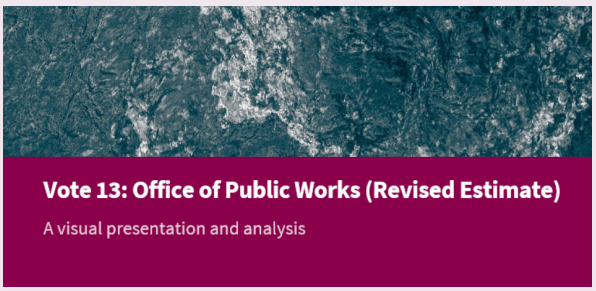
A Guide to the Structure of Votes in the *Revised Estimates for Public Services 2020* – Vote 13 (Office of Public Works) as a model

PBO interactive visualisations

In addition to this Publication, the PBO has provided an interactive visualisation on its Data Visualisation and Analysis Page of key developments in the Office of Public Works Vote in 2020.

Vote 13: A visual presentation and analysis



Key Messages

- A Revised Estimate for Public Services is intended as a high-level document, and its structure is not easy to scrutinise.
- It can however be a useful source of information if the reader knows how to analyse it – most Government spending is set out in the Revised Estimates and it is the Dáil's role to consider and approve that spending – they are therefore vital documents.
- Most Votes have a standard structure but some of the largest Votes have significant variations (Health, Education, Social Protection).
- Dáil Éireann sectoral Select Committees have an accountability and oversight role which aims to promote the more effective and efficient use of public resources. Therefore, in order to facilitate effective scrutiny, there should be a consistent approach to performance budgeting, including metrics and financial allocations, across these resources.
- The 'new' Revised Estimates published to date do not contain updated performance indicators.
- Vote 13 (OPW) is one of a number of Votes within the Public Expenditure & Reform Vote Group which will be considered on 23 July 2020. The only change between this 'new' version of the Revised Estimate for Vote 13 and that published pre-pandemic (December 2019) is that the OPW has estimated that it will receive €7 million less in own income (Appropriations-in-Aid), which means that this shortfall is being sought from funds to be approved by Dáil Éireann.

Introduction

This PBO Note is intended as a Guide, to support Members' ability to independently navigate the complex documents which are the Revised Estimates for Votes. A large number of Estimates are being proposed for consideration by Dáil Éireann this week, and in the coming weeks. Further Revised Estimates (FREs) will also be provided in the case of Departments where functions are being transferred – such as the new Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. This Note is relevant to FREs as well.

The Note provides an overview and analysis of the data contained in the Revised Estimate for a selected Vote - in the context of scrutinising spending and related performance. **Vote 13 – Office of Public Works - has been selected due to the standard structure of the Vote**. In addition, of the Votes being considered (within the Public Expenditure & Reform Vote Group)[1] by the Dáil this week it has the largest financial allocation. A visual presentation and analysis of Vote 13 is available on the PBO website.

This Note is of limited use in the case of Votes that have a non-standard layout, especially Health, Education & Skills and Employment Affairs & Social Protection. However, these Votes are normally the subject of specific PBO analysis when proposed to the Dáil for consideration.

The Structure of a 'standard' Vote

A Vote is structured in three parts:

I. Estimate of the amount required;

II. Programmes under which the Subheads for this Vote will be accounted for; and

III. Details of Programmes - Objectives, Outputs and Financial & Human Resources.

This structure applies to most Votes.

Part I: Estimate of the amount required

Part I (a) sets out the *net* Voted allocation in respect of which approval is sought from Dáil Éireann. Any unspent capital allocation brought forward from the previous year is stated under Part I (b).

Figure 1: Part I of Vote 13

[13] *Office of Public Works* *[13]*

13

OFFICE OF PUBLIC WORKS

I. Estimate of the amount required in the year ending 31 December 2020 for the salaries and expenses of the Office of Public Works, for services administered by that Office and for payment of certain grants and for the recoupment of certain expenditure.

(a) by way of current year provision

Four hundred and ninety million, four hundred and twenty-seven thousand euro (€490,427,000)

(b) by way of the application for capital supply services of unspent appropriations, the surrender of which may be deferred under Section 91 of the Finance Act 2004.

Eight million euro

(€8,000,000)

Source: Revised Estimates for Public Services 2020 for Vote 13 (July 2020)

1 The PBO has provided an infographic which shows the relationship between Votes and Groups – available here.

In Vote 13, Part I (a) sets out that the amount allocated (net total) is €490,427,000 for 2020, i.e. just over €490 million.

Part I (b) sets out a deferred surrender of €8,000,000 in accordance with Section 91(2) of the Finance Act 2004 which permits the carryover of unspent capital allocation from one financial year into the next provided (i) it is not more than 10% of the allocation in the first year; and (ii) it is applied towards *capital* supply services.[2,3]

Part II - Programmes under which the Subheads for this Vote will be accounted for

Part II initially provides a table (see Figure 2) setting out the individual Gross Voted allocation for each of the programmes in the Vote (broken down by current and capital).

Figure 2: Gross allocation by Programme, A-in-A and Net Vote Allocation – Vote 33

II. Programmes under which the Subheads for this Vote will be accounted for by the Office of Public Works.

	2019 Estimate			2020 Estimate			Change 2020 over 2019
	Current	Capital	Total	Current	Capital	Total	
	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	%
PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE							
A - FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT	35,509	73,262	**108,771**	38,225	87,994	**126,219**	16%
B - ESTATE MANAGEMENT	249,385	105,787	**355,172**	263,153	116,055	**379,208**	7%
Gross total :- *	284,894	179,049	**463,943**	301,378	204,049	**505,427**	9%
Deduct :-							
C - APPROPRIATIONS-IN-AID....	24,205	-	**24,205**	15,000	-	**15,000**	-38%
Net total :- *	260,689	179,049	**439,738**	286,378	204,049	**490,427**	12%
				Net Increase (€000)			50,689

Source: Revised Estimate for Public Services 2020 for Vote 13 (July 2020)

In the example above, this first table in Part II gives the programme sub-totals to calculate the gross total of €505,427,000.[4] The projected Appropriations-in-Aid, which consists of own-generated revenue which may be retained within the Vote reducing thereby reducing the allocation required, (A-in-A - €15,000,000)[5] are then *deducted* to arrive at the net Voted allocation (€490,427,000).[6] The net increase in Voted expenditure between 2019 and 2020 is then provided. This is the amount set out in Part I and is the amount Dáil Éireann is been requested to approve.

Should the OPW's own income, or Appropriations-in-Aid, be lower than the amount estimated a Supplementary Estimate may be needed from the Dáil in November/December.

As with all Votes in the Revised Estimates, the intended allocation for the year is compared to the previous year's final allocation (i.e. including any Supplementary Estimate approved by the Dáil for that year). However, when referring back to the original allocation for 2019 set out in the *Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019*, it is important to remember that the original allocation would not include any Supplementary Estimate or Further Revised Estimate approved by Dáil Éireann subsequent to the publication of the Revised Estimates for that year. For Vote 13 there was no Supplementary Estimate in 2019.

2 This €8,000,000 is not considered to form part of Voted funds for 2020 (net or gross) as it was previously Voted in respect of a particular use in 2019.
3 Part II of the Vote details the subhead(s) in which the deferred surrender is being allocated to and where the savings arose for Vote 13; the entire amount is to be applied across the subheads in Programme B – Estate Management in Vote 13 in 2020. A Ministerial Order must also be made by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform before 31 March in the year of carryover. This is subject to approval by Dáil Éireann.
4 It is important to note that this is what it is intended should be spent under the Vote and that performance metrics, where provided, will relate to some part of the *gross* expenditure.
5 For further information on Appropriations-in-Aid, please see PBO, Appropriations-in-Aid in the Revised Estimates for Public Services (2018)
6 It should be recalled that this is the amount in respect of which the approval of the Dáil is sought.

The inclusion of additional resources during the previous year may distort trend analysis over time e.g. if a Supplementary Estimate were used to provide for one-off expenditure it could obscure the underlying rate of change in the Vote allocation.[7]

Part II then provides data in respect of Exchequer pay and pension costs in thousands (and corresponding employee and pensioner numbers)[8] based on the net allocations for 2019 and 2020.

Figure 3: Exchequer, pay, pensions and associated numbers – 2019 and 2020 Estimates and change between those years

	2019 Estimate	2020 Estimate	Change 2020 over 2019
Exchequer pay included in above net total	*98,748*	*106,508*	8%
Associated Public Service employees	*2,000*	*2,105*	5%

Source: Revised Estimate for Public Services 2020 for Vote 13 (July 2020)

This data (Figure 3) is very important as staff costs can form a significant element of a Vote's allocation. An increase in staff numbers will also normally suggest that the State is taking on long-term salary and pension costs.

Public service employee numbers in Vote 13 are projected to increase by 105 (+5%) between 2019 and 2020. Total pay is set to increase by 8% from €98.75 million to €106.5 million. If there was a wide discrepancy between the percentage increase of these figures, it may be a point to query in the scrutiny of a Vote. For example, to ascertain why any financial increase did not appear to be in line with any percentage increase in employee numbers. Even if the number of staff did not increase, overall public sector pay in a Vote will likely increase as agreed public sector pay increases and increments for many employees are applied.

A table then details the composition of administrative expenditure under the Vote (€58,347,000 - 10% of the Vote's gross allocation). This data is usually of limited use in scrutinising the Vote though large increases in expenditure on individual lines should be queried. Part II of Vote 13 is, for ease of reference, reproduced in its entirety (see Figure 4).

7 It is advisable to consider Supplementary Estimates in conjunction with the REV as many are recurring.
8 This includes the Department's own employees and may also include those of bodies which the Department is responsible for funding.

Figure 4: Part II of Vote 13 (Revised Estimate for Public Services 2020)

II. Programmes under which the Subheads for this Vote will be accounted for by the Office of Public Works.

	2019 Estimate			2020 Estimate			Change 2020 over 2019
	Current	Capital	Total	Current	Capital	Total	
PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	%
A - FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT	35,509	73,262	**108,771**	38,225	87,994	**126,219**	16%
B - ESTATE MANAGEMENT	249,385	105,787	**355,172**	263,153	116,055	**379,208**	7%
Gross total :- *	284,894	179,049	**463,943**	301,378	204,049	**505,427**	9%
Deduct :-							
C - APPROPRIATIONS-IN-AID....	24,205	-	**24,205**	15,000	-	**15,000**	-38%
Net total :- *	260,689	179,049	**439,738**	286,378	204,049	**490,427**	12%
				Net Increase (€000)			50,689

Gross Voted allocation by programme

Net Voted allocation

Exchequer pay included in above net total	*98,748*		*106,508*	8%
Associated Public Service employees	*2,000*		*2,105*	5%

* *The above programmes include significant administrative and support costs for the provision of Agency Services funded by and on behalf of other Departments.*

	2019 Estimate			2020 Estimate			Change 2020 over 2019
ADMINISTRATION *Functional split of Administrative Budgets, which are included in above Programme allocations.*	Current	Capital	Total	Current	Capital	Total	
	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	%
(i) SALARIES, WAGES AND ALLOWANCES	41,429	-	**41,429**	44,840	-	**44,840**	8%
(ii) TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE	1,911	-	**1,911**	2,310	-	**2,310**	21%
(iii) TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT AND INCIDENTAL EXPENSES	1,187	-	**1,187**	1,300	-	**1,300**	10%
(iv) POSTAL AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES	1,532	-	**1,532**	1,800	-	**1,800**	17%
(v) OFFICE EQUIPMENT AND EXTERNAL IT SERVICES	2,080	3,170	**5,250**	2,880	3,502	**6,382**	22%
(vi) OFFICE PREMISES EXPENSES	1,079	-	**1,079**	1,279	-	**1,279**	19%
(vii) CONSULTANCY SERVICES AND VALUE FOR MONEY AND POLICY REVIEWS	266	-	**266**	266	-	**266**	-
(viii) GOVERNMENT PUBLICATION SERVICES	170	-	**170**	170	-	**170**	-
Gross Total :-	49,654	3,170	**52,824**	54,845	3,502	**58,347**	10%

Administrative budget

Subheads under which it is intended to apply the amount of €8 million in unspent 2019 appropriations to capital supply services.

	2019	2020	Change 2019 over 2020
	Application of Deferred Surrender		
	€000	€000	%
B - ESTATE MANAGEMENT	-	8,000	-
	-	**8,000**	-

Application of deferred surrender

Source: Revised Estimate for Public Services 2020 for Vote 13 (July 2020)

Part III - Details of Programmes - Objectives, Outputs and Financial & Human Resources

Part III of a Vote describes each programme in terms of allocation and performance.

The first table in Part III, of each 'standard' Vote, details the total programme allocation by subhead. The subhead allocations are broken down between current and capital expenditure.

The first programme in Vote 13 is Programme A – Flood Risk Management, which contains six subheads (A.1-A.6). Subheads A.1 and A.2 relate to administrative expenditure rather than the direct provision of public services.[9] Subheads 1 and 2 across all programmes will sum to the administration budget in Part II. Public service employees associated with different subheads are also detailed in this table.

9 Subhead A1 and A2 (and the equivalent for each programme) relate to the Department's or Office's costs.

Up to this point all the data provided in Part III has been financial. In respect of each programme, performance budgeting is now introduced through the provision of two additional tables under the heading of 'Key outputs and Public Service Activities':

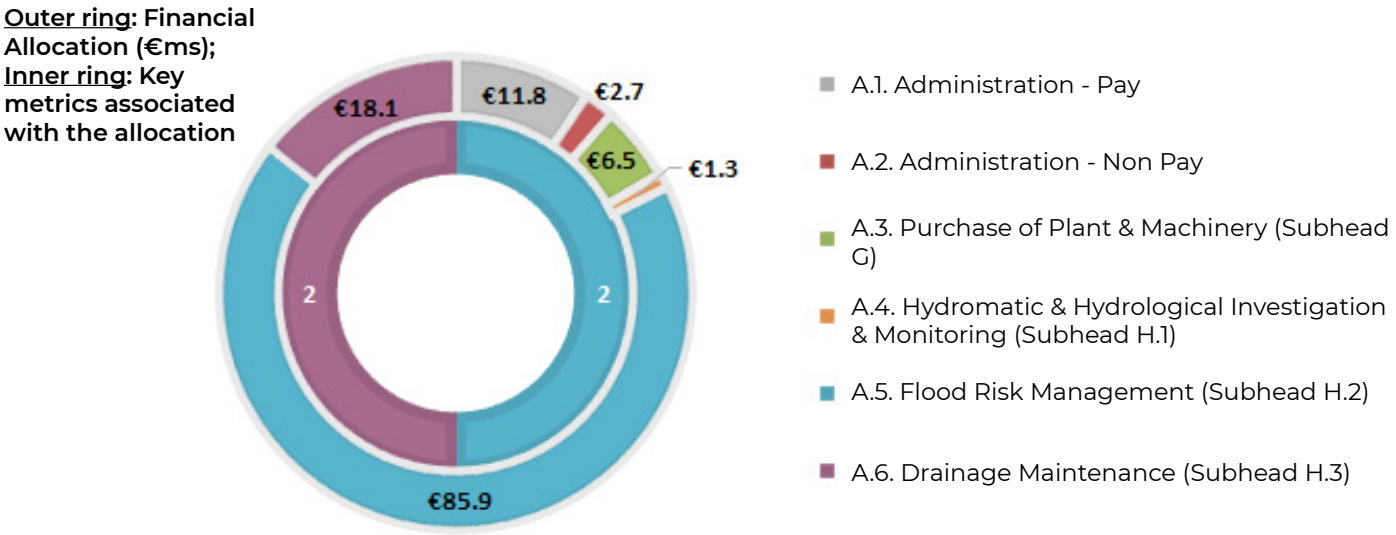
- Key High Level Metrics[10] provide output indicators/targets for the year of the Revised Estimate in question (x), the previous year (x-1) and the year before that (x-2).1 It also provides the final outturn for year x-2.[11]
- A table of context and impact indicators is then provided.

This format is repeated for each subsequent programme.

Based on the data set out in the Revised Estimate it is usually not possible, with certainty, to directly map the amount of Programme allocation onto specific output targets/outturn, i.e. the key high level metrics do not state which subhead(s) they relate to. This can be seen across the different Votes in the Revised Estimates for Public Services.

It is *possible* to make assumptions for some metrics that they are linked to specific subheads. For example, in programme A of Vote 13 an assumption can be made that the key high-level metric, "Distance and % of Arterial Drainage Channels to maintain" is related only to subhead A.6 Drainage Maintenance. However, it is possible that other subheads are involved or that not all the funding provided to that subhead relates to that metric. Similarly, with other metrics provided in respect of Programme A, while assumptions can be made, it is not possible to associate funding in one subhead to a particular key high level metric with total accuracy. This is illustrated in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Programme A, Non-administration allocations (€ms) and associated performance metrics 2020



Source: PBO based on Revised Estimate 2020 (Vote 13).

Performance metric targets are important, and it should be possible to relate them directly to specific Vote expenditure (subheads) thereby facilitating scrutiny of performance. Until the linkage to expenditure is clear and the outputs are measured with good quality *quantitative* metrics and refer to a substantial portion of the Vote's allocation, any scrutiny of the impact indicators provided is of limited value.

Programme A is reproduced in its entirety in Figure 6 below.

10 This table is integral to an understanding of the Programme Logic Model. See PBO, *Performance Information and the Revised Estimates for Public Services* (2018)

11 In this case therefore targets are provided for 2019 and 2020. Targets and actual Outturn are provided in respect of 2018.

Figure 6: Part III of Vote 13 (Programme A)

[13] *Office of the Public Works* *[13]*

III. **Details of Programmes - Objectives, Outputs and Financial & Human Resources**

PROGRAMMES

A - FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

High Level Goals: To minimise the extent of coastal and river flooding and its social, economic and environmental impacts through the implementation of effective protection and mitigation measures for at-risk areas, the provision of flood risk guidance and advice in the area of sustainable planning, and assisting the development of resilient communities.

Financial & Human Resource Inputs

Numbers 2019	Numbers 2020			2019 Estimate Current €000	2019 Estimate Capital €000	2019 Estimate Total €000	2020 Estimate Current €000	2020 Estimate Capital €000	2020 Estimate Total €000
200	229	A.1 -	ADMINISTRATION - PAY	10,898	-	10,898	11,796	-	11,796
		A.2 -	ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY	2,103	143	2,246	2,567	158	2,725
		A.3 -	PURCHASE OF PLANT AND MACHINERY *(Subhead G)*	-	4,150	4,150	-	6,470	6,470
11	14	A.4 -	HYDROMETRIC & HYDROLOGICAL INVESTIGATION & MONITORING *(Subhead H.1)*	1,255	-	1,255	1,264	-	1,264
		A.5 -	FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT *(Subhead H.2)*	4,158	68,969	73,127	4,500	81,366	85,866
268	267	A.6 -	DRAINAGE MAINTENANCE *(Subhead H.3)*	17,095	-	17,095	18,098	-	18,098
			Programme Total:-	35,509	73,262	108,771	38,225	87,994	126,219
479	510		*of which Pay :-*	*25,855*	-	*25,855*	*27,507*	-	*27,507*

Programme expenditure by subhead

Key Outputs and Public Service Activities

Key High Level Metrics	*2018 Output Outturn* (2018 Output Target)	*2019 Output Target*	*2020 Output Target*
No. of major Flood Relief Schemes substantially complete, and properties to benefit from these schemes on completion	2 (4) 347 (1,750)	4 1,192	5 2,436
No. of major Flood Relief Schemes to commence, and properties to benefit from these schemes on completion	2 (6) 343 (4,023)	6 1,235	4 964
Distance and % of Arterial Drainage Channels to maintain	2,093km/18.2% (2,096km/18.2%)	2,031km 17.7%	2,075km 18.04km
Distance and % of Flood Defence Embankments to maintain and refurbish	117.2 km/14.7% (132.25km/16.5%)	135.29km 16.9%	133.35km 16.75%

Publish Documents	*2018 Output Outturn*	*2019 Output Target*	*2020 Output Target*
	- 29 Flood Risk Management Plans	- Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Flood Risk Management	

Key outputs and public service activities

Context and Impact indicators

	2016	*2017*	*2018*
1- Number of major flood relief schemes completed	1	4	2
2- Number of major flood relief schemes commenced	6	2	2
Benefit of completed Flood Relief Schemes: 3- Number of Properties Damage/Loss avoided (€)	417 €317m	1,579 €184m	347 €37m
4- Level of funding provided to Local Authorities (minor works)	€2.98m	€2.4m	€1.816m
5- Number of Local Authority projects funded (minor works)	60	59	55
6- Kilometres and % of OPW arterial drainage channel maintained	2,114 18.4%	2,093 18.2%	2,093 18.2%
7- Kilometres and % of OPW embankments maintained	179 22.5%	110.45 13.9%	117.21 14.7%

Source: Revised Estimate for Public Services 2020 for Vote 13 (July 2020)

Details of projected Appropriation-in-Aid are provided at the very end of Part III (see Figure 7 over). A-in-A are own-generated revenue which accrue to a Vote. These vary in nature from one Vote to another but include revenue from sources such as rental income and user/customer charges/fees.

A projected *increase* in A-in-A *reduces* the need for Exchequer funding while a *reduction* in A-in-A serves to *increase* the need for Exchequer funding. In Vote 13, A-in-A for 2020 is projected to decrease from €24 million to €15 million. The overall decrease is due to combination of reasons such as the reduction in receipts from admission charges and sales at national monuments and historic properties, and a reduction in receipts from additional superannuation contributions on public service remuneration.

While the performance budgeting metrics have not been revised to take account of the impact of Covid-19 on schemes and programmes on the OPW Vote, it does appear that the pandemic's impact on A-and-A has been factored in.

Figure 7: A-and-A in Part III of Vote 13

Details of Appropriations-in-Aid

C. - APPROPRIATIONS-IN-AID:	2019 Estimate			2020 Estimate		
	Current	Capital	Total	Current	Capital	Total
	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000
1. Rents, Licence Fees etc	3,150	-	**3,150**	3,150	-	**3,150**
2. Events and Facilities Management	3,500	-	**3,500**	2,500	-	**2,500**
3. Receipts for Government Publication Services	630	-	**630**	630	-	**630**
4. Sales at National Monuments and Historic Properties	2,300	-	**2,300**	1,100	-	**1,100**
5. Admission Charges at National Monuments and Historic Properties	10,500	-	**10,500**	4,633	-	**4,633**
6. Miscellaneous, including fees, interest and disposals etc	200	-	**200**	600	-	**600**
7. Receipts from Additional Superannuation Contribution on Public Service Remuneration	3,925	-	**3,925**	2,387	-	**2,387**
	24,205	-	**24,205**	15,000	-	**15,000**

Source: Revised Estimate for Public Services 2020 for Vote 13 (July 2020)

Conclusions on Vote Structure

While this Note focusses on Vote 13 – the Office of Public Works, it describes the elements and structure that are shared by most of the Votes in the Revised Estimates for Public Services. Some Votes, however, will follow this structure while also including some additional elements which may not be present in all cases such as Equality Budgeting metrics.

Other information is available in the full (pre-pandemic, i.e. published December 2019) version of the *Revised Estimates for Public Services 2020* including non-commercial State Agencies[12] (including their statements categorised by Vote) and a range of appendices.

The appendices are useful to the extent that they breakdown a particular type of expenditure, or funding received from a specific source, and point the reader to the subhead within each vote where the funding is allocated. Example appendices in 2020 include spending on consultancy, climate related expenditure, carbon tax expenditure, National Lottery funding, and estimated EU receipts. However, the approach taken is simplistic in that it offers no greater specificity other than listing the Vote and subhead, providing no insight as to the intended outcomes of the expenditure, whether it represents value for money, etc.

Figure 8 summarises the structure of a 'standard' Vote in the REV.

12 Revised Estimates for Public Services 2020 (2019, p.224).

Figure 8: Standard Vote Structure (based on Vote 13 in the REV2020)

Part I - Estimate of the amount required	(A) Current year provision (B) Deferred Surrender	
Part II - Programmes under which the Subheads for this Vote will be accounted for	Programme Expenditure Administration Application Of Deferred Surrender	Details of public service employees, pensioners and associated pay and pension costs
Part III - Details of Programmes - Objectives, Outputs and Financial & Human Resources	Programme Expenditure Performance Indicators	Key Outputs And Public Service Activities: • Key High Level Metrics • Context And Impact Indicators Key Outputs And Public Service Activities: • Key High Level Metrics • Context And Impact Indicators
	Details Of Appropriations-In-Aid	

Source: PBO (2020)

Making use of data in the Revised Estimate

The Revised Estimates are a core reference text throughout the budgetary cycle - other documents are subsequently published during the year that update the financial, and rarely, some of the performance data contained in it.

It is therefore necessary to consider the Revised Estimates' content alongside a range of other data sources. These sources include, but are not limited to, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Databank,[13] the Department of Finance's Fiscal Monitor, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's *Public Service Performance Report* and *Mid-Year Expenditure Report* and the Budget's *Expenditure Report*. Publications of a Vote-specific nature are also important in understanding and analysing the content of the Revised Estimates, examples of these include annual reports and financial statements or strategic documents. In addition, the PBO has produced a large number of notes and papers analysing both specific votes and general expenditure.

Trend Analysis

The Revised Estimate for a Vote should not be viewed in isolation. In particular, as already noted the final allocation for a year will include in-year increases to that allocation (if any). In Part II of the Vote an asterisk will denote that a Supplementary Estimate is included in the allocation of the preceding year.[14]

A Further Revised Estimate is often associated with restructuring of Ministerial responsibilities; a Further Revised Estimate can therefore have a significant distortive impact on trend analysis. There are likely to be a number of Further Revised Estimates later in 2020 in response to the announcement of the new Government.

13 The databank should not be launched in Internet Explorer. Browsers such as Firefox support use of the databank.
14 It should be noted that a Further Revised Estimate will not be notified in this fashion.

Figure 9: Programme A (Vote 13) – Trend Analysis

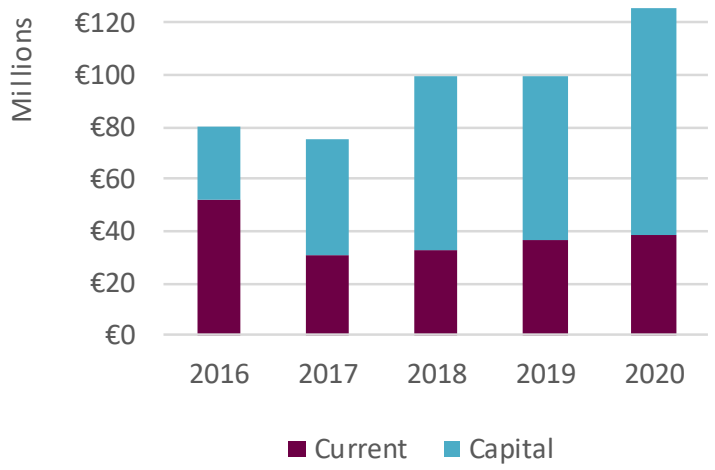


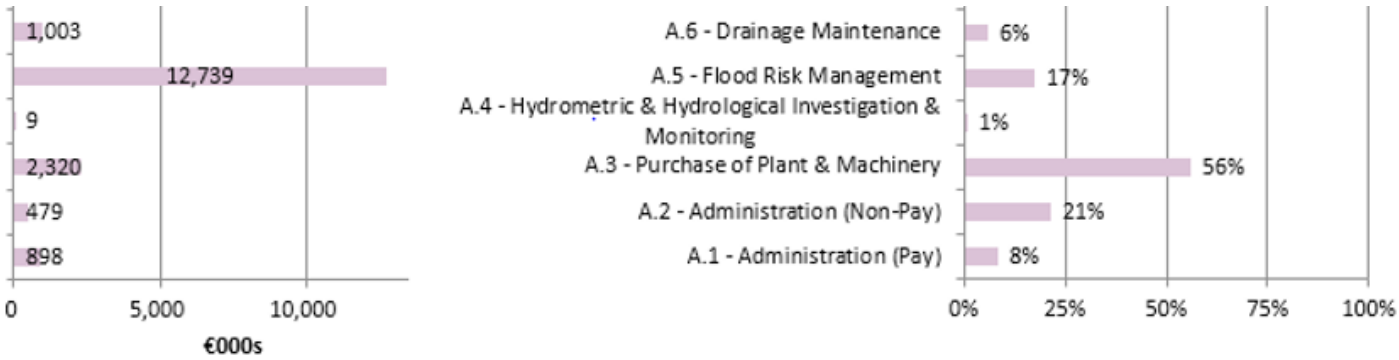
Figure 9 illustrates the use of trend analysis over time. It does so by setting out, for Programme A, the final outturn for the years 2016 to 2019 (from the Department of Public Service and Reform's Databank) and the allocation for 2020 (from the *Revised Estimates for Public Services 2020*).

Figure 9 illustrates a significant increase in Programme A's annual allocation, with the increase focussed on capital expenditure.

Source: PBO based on REV2020 (Vote 13)

A more detailed analysis can also be carried out of each individual programme and how the subheads within it are projected to change between 2019 and 2020 as illustrated in Figure 10 below.

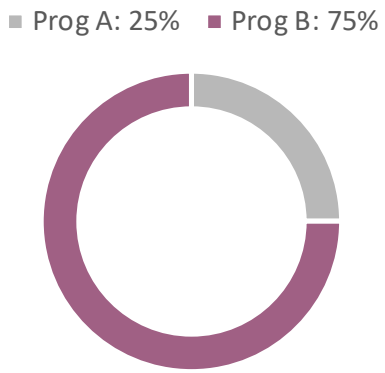
Figure 10: Programme A, Changes in Subhead Expenditure Projections 2019 v 2020



Source: PBO based on REV2020 (Vote 13)

Identification of Priority Areas

Figure 11: Vote 13 Programme Composition (% share of Gross Allocation)

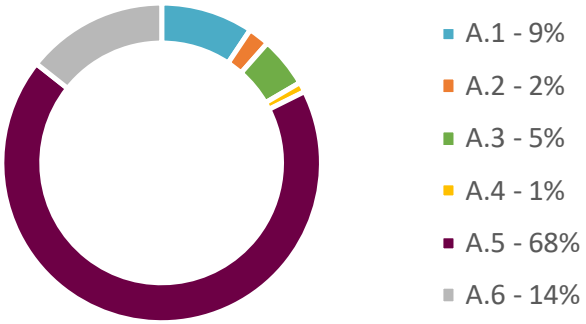


Analysis of a Revised Estimate can also be helped by the use of charts to visualise the comparative size of programmes in the first instance, and subheads in the second. Figure 11 illustrates such analysis using Vote 13 as an example.

Source: PBO based on Revised Estimates for Public Services 2020

A similar approach can be applied at Programme level of a vote to demonstrate the share of funding allocated to each subhead (see figure 12). It is worth noting that in Vote 13, both Programmes contain a relatively small number of subheads (six in A and 11 in B) making the graphic presentation of the data more manageable. However, a number for Votes may contain Programmes with a high number of subheads, with a wide array of values in their allocations.

Figure 12: Subhead Composition of Programme A in Vote 13 (% of Programme Allocation)



Source: PBO based on Revised Estimates for Public Services 2020

Figures 11 and 12 are examples of how fiscally significant areas can be easily and prominently identified. While funding for Programme A comprises of only 25% of the overall funding in Vote 13, subhead A.5 – Flood Risk Management accounts for 68% of Programme A's allocation. However, in the absence of any detailed metrics or performance indicators this information would be of limited use in scrutinising this particular Vote given that the overall Programme is also entitled Flood Risk Management.

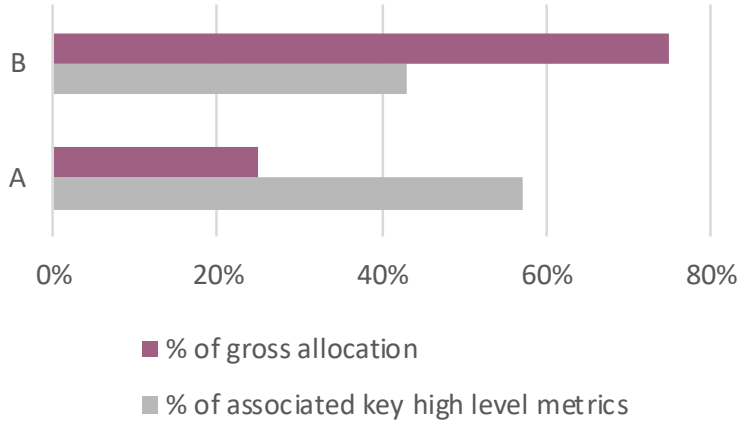
The Relationship between Performance Information and Expenditure

The relative sizes of subheads and/or programmes can be used to comment on potential issues in the Vote's structure. It is also possible to link such analysis with the performance information in the Revised Estimate (or lack thereof) to comment on the adequacy of the performance information provided. The PBO has previously described the Programme Logic Model (PLM) for evaluating the effectiveness of expenditure.[15]

In some cases it is not easy to link a performance metric to a specific subhead. At present doing so requires that the description of the metric and the subhead seem similar. However, there could be metrics which relate to more than one subhead.

Figure 13 provides an overall analysis of Vote 13 whereby the relative allocation size and percentage of total key high-level metrics are determined.

Figure 13: Programme Analysis of Vote 13



The analysis in Figure 13 illustrates that there are potential issues with the number of metrics and/or their distribution in Vote 13. In this case, Programme A has only 25% of the Vote allocation but almost 60% of the metrics.

Source: PBO based on Revised Estimates for Public Services 2020

The lack of useful and precise metrics in the Revised Estimate make the task of scrutinising in-Vote spending both more difficult and less transparent.

In some policy areas a review of other sources (e.g. Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) Spending Review papers, replies to Parliamentary Questions) may reveal that there are other metrics which are reported on separately. This may inform additional scrutiny

15 PBO, *Performance Information and the Revised Estimates for Public Services* (2018)

or may facilitate commenting on their absence from the Revised Estimate itself.

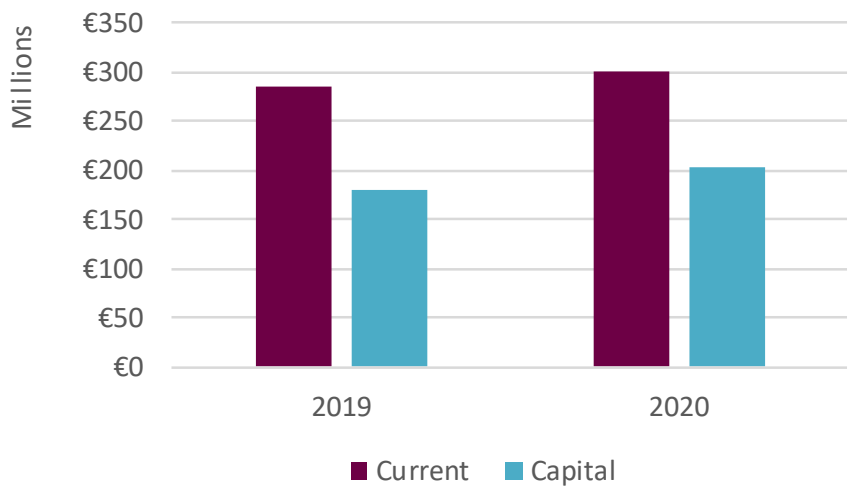
Finally, the change in targets associated with metrics can also raise issues for further inquiry. For example, a large increase in targeted output in the absence of a proportionate increase in funding may suggest that the target is unrealistic, previous targets were overly cautious, or that efficiencies are expected to be found. There may, of course, be other explanations but these will need to be clearly identified.

In the context of the Government response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 'new' Revised Estimates being published from May 2020 onwards do not contain updated performance indicators relating to new expenditure allocations. This is a worrying development given that additional funding is being proposed without the adequate performance indicators being made publicly available. The ability to properly scrutinise the spending related to the pandemic is therefore reduced.

Current and Capital Expenditure

In undertaking scrutiny of a Revised Estimate it can be useful to look at the share of current and capital expenditure in a Vote. In most 'standard' Votes the majority of spending is current. The balance of current and capital expenditure can be significant in determining the relative sizes of increases or decreases in a Vote's allocation. In Vote 13, 60% of the gross Voted allocation in 2020 is current in nature.

Figure 14: Growth in Vote 13 Allocation 2019-2020



Source: PBO based on Revised Estimates for Public Services 2020

Figure 14 illustrates that the increase in allocation in Vote 13 in 2020 of €16.5 million current and €25 million capital represent increases of approximately 6% and 14% respectively. The relative size of increases in allocations may merit further scrutiny.

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