



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development



Realising our
Rural Potential
Action Plan for Rural Development



Second Progress Report
April 2018



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Minister's Foreword

The Government launched the Action Plan for Rural Development at the start of 2017 to provide, for the first time, a fully cross-Governmental approach to the economic and social development of rural Ireland. The Action Plan contains more than 270 commitments for delivery by a range of Government Departments, State Agencies and other organisations over a three year period. This is the second Progress Report on the delivery of those commitments.



I am pleased to say that just over a year since the Action Plan was launched, significant progress has been made in delivering the actions that are making a real and tangible difference to the lives of people who live in rural parts of Ireland. For example:

- Employment increased in almost every region of the country in 2017. Employment outside of the Dublin region increased by 56,200, accounting for 84% of the overall national increase in employment.
- 281 projects were funded under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme in 2017, bringing to over 450 the total number of projects support by the Government under this scheme since the second half of 2016.
- 900 LEADER projects have now been approved by Local Action Groups and are getting under way, with more than 300 further projects going through the approvals process.
- A total of 1,567 allocations, with a total value of almost €46 million, were made to projects outside of Dublin under the Sports Capital Programme.
- The development of the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East tourism brands has led to more people than ever visiting and experiencing rural Ireland, boosting employment in local economies. A new brand for the Midland region, "Ireland's Hidden Heartlands" has now been launched by Fáilte Ireland.
- Additional investment is being made in public roads, and the re-introduction of the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) in 2017 provided funding of €17 million for non-public roads. Further investment of €10 million in the LIS in 2018 will bring the number of these roads supported since September 2017 to over 1,100.

This Progress Report sets out the details of these, and all other actions which were due for delivery in 2017, or which are being delivered on an on-going basis over the course of the three-year Action Plan. Overall, 93% of the actions to be reported on have been completed or are substantially advanced. A small number of actions are delayed; however, these will continue to be monitored with a view to their completion as soon as possible.

It is clear to me, as I visit people around the country, that the Action Plan for Rural Development is working and is making a difference to people who live in rural areas. The Government has reinforced its commitment to rural Ireland through the establishment of a new Rural Regeneration and Development Fund which will provide an additional €1 billion of investment in rural Ireland over the next 10 years. Details of the Fund will be announced later this year.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the commitment of all those across national and local government, and those who work in our communities, for their efforts in delivering on the measures in the Action Plan to date. I look forward to their continued collaboration in this important project over the course of the remaining two years of the Action Plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Ring". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Michael Ring T.D.
Minister for Rural and Community Development

Glossary of Abbreviations

BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
CIF	Construction Industry Federation
CSO	Central Statistics Office
daa	Company formerly known as the Dublin Airport Authority
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DBEI	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
DCHG	Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development
DCCAE	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DESP	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
DHPLG	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
DJE	Department of Justice and Equality
DoF	Department of Finance
DoH	Department of Health
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DTTAS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
EI	Enterprise Ireland
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
ETBs	Education and Training Boards
FLAGs	Fisheries Local Area Action Groups
GSI	Geological Survey of Ireland
HEIs	Higher Education Institutes
HSE	Health Service Executive

IDA	Industrial Development Authority
ILCU	Irish League of Credit Unions
ISIF	Ireland Strategic Investment Fund
LAs	Local Authorities
LAGs	LEADER Local Action Groups
LDCs	Local Development Companies
LCDCs	Local Community Development Committees
LEOs	Local Enterprise Offices
NTA	National Transport Authority
NUIG	National University of Ireland Galway
OPW	Office of Public Works
OSI	Ordnance Survey Ireland
PPNs	Public Participation Networks
RAPID	Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development
RGDATA	Retail Grocery Dairy & Allied Trades Association
SBCI	Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
WDC	Western Development Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Background

Realising our Rural Potential, the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development was launched in January 2017. The Action Plan contains 277 actions for the delivery across Government, State agencies and other bodies over the next three years to support the economic and social progress of rural Ireland.

The actions are broken down across 5 thematic Pillars as follows:

- Pillar 1:** Supporting Sustainable Communities
- Pillar 2:** Supporting Enterprise and Employment
- Pillar 3:** Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential
- Pillar 4:** Fostering Culture and Creativity in rural communities
- Pillar 5:** Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity

Each action has been assigned to a lead body which is responsible for implementation of the action. Progress on the implementation of the actions is overseen by a Monitoring Committee which includes senior representatives of relevant Government Departments and key rural stakeholder interests.

Progress Reports on the implementation of the Action Plan are published twice-yearly. The first Progress Report was published in August 2017. This second Progress Report outlines the progress which has taken place in relation to all of the actions due for delivery in 2017, or which are being implemented on an ongoing basis over the course of the three year Action Plan.

A total of 271 actions are reported on. One of these actions, relating to Brexit research by the WDC is not proceeding and has been closed, as sufficient research is being, or has already been, carried out on Brexit by other bodies.

Of the remaining 270 actions to be reported on, 254 have been completed or are substantially advanced, representing a delivery rate of 93%. 16 actions due for delivery in 2017 were delayed. These are summarised on page 21.

The Monitoring Committee which oversees the implementation of the Action Plan met on four occasions since the Plan was published and examined a number of specific themes of particular relevance to rural Ireland, including mental well-being, jobs, the LEADER programme and the work of the Fisheries Local Area Action Groups (FLAGs).

The Government has made a long-term commitment to the development of rural Ireland in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan which were published in February 2018. One of the national strategic objectives in the NPF is to strengthen our rural economies and communities, while a new €1 billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund is to be established through the National Development Plan to support this objective.

Pillar 1 – Supporting Sustainable Communities

The objective of this Pillar is to make rural Ireland a better place in which to live and work, to achieve this, we must support our rural communities. We need to enhance local services, support social cohesion and empower the people that live in our communities to ensure that their voices are heard. Some of the key achievements to date under this Pillar are set out below.

1. The 2017 Town and Village Renewal Scheme was launched in April 2017 with a closing date in June 2017. The scheme was funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and was delivered through the Local Authorities. On 4th October 2017 281 projects in towns and villages across Ireland were allocated funding of €21.6m under the scheme. Over 450 projects have now been funded under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme since it was launched in the second half of 2016. (Action 1 – DRCD)
2. The Framework for Town Centre Renewal was launched in April 2017 by the Retail Consultation Forum, which is chaired by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. The Framework includes an Action Plan for Town Centre Renewal which provides a blueprint for towns and villages, guiding them through the three stages of town centre renewal: stakeholder engagement, carrying out a town centre health check and preparing a Town Centre Plan. The implementation of a number of the recommendations in the Framework is underway by the Retail Consultation Forum and key stakeholders. Town Centre Renewal is a key focus for the Retail Consultation Forum and work will continue during 2018 to drive implementation of the recommendations in the Framework document. (Action 4 – DBEI)
3. In December 2017, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring T.D., allocated funding totalling €1.4 million for Tidy Town Committees throughout the country to assist with their work and to mark the 60th anniversary of the competition. Consultation meetings with Tidy Towns Committees seeking views on enhancing the competition were completed. The 2018 competition was launched at the end of March 2018. (Action 11 – DCRD)
4. The recast RAPID programme, which launched in November 2017, had a total allocation of €2 million for 2017. The Scheme is being administered on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development by Local Community Development Committees under the remit of the Local Authorities. The closing date for applications was 24th November 2017. Each of the 31 Local Authorities was provided with an equal allocation of €64,500 under this programme. (Action 15 – DRCD)
5. A number of measures have been significantly progressed as part of the overall engagement to implement the Health & Safety Authority's Farm Safety Action Plan 2016–2018. The focus of the Action Plan is on high risk activities such as tractor and machinery use, livestock handling, and forestry and timber work on farms, as well as the development of new ways of improving farmer skill levels, particularly around risk identification and management. (Action 16 – HSA)

6. Based on a business case submitted by the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has decided to finance a Community Water Development Fund, to be accessible to community groups who wish to engage in water quality projects to further the achievement of the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive. (Action 40 – DHPLG)
7. In the second half of 2017, activity under LEADER increased significantly and by April 2018, 900 projects with a value of €27 million had been approved by the LAGs for LEADER funding. Over 300 further projects were at some stage in the approvals process. An on-going increase in activity under LEADER is expected over the course of 2018, and a Food Initiative strand for Artisan, Micro, and Small Food Producers was launched on 1 May 2018. (Action 47 – DRCD)
8. Over the course of 2017, the first year of operation of the seven new Fisheries Local Action Groups, grants of €2.7m were awarded to 190 projects. Approved projects covered a diverse range of activities, including micro seafood enterprises, marine tourism projects, marine leisure projects, marine ancillary services, marine cultural and heritage projects, seafood festivals and marine awareness projects. The Scheme remains open for applications and strong demand is again anticipated in 2018. (Action 48 – DAFM)
9. The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is the largest social inclusion intervention of its kind in the State. Its aim is to tackle poverty, social exclusion and long-term unemployment through local engagement and partnership between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations, public sector agencies and other stakeholders. In 2017, 3,057 Local Community Groups received SICAP supports; 22,441 individuals received Goal 2 educational supports; 6,443 individuals aged 15-24 who were not in education, employment or training received supports; 7,700 low income workers were supported by SICAP. (Action 49 – DRCD)
10. 500 additional Rural Social Scheme places were announced in January 2017. As part of Budget 2018, an additional 250 places have been allocated to the RSS, bringing the overall allocation up to 3,350. (Action 50 – DEASP)
11. The Department of Agriculture and Food's Social Farming Initiatives under the Rural Innovation and Development Fund provided funding of €367,000 to three projects in 2017. The first project contract was awarded to the Leitrim Integrated Development Company for the continuation of a national Social Farming Model of Best Practice Project, with funding of €121,000. The second project was awarded to South Kerry Development Partnership with funding of €123,000 for the provision of a Social Farming Project. The third successful award was for Down Syndrome Ireland (Cork Branch) for funding of €123,000. In addition, DAFM extended the contract for one year, with associated funding of €350,000, to the Leitrim Development Company for the continuation of its Social Farming Network. Total DAFM funding to social farming in 2017 therefore amounted to €717,000. (Action 51 – DAFM)
12. The Minister for Rural and Community Development launched a new iteration of the Seniors Alert scheme, effective from the 1 November 2017, with funding of €2.3 million. The scheme has been universally welcomed and demand has increased substantially - in November alone over 2,650 applications under the scheme were received. The Minister has made an additional €400,000

available in 2017 to meet this extra demand, bringing total investment in 2017 to €2.683 million. (Action 61 – DRCD)

- 13.** A total of €60m was allocated to over 1,800 sports capital projects in November and December 2017. 1,726 local applications were allocated a total of €55,831,000 of funding in November. Of these, 1,518 (88%) were based outside Dublin and were allocated a total of €43,067,037. 81 non-local (national and regional) applications were allocated a total of €4,000,000 of funding in December. Of these 49 (60%) were based outside Dublin and were allocated a total of €2,895,500. Overall, a total of 1,567 allocations totalling €45,962,037 were made outside Dublin under the 2017 Sports Capital Programme. (Action 65 – DTTAS)

Pillar 2 - Supporting Enterprise and Employment

The focus of this Pillar is on supporting enterprise to start-up and grow, and supporting job seekers in rural areas to access jobs. Increasing employment opportunities for people across all regions of the country is a key objective for the Government. Supporting the growth of enterprises at regional level – whether start-ups, scaling companies or FDI companies – will bring increased job opportunities for people who live in rural areas, and will increase economic activity in rural areas. Some of the key achievements to date under this Pillar are set out below.

1. Progress under the Government's Regional Action Plan for Jobs is good and employment continues to grow strongly throughout the regions. Employment outside the Dublin region increased by 56,200 in 2017, representing 84% of the overall increase in employment nationally. In 2017, 65% of new jobs created by Enterprise Ireland supported companies, and over half of those created by IDA supported companies, were outside Dublin. (Action 68 – DBEI)
2. As part of the IDA's €150m property investment programme, following the securing of tenants for new property locations in Waterford and Athlone, the buildings in Sligo, Castlebar and Tralee were completed in 2017. The Sligo Advance Technology Building is now under lease and Tralee and Castlebar are included in IDA's Marketing programme. The next construction phase includes Galway, Dundalk and Limerick which are all due to commence in 2018 along with the remaining buildings in the programme, Carlow, Athlone and Waterford. (Action 71 - IDA)
3. 630 new full-time jobs were created in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in 2017. This culminated in a net increase of 155 jobs on the previous year, which means that there were 7,503 full-time and 606 part-time jobs in companies in receipt of support from Údarás at year end. (Action 72 – DBEI)
4. The Gateway Hub, Shannon Commercial Properties' new co-working and service office facility, formally opened in November 2017. The facility has been well received in the region and has significant demand for its serviced office facility. Companies that are initially in occupation include Parc Aviation and Edwards Lifesciences. Bank of Ireland have proposed a strategic partnership to promote co-working in the location. In addition, Shannon Group's International Aviation Services Centre (IASC) in partnership with DCU Ryan Academy for Entrepreneurs, Boeing, Datalex and Enterprise Ireland launched 'Propeller Shannon' an aviation/aerospace start-up accelerator programme. This will drive the development of innovative Irish and international start-up companies in the aviation sector, providing them with the opportunity to tap into the unique aerospace ecosystem that has seen almost 60 companies employ over 2,600 people in Shannon Free Zone, reaffirming its position as the largest Aviation/Aerospace cluster in Ireland. (Action 82 - Shannon Group)

5. Significant progress has been made in relation to the following Digital Hubs (Action 85 - Údarás na Gaeltachta):
- County Donegal: Áislann Ghaoth Dobhair - The Digital Hub in Áislann Ghaoth Dobhair was opened to the public in June 2017. The hub can accommodate 40 people and currently employs 20 people.
 - County Kerry: Mol Tech – Daingean Uí Chúis - This digital hub opened to the public on 28 April 2017.
 - Co. Mayo: Digital Unit, Béal an Mhuirthead - This digital hub was officially opened in September 2017.
 - Co. Galway: Digital Unit, An Spidéal - Capital provision is being set aside by Údarás na Gaeltachta to adapt a former factory in An Spidéal as the digital hub and Enterprise Development Centre to serve the Connemara Coast. Planning application has been lodged with Galway County Council in respect of this unit.
 - Co. Galway: Digital Hub in Carna and An Cheathrú Rua - capital funding has been approved by the Board to develop a digital hub in both Carna and An Cheathrú Rua.
6. The ACORNS programme, sponsored by DAFM, addresses the skills, enterprise and capability gaps of rural start-up female entrepreneurs. It provides participants with the knowledge, support and networking opportunities to meet and even exceed their business goals. The third year of ACORNS was announced in August 2017. There was a strong demand, with 131 applications for 56 places. 134 female entrepreneurs from rural Ireland are currently being actively supported through ACORNS. Progress made by participants on the 2016 programme demonstrates the benefit of ACORNS. Nine business began trading for the first time, there was a 21% increase in turnover among the 47 trading businesses during the six-month cycle of the programme and eight participants made export sales, including three that were first time exporters. (Action 94 – DAFM)
7. The Agriculture Cashflow Support Loan Scheme was developed by DAFM in co-operation with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI), and made €150 million available to farmers throughout Ireland at low-cost interest rates of 2.95%. The Scheme provided farmers with a low-cost, flexible source of working capital, allowing them to pay down more expensive forms of short-term debt, ensuring the ongoing financial sustainability of viable farming enterprises. The Scheme was launched on 31 January 2017 and by the beginning of March, all of the participating banks had reported that their funds were committed. (Action 110 – DAFM)
8. The Brexit Loan Scheme was formally announced in Budget 2018. Based on the DAFM Agriculture Cashflow Support Loan Scheme model, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine launched the €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme in March. In October's budget, €14 million was secured by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, together with €9 million by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, for the Brexit Loan Scheme. The €300 million loan scheme is available to eligible SMEs and small mid-caps that have been negatively affected by Brexit. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's share of funding ensures that at least 40% of the fund will be available to food businesses. The Scheme will be open to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees, and has the potential to benefit over 5,000 companies. (Action 110 – DAFM)

9. SFI made four Investigators Programme awards in 2017 in the agriculture sector, with a total value of €4.9 million. These four awards focus on: dairy cattle breeding; protecting crops against diseases and pests; using ultraviolet LEDs to improve plant quality; and reducing emissions from fertiliser production. (Action 126 – SFI)
10. Teagasc ConnectEd is a new and exciting initiative which has been designed to provide businesses and professionals working with the agri-food sector structured access to Teagasc research, education, knowledge resources and online tools. The Teagasc ConnectEd programme established a credible client base of almost 500 users in the first full year and is expanding its client base and putting additional supports for the programme in place. During Q1 2018, 1,103 training places were provided to industry professionals through the ConnectEd Programme. (Action 130 – Teagasc)
11. In October 2017, the Food Wise High Level Implementation Committee (HLIC) agreed that research needed to be carried out on addressing farm labour shortages for the dairy sector which arose from the Food Wise 2025 Workshop on Skills Shortages in the agri food sector that was held in April 2017. The Dairy Labour Industry Stakeholder Group Action Plan will be available in Q2 2018. (Action 131 – Teagasc)
12. Expand Your Horizons meetings were completed in 28 locations around the country in 2017 in conjunction with the National Rural Network. The central focus of the meetings was the provision of information for rural dwellers who wish to explore new possibilities for improved economic and social development for their own lives and for the betterment of their community. (Action 132 – Teagasc)
13. The Opt-In pilot (a website aimed at helping rural dwellers find the means and skills necessary to increase their income-generating options) is now fully operational in Limerick and Tipperary. Preparations are now underway for a national rollout in Q2 of 2018. (Action 133 – DAFM, Teagasc)
14. The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2015–2017 ran to 31 December 2017. Between 2015 and 2017 with the assistance of SICAP: 110,000 people were supported on a 1:1 basis; 5,030 local community groups received assistance; 9,720 gained a higher qualification; 5,801 people got jobs; 15,923 people set up a new business, which created 1,695 full-time jobs; and 38,352 people took part in life-long learning courses. Over 29% of these recipients lived in disadvantaged areas and 40% of them came from a jobless household. In April 2018 SICAP 2018-2022 was launched by the Department of Rural and Community Development, which will provide €190 million over the five year period. (Action 137 – DRCD)

Pillar 3 - Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential

Tourism is a key driver of economic development in rural Ireland and this Pillar of the Action Plan aims to maximise the potential of the sector for the benefit of rural communities. In 2015, 85% of visitors to Ireland visited at least one region outside Dublin. With the revenue this generates in the regions, tourism has a significant role to play in supporting sustainable jobs and growth in rural areas and will be supported through targeted marketing initiatives and co-ordinated approaches at national and local level. There is also potential to develop and promote Activity Tourism and capitalise on our rich built and natural heritage. Some of the key developments under this Pillar of the Action Plan are set out below.

1. As part of the response to Brexit in 2018, there will be a focus placed on addressing regionality and seasonality issues in rural Tourism to help counteract the decline experienced from the Great Britain market in 2017. While final figures for tourist visits to rural areas in 2017 are not yet available, CSO figures show overseas visits to the country as a whole (i.e. both urban & rural areas) in 2017, have increased for the seventh consecutive year. (Action 152 – DTTAS)
2. Following on from the successful Local Authority Tourism Conference in March 2017, the Tourism Action Plan for the period 2018-2020 will continue to drive the implementation of the Government's Tourism policies, one of which is to continue to collaborate with and support local authorities all around the country, to grow and develop regional tourism. One practical step towards a collaborative approach is the funding agreement between Fáilte Ireland and Local Authorities to bring greater focus to the development of tourism-focused festivals and participative events. (Action 155 – DTTAS)
3. All infrastructure work on the development of the 1st stage of the Royal Canal Blueway has been completed. The Blueway will provide 22km of paddling centred around Mullingar, 140 Km of walking from McNead's Bridge in Westmeath to Richmond Harbour in Longford, along with 60km of cycling and will be officially launched in the summer of 2018. (Action 168 – DCHG)
4. Carlow County Council, County Carlow Sports Partnership, Carlow Tourism, Carlow Regional Youth Services, in conjunction with Waterways Ireland, piloted the hugely successful Carlow Town Park Activity Hub in August 2017. The hub offers bicycle hire, kayak and stand up paddling, rowing and dragon boat taster sessions as well as eco trails and photo orienteering. (Action 169 – Waterways Ireland)
5. In December 2017, the Department announced the expansion of Ballycrocy National Park with the addition of the Wild Nephin area, expanding the total size of the National Park to over 15,000 hectares. (Action 186 – DCHG)
6. The Heritage Council approved funding for 198 projects during the year under the Community Heritage Grants scheme in 2017. Project organisers also undertook activities during Heritage Week that engaged the public contributing to the profile and access to our built, natural & cultural nationwide. (Action 194 – Heritage Council)

7. Under the 2017 Outdoor Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme more than 240 projects were approved for funding to the value of €13.6 million. This funding supports the development and maintenance of greenways, blueways and walking trails in rural areas. Investment in recreational infrastructure of this nature supports increased tourism and consequent job opportunities for rural communities. (Action 170 – DRCD)

8. Fáilte Ireland has launched 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' as its latest new tourism brand - designed to boost tourism and drive visitor growth across the Midlands region. An initial €2m has been allocated to start the development stage of the brand, with further funding to follow. This first round of investment will help to develop visitor experiences, support industry development and develop marketing campaigns for the region. (Action 153 - Fáilte Ireland)

Pillar 4 - Fostering Culture and Creativity in Rural Communities

Many rural communities all over Ireland have a thriving arts scene and it is important that facilities and assets in rural areas are enhanced to strengthen the social fabric of rural life. This Pillar aims to increase access to the arts and to develop culture and creativity in rural communities. The Irish language is also a vital part of our culture and heritage and is a key resource in Gaeltacht communities. Some key developments under this Pillar of the Action Plan are set out below.

1. The Arts and Culture Capital scheme 2016-2018 is focused on the refurbishment and enhancement of the existing stock of arts and culture facilities including theatres throughout the country. This scheme is running from 2016 to 2018 over three complementary grant streams. Grant funding of between €20,000 and €2m is being offered to projects on a matched funding basis with a maximum of between 50% - 70% provided by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Stream 3 in particular focuses on community and voluntary groups, many of which received grants under the scheme. To date, funding of €10.214m has been allocated to 134 projects under the 3 streams. (Action 203 – DCHG)
2. All the local authorities have now appointed Creative Ireland co-ordinators and have established Culture Teams. €1m was allocated to the local authorities to enable them to develop their Culture and Creativity Plans and an associated programme of events and initiatives in each county. This was bolstered by an additional €1m from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government ensuring that each local authority received approximately €64,000 each to implement their Culture and Creativity Plans for 2017. In total, the plans listed over 750 local cultural projects, events and initiatives taking place nationwide in 2017, of which 250 were directly funded by the Creative Ireland Programme. (Action 210 – DCHG and Action 211 – LAs)
3. Creative Youth – A Plan to Enable the Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person was launched on 7 December 2017. Creative Youth sets out 16 measures to deliver on one of the key goals of the Creative Ireland Programme, to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022. A number of initiatives have been launched and successful schools and participants are now being selected for participation in these initiatives. (Action 217 – DCHG and DES)
4. Techspace assists youth organisations and schools to help young people create digital and technological content. Development work has commenced to roll out TechSpace as Gaeilge to the Munster region. Two day Digital Media training course was held in Tralee and in Cork in September with a total of 16 schools/youth organisations in attendance. The annual Creative Tech Fest Event took place in Google Foundry in November 2017 with a strong presence from the Clár TechSpace of 60 young people from schools in the Connacht and Munster region. (Action 225 – DCHG)

Pillar 5 - Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity

The objective of this Pillar is to improve the connectivity of rural communities through improved broadband connection, improved transport links and by reducing the risk of flooding in vulnerable areas. Some key developments under this Pillar of the Action Plan are set out below.

1. In line with Action 1 of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce report, an industry/stakeholder forum was held in October 2017. The primary goal of the Forum was to bring together key stakeholders under one roof to engage in open dialogue, to discuss issues impacting on broadband and mobile phone coverage, and to identify solutions to those challenges in order to enhance and improve services. An Implementation Review, reporting on the progress of measures for delivery in 2017, was published on 21 February 2018. The Review also provided details of the work programme for 2018, encompassing 34 measures, which will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Mobile Phone and Broadband Implementation Group. (Action 233 – DRCD and DCCAE)
2. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) is progressing planning and preparatory advance works for the major national road improvement projects included in the Building on Recovery Capital Plan. Construction started in 2017 on the first of these major schemes, the Naas Bypass Widening Scheme. The rolling programme of improvements on the N56 was also continued in 2017. Work also commenced on the construction of the Sallins Bypass in 2017. Significant additional funding was secured for the roads sector under the Capital Plan Review concluded in 2017. Overall the capital envelope available for roads has increased to €4.2 billion for the period 2018-2021. (Action 248 – DTTAS)
3. The Authority sought the views of the 17 Local Link groups in Q1 2018 in terms of the various ways the Rural Transport Programme is currently addressing unmet transport needs in rural areas during evening and night-time hours. Additionally, proposals were sought for addressing these needs in rural areas going forward. Based on the feedback and with an initial budget of €200,000, the Authority subsequently issued a funding call for applications from all Local Link groups to deliver a range of pilot evening and night time services. 12 of the 17 Local Link groups submitted funding applications and it is hoped to advise funding decisions shortly. (Action 252 – NTA)
4. The Capital Plan Review has resulted in significant additional funding for regional roads in the period to 2021. As well as facilitating repair and safety related works programmes and traffic route lighting energy reduction measures, this funding will allow the Listowel and Ardee Bypasses to be added to TII's construction programme and the following additional regional road projects, subject to necessary consents, to be commenced: Sligo Western Distributor Road; Tralee Northern Relief Road; Realignment of the R498 road at Latteragh; Coonagh to Knockalisheen Phase 2; and the Killaloe Bypass/R494 upgrade. (Action 258 – DTTAS)

5. In September 2017 €10m in funding was provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development for a Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) to support improvement works on private and non-public roads. An additional €7.4m for LIS roads was announced at the end of November and was allocated to Local Authorities. In February 2018, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring T.D., announced an allocation of €10 million for LIS roads in 2018. (Action 259 – DRCD)
6. By year end, a total of €5.5m was allocated in 2017 in capital (€1.9m) and operational (€3.6m) grants to the regional airports in Donegal, Kerry and Ireland West Airport Knock towards safety and security related projects and activities. As part of 2017's Review of the Capital Plan, an additional €17m was secured in capital funding for the Regional Airports Programme and these additional resources will be deployed in the period 2019 to 2021. (Action 260 – DTTAS)
7. Cork Airport passenger numbers for 2017 were up 3.5% to 2.3 million compared to 2016, following on from growth of 8% in 2016. Cork airport has secured two new services, Aer France to Paris from Summer 2018 and Aer Lingus year round to Lisbon from October. In addition, Iberia Express will expand its Madrid route by 5% and Volotea plans to double its Cork to Verona route. Likewise, Aer Lingus Regional intends to increase frequency across key UK routes and expand the capacity of its Newquay route for Summer 2018. These new services will help to attract more tourist and business traffic between the south of Ireland and the countries concerned. (Action 261 – daa)
8. The following routes will operate from Shannon Airport (Action 262 – Shannon Group):
 - Air Canada will launch a new four times weekly service from Toronto to Shannon returning after an absence of 10 years.
 - Norwegian Airlines will suspend services to Providence Rhode Island for winter 18/19 season and increase services to New York Stewart and return on Providence Rhode Island in summer season 2019.
 - American Airlines commenced services to Philadelphia a month earlier in April.
 - Lufthansa will reinstate its weekly Frankfurt service from Shannon with a new twice weekly route to Barcelona-Reus also launched by Ryanair.
 - Ryanair will also launch new services in May from Bristol twice weekly and Liverpool three times weekly and increase services on Manchester from 4 per week to 6 weekly flights.

Again these services will help to support more business and tourist traffic between the wider region and the countries in question.

9. A 10-year €1 billion programme of investment in flood relief measures was announced by the Minister of State for the Office of Public Works, Kevin Boxer Moran, on 3rd May 2018. (Action 265 – OPW)
10. On April 11th 2017, the Government agreed the administrative arrangements for a Voluntary Homeowners Relocation Scheme for those primary residential properties that flooded between December 4th 2015 and January 13th 2016. As at April 2018, in the region of 30 homeowners had been invited to make an application for Stage 2 of the process which involves a site inspection of their home. The OPW is currently working with each of the Local Authorities to consider

approximately 70 homes that have been flooded during the event and which may benefit from a known or possible engineering solution. (Action 266 – OPW)

11. The review of the Minor Flood Mitigation Works & Coastal Protection Schemes has been completed. It examined all the existing criteria with a view to strengthening and improving the operability of the Scheme. As a result, the upper financial threshold has now been increased significantly from €500,000 to €750,000 per project and for the first time, farm yards/buildings will be included as commercial premises in all categories. Other improvements include lowering the benefit-to-costs ratio for smaller projects, improved benefit allowances for different property types, and updated methodology for diverted journeys due to flooding. (Action 271 – OPW)
12. An Interagency Taskforce to develop an action plan to address the significant decline in the population of Gaeltacht Uíbh Ráthaigh (Inveragh, Co. Kerry) and to revitalise the area was established and officially launched in September 2017. Meetings and public consultations have taken place and are ongoing. A survey of those who have left the South Kerry area in the last 10 years has been commissioned by the Taskforce. The Taskforce is preparing an action plan for the area which is due to be completed in Q2 2018. (Action 277 – Údarás na Gaeltachta)

Delayed Actions

The sixteen actions which were not completed on schedule in 2017 were:

Action 2	Develop and pilot an initiative to encourage increased residential occupancy in town and village centres.	DRCD
Action 7	Increase delivery of small housing schemes in towns and villages as an alternative to one-off housing.	DHPLG
Action 9	Consider the relative requirements and identify appropriate targets for an additional Rural Resettlement Initiative as a measure to facilitate wider re-utilisation of existing housing stock.	DHPLG
Action 36	Expand provision of affordable childcare through the implementation of the Affordable Childcare Scheme, which will assist in delivering greater accessibility to childcare services across the country.	DCYA
Action 80	Introduce a Marine Development and Investment Strategy for the Gaeltacht in line with Harnessing our Ocean Wealth.	Údarás na Gaeltachta
Action 97	Conduct a review of the REDZ initiative to measure its impact on rural communities, and to support the development of future calls for projects under the scheme.	DRCD
Action 113	Finalise the Draft Bioenergy Plan, which will capture the potential of the bioenergy sector and help generate employment opportunities.	DCCAE
Action 167	Develop a strategy to underpin the development, funding and promotion of Greenways to support activity tourism in rural areas.	DTTAS
Action 176	Agree and implement a scheme to indemnify private land owners with regard to recreational users of their lands.	DRCD
Action 188	Develop and publish an updated National Heritage Plan to protect, manage and promote our built and natural heritage.	DCHG
Action 221	Develop an integrated Arts Strategy for the Gaeltacht and Irish Language Arts in conjunction with Foras na Gaeilge, Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Arts Council.	DCHG
Action 238	Remove development contribution charges for the placement of telecommunications infrastructure across all Local Authorities as a matter of priority.	LAs
Action 240	Explore whether take up of the Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) can be improved, including through a review of the pricing and other arrangements relating to connections.	DCCAE
Action 244	Develop a licensing scheme allowing for the use of mobile phone repeaters to improve the quality of indoor mobile coverage, particularly in rural areas.	COMREG
Action 251	Conduct a full review of public transport policy, including the rural transport dimension, to ensure that it meets the needs of rural communities.	DTTAS
Action 257	Conduct a review of the small public service vehicle driver licensing framework to ensure, amongst other things, the availability of taxi/hackney services including in rural areas.	NTA



**Realising our
Rural Potential**
Action Plan for Rural Development

Detailed Progress Report

July – December 2017

Second Progress Report Progress up to end December 2017

Pillar 1: Supporting Sustainable Communities

No:	1
Action:	Support over 600 towns and villages through an enhanced Town and Village Renewal Scheme, with funding of up to €12 million per annum, to support their revitalisation, boost their potential to support increased economic activity and improve the living and working environment of rural dwellers.
Lead:	DRCD, LAs
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update: Following on from the successful launch of the first Town and Village Renewal Scheme in 2016, an enhanced Town and Village Renewal Scheme was launched in April 2017. The scheme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and is delivered through the Local Authorities. On 4 th October 2017 the Minister for Rural and Community Development announced that 281 projects in rural towns and villages across Ireland, would receive funding of €21.6 million under the 2017 scheme. A further funding round of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme will be launched in 2018.	

No:	2
Action:	Develop and pilot an initiative to encourage increased residential occupancy in town and village centres.
Lead:	DRCD, LAs, DHPLG
Timeline	Q3 2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update: Following initial discussions at official level, a Steering Group has been established to oversee the design and delivery of the pilot scheme to encourage increased residential occupancy of vacant premises in rural towns/villages. The Steering Group is chaired by the Department of Rural and Community Development, and includes a number of other key Government Departments, including the Departments of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Public Expenditure and Reform and Finance. Significant progress in designing the pilot model is expected in the first half of 2018.	

No:	3
Action:	Complementing the Town & Village Renewal Scheme, roll out the National Town Centre Health Check Programme in selected rural towns across Ireland to maximise the contribution of important facilities and assets within rural towns, in particular heritage resources.
Lead:	DCHG, Heritage Council, RGDATA
Timeline	Q2 2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>The National Pilot Town Centre Health Check (TCHC) Training Programme, the first step in the overall Programme, was launched at a workshop held in Naas in September 2016. The aim of the Training Programme is to raise awareness and appreciation of the role that historic town centres play, and their impact on the socio-economic, environmental and cultural development of the towns in question. Pilot TCHCs are now underway in seven towns (Ballina, Cashel, Ennis, Dundalk, Monaghan, Naas, Tralee) as part of the 'pilot' TCHC training programme 2016/2017 and associated Training Workshops were delivered in Dublin Castle in March 2017 to 130 attendees.</p> <p>The collaborative Town Centre Health Check Training Programme (4 pillars comprising Local Authorities, Chambers of Commerce, third-level education organisations/institutes and the Heritage Council), and which is linked to the statutory planning system, made significant progress during 2017. For example, the Tralee TCHC Summary Report 2017 was launched in August 2017.</p> <p>Similar TCHC Summary Reports for Ballina, Cashel, Ennis and Monaghan are being finalised. Dundalk TCHC Summary Report will be published in Q2 2018. Towns that have been part of the 'pilot' TCHC training programme 2016/2017 will prepare Collaborative Public Realm Plans during 2018 using the data and information gathered during the TCHC surveys.</p> <p>The aims, objectives and benefits of the TCHC Training Programme will be included in the Irish Planning Institute's National Conference which is taking place in Tralee in April 2018 and an overview of the programme will also be included in the literature for the Irish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2018. Further details of this initiative are available at www.heritagecouncil.ie</p>	

No:	4
Action:	Finalise and implement the recommendations of the Framework for Town Centre Revival to assist with the regeneration of rural towns.
Lead:	DBEI
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>The Framework for Town Centre Renewal was launched in April 2017 as a key deliverable for the Retail Consultation Forum. The Framework sets out the main characteristics of a successful town centre and identifies existing supports and best practice examples from around the country. Most</p>	

importantly, the Framework includes an Action Plan for Town Centre Renewal which is intended to be a blueprint for towns and villages, guiding them through the three stages of town centre renewal: stakeholder engagement, carrying out a town centre health check and preparing a Town Centre Plan.

The implementation of a number of the recommendations in the Framework is underway by the Retail Consultation Forum and key stakeholders. A particular focus of this work is raising awareness of the Framework within the public sector and business & community sectors and encouragement for the use of the associated Action Plan by towns and villages around the country. Town Centre Renewal is a key focus for the Retail Consultation Forum and work will continue during 2018 to drive implementation of the recommendations in the Framework document.

No: 5

Action: As part of Rebuilding Ireland, the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, support all local authorities to respond to the needs of their communities and deliver 50,000 new social homes which should also stimulate construction and other economic activities on a local and regional basis.

Lead: DHPLG

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

In December 2017, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government published a comprehensive status list of social housing schemes that are advancing nationwide. The report allows progress to be seen by county.

The Q3 2017 report shows a pipeline of over 12,000 new social houses being built over the coming years across over 700 separate projects. The list includes those projects already completed in 2016 and to the end of Q3 2017, and those being advanced, ranging from those undergoing planning and design work, to those on site.

This was the fourth Social Housing Construction Status Report published and since the last Report, which was to the end of Q2 2017, the number of new, individual social homes being developed and represented on the report has risen from over 11,000 to over 12,300 and will continue to increase.

No: 6

Action: Review planning legislation to allow the change of use of vacant commercial properties in cities, towns and villages, including vacant or under-utilised areas over ground floor premises, into residential units without having to go through the planning process.

Lead: DHPLG

Timeline 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

Draft Planning and Development (Amendment) No. 2 Regulations 2018 which propose an exemption from the requirement the change of use, and any related works, relating to the conversion of vacant commercial premises for residential use, subject to certain limitations, were laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas on 13 December 2017 and referred by both Houses to the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Housing, Planning and Local Government for its consideration in early 2018. The Minister signed the regulations on 8 February 2018, to bring them into operation with effect from that date.

No: 7**Action:** Increase delivery of small housing schemes in towns and villages as an alternative to one-off housing**Lead:** DHPLG**Timeline** 2017**Status:** Delayed**Progress Update:**

While this action is behind the schedule originally envisaged, the National Planning Framework, published with the National Development Plan under Project Ireland 2040, sets out a National Policy Objective (No 18(b)) in Chapter 5 on rural development, which states:

“Develop a programme for ‘new homes in small towns and villages’ with local authorities, public infrastructure agencies such as Irish Water and local communities to provide serviced sites with appropriate infrastructure to attract people to build their own homes and live in small towns and villages”.

No: 8**Action:** Based on an examination by the Working Group on Urban Renewal, review the Derelict Sites Legislation with a view to assisting in the revitalisation of towns and villages.**Lead:** DHPLG**Timeline** Q4 2017**Status:** In Progress**Progress Update:**

As a first step in the review of the Derelict Sites Legislation, consideration is being given - in the context of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016 which is presently being

progressed through the Houses of the Oireachtas - to increasing the rate of derelict site levy in line with the proposed increase in the vacant site levy to take effect from January 2020, as announced in Budget 2018.

No:	9
Action:	Consider the relative requirements and identify appropriate targets for an additional Rural Resettlement Initiative as a measure to facilitate wider re-utilisation of existing housing stock.
Lead:	DHPLG
Timeline	2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update:	
The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development: Realising our Potential has a clear objective of working across Government Departments to deliver a co-ordinated group of strategies to ensure the success of vibrant rural communities across Ireland.	
In relation to social housing, it is possible already for people to move between local authorities under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Scheme. DHPLG is also currently examining other possible additional ways to facilitate households, who are qualified for social housing, and who may wish to relocate to rural areas.	

No:	10
Action:	Launch a new phase of the CLÁR Programme in 2017, with funding of €5m, to support small infrastructural projects in rural areas experiencing depopulation.
Lead:	DRCD, LAs, Údarás na Gaeltachta
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
The 2017 CLÁR programme was launched in March 2017. The programme provides funding for small scale infrastructural projects in disadvantaged rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. Funding for the 2017 CLÁR programme was available under four separate Measures:	
Measure 1:	Support for School and Community Safety Measures
Measure 2:	Play Areas
Measure 3:	Targeted Community Infrastructure
Measure 4:	First Responder Supports

Over 500 applications were received across the four Measures, to the value of €15 million. 231 successful projects were approved, with a total of just under €7 million allocated across the four Measures.

Over 900 projects have been approved for funding under CLÁR since the programme was re-launched in the second half of 2016.

A further round of the CLÁR programme was launched in March 2018.

No:	11
Action:	Expand the Tidy Towns Competition with a view to increasing the level of support available to applicants and the addition of a number of new categories and/or elements to the competition.
Lead:	DRCD
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress

Progress Update:

This Action is primarily focused on the 60th Anniversary of the competition in 2018.

In December 2017, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring T.D., announced funding totalling €1.4 million was being made available for Tidy Town Committees throughout the country to assist with their work on a once-off basis to mark the 60th anniversary of the competition.

Consultation meetings with Tidy Towns Committees seeking views on enhancing the competition have been completed. Regional Steering Groups met in January 2018 to review the feedback from the consultation meetings and agreed changes to be incorporated into the competition to in advance of the launch of the 2018 competition at the end of March 2018.

No:	12
Action:	Provide support for An Taisce National Spring Clean to heighten awareness of litter and waste issues and recycle and reuse where possible.
Lead:	DCCAE
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress

Progress Update:

The National Spring Clean was undertaken nationwide in April 2017, organised by An Taisce and supported by DCCAE. The Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten, T.D., increased funding for the initiative from €168,000 in 2016 to €225,000 for 2017.

Registration for the 2018 Spring Clean, which marks the 20th anniversary of the initiative, is currently open.

No:	13
Action:	Support a built heritage investment scheme of an estimated €6m between 2017 and 2019, which supports employment of skilled and experienced craft workers, tradespeople and conservation professionals to invest in and assist in the conservation and re-use of heritage.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2019)
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) 2017 was launched in January 2017. The scheme was administered through the 31 Local Authorities.	
The total funding distributed under the 2017 scheme was €3,281,210. A total of 412 projects were funded nationwide and over €6.5 million of private funding was leveraged, with the total cost of all projects amounting to over €10 million. It is estimated that in excess of 25,000 days of employment were created.	
Capital funding of €2m in 2018 for 370 heritage projects across the country were announced under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme in April 2018.	

No:	14
Action:	Implement the GLAS Traditional Farm buildings grant scheme to help in the conservation of traditional farm outbuildings as a support to rural communities.
Lead:	Heritage Council
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2019)
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Up to the end of 2017, the Heritage Council, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, oversaw the completion and certification of 63 projects, comprising 81 buildings and four wall projects, with total grant aid of €815,796. This funding supports the conservation of traditional farm buildings and by doing so are supporting employment in rural communities through the engagement of traditional skills people, architectural professionals and wildlife surveyors.	

No:	15
Action:	Make use of the new RAPID programme to provide small scale seed financing for capital and small scale infrastructure projects of a regenerative nature in disadvantaged areas, including provincial towns.

Lead: DRCD
Timeline 2017

Status: **Completed**

Progress Update:

The recast RAPID programme, which launched in November 2017, had a total allocation of €2 million for 2017. The Scheme is being administered on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development by Local Community Development Committees under the remit of the Local Authorities. The closing date for applications was 24th November 2017. Each of the 31 Local Authorities was provided with an equal allocation of €64,500 under this programme.

No: 16

Action: Implement the Health & Safety Authority's Farm Safety Action Plan 2016–2018, with a focus on high risk activities such as tractor and machinery use, livestock handling, and forestry and timber work on farms, as well as the development of new ways of improving farmer skill levels, particularly around risk identification and management. Measures will include the promotion of farm safety through targeted awareness campaigns, farm inspections and training courses.

Lead: HSA

Timeline 2017-2018

Status: **In Progress**

Progress Update December 2017

The actions below represent part of the overall engagement by the members of the Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee of the Board of the Health and Safety Authority taken to meet the goals set out in its 2016 – 2018 Farm Safety Action Plan.

Focus on high risk activities:

1. Tractor and machinery use

- Driver visibility identified as a major area of concern following FSPAC Working Group review of Tractor & Machinery accidents (particularly fatal accidents) and group now investigating modern technology solutions.
- Teagasc have purchased a number of 360 degree cameras and in conjunction with UCD are carrying out detailed research in this area to establish accident prevention strategies.
- Farm Relief Services (FRS) continue to deliver Tractor Skills training courses for teenagers through schools, supported by FBD Insurance, as well as specific courses for contractors funded by Macra na Feirme Young Farmer Skillnet (<http://www.skillnets.ie/network/macra-na-feirme-young-farmer-skillnet>).
- Demonstrations of Tractor, Machinery and Quad Bike risks were carried out at various events including Teagasc Dairy Event Moorepark, Head to Toe Mental Health event, Gorey, the Tullamore Show, National Ploughing Championships, Tullamore, IOSH Safety Conference and Farm Walk, Kildalton College and various other farm walks.
- Safety stand and safety publications were provided at various Teagasc Forestry Events.

2. Livestock handling

- A video clip demonstrating an emergency response to a livestock attack included in the Farm TV series at marts.
- Livestock safety information will now be included in livestock tagging supplies.
- Livestock handling facilities and live demo of separating calf from cow carried out at the Tullamore Show.
- New video for safety of farmers and the general public while at marts nearing completion.
- Livestock Safety & Directors/Managers responsibilities presentation given at ICOS mart manager's conference.

3. Forestry and timber work on farms

- Safety stand and safety publications were provided at a number of Teagasc Forestry Events.
- Chainsaw safety demos done at various events including IOSH Clonakilty Open Day.

Development of new ways of:

1. Improving farmer skill levels

- *Knowledge Transfer* (KT) facilitators trained by HSA/Teagasc holding farm safety meeting within KT Scheme and developing farm safety plans with individual farmer clients.
- Demand for copies of revised Code of Practice and uptake of half-day training on the Farm Safety Code of Practice hugely increased due to TAMS II Grant Scheme requirement.

2. Risk identification and management

- Facilitator/Inspector led KT Meetings improving farmer identification of risks and action.
- Working at Heights Safety Leaflet published and distributed at various events to prevent fatalities from falls from height.
- The 4 page draft leaflet on "*Slatt Inspection*" has been developed and is being reviewed before publishing.
- Guidance for selection and management of contractors is being developed and should be published early in 2018.
- The HSA sponsored the safety category of the Irish Independent & Zurich Insurance "Safety Farmer of the Year Award" for the 3rd year running.

The promotion of farm safety through:

1. Targeted awareness campaigns

- The IFA supported by the HSA led on the "UK & Ireland Farm Safety Week" in July 2017 which had five themes, for five days in five jurisdictions.
- The HSA ran a radio/press ad media campaign on farm safety running before and during the National Ploughing Championships.
- Farm Safety adverts and videos were shown on the giant screen at the Tullamore Show and at the National Ploughing Championships.
- A minute's silence for those lost to farm accidents was observed at all marts across the country in October 2017 followed by a safety message to all farmers present. This was an FBD/ICOS/HSA/EMBRACE Farm initiative and leaflets were also distributed.
- A targeted farm safety awareness campaign was held for the month of November on "Working at Height/Falling Objects". This generated considerable media attention with many radio interviews.

2. Farm inspections

Over 1,750 farm safety visits have been carried out to date in 2017. Enforcement action was taken on approximately 12% of farms, with written advice being given in a further 40%. In addition HSA Inspectors participated in over 80 Farm Safety walks and Knowledge Transfer Group meetings on farms and engaged with an additional 1,000 farmers.

3. Training courses

Activity in this area included:

- *Knowledge Transfer* facilitators trained by HSA/Teagasc holding farm safety meeting within KT Scheme and developing farm safety plans with individual farmer clients.
- Demand for copies of revised Code of Practice and uptake of half-day training on the Farm Safety Code of Practice hugely increased due to TAMS II Grant Scheme requirement.

No:	17
Action:	Prioritise farm safety through knowledge transfer and inclusion of farm safety measures through knowledge transfer schemes.
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Farm safety in Knowledge Transfer groups is ongoing, with farmers having completed their Farm Improvement Plans, included Health and Safety.	
The Farm Safety element in the green cert (level 6) has now been commenced.	
(See also update under Action 16)	

No:	18
Action:	Provide support for an estimated 700 small-scale environmental projects under the Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund to promote sustainable development at local level.
Lead:	DCCA
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The 2017 Local Agenda 21/Local Environment Partnership Fund Scheme supported over 750 small scale local environmental projects. The 2018 Scheme will open for applications in Q2 2018.	

No:	19
Action:	Provide funding for Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Information Services, as well as national organisations such as Volunteer Ireland, which aims to strengthen those organisations and foster a culture of volunteering in Ireland, including to the benefit of rural communities and community-based organisations.
Lead:	DRCD
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>The voluntary sector is of vital importance to rural Ireland, providing a response to social needs through direct service provision and through wider local and community development. The sector in turn provides opportunities for volunteers to participate and develop skills and helps identify interventions which address the needs of local communities and specific sectors.</p> <p>In 2017, a funding increase of 10% was distributed to the national Volunteer Centre network with an emphasis on strengthening the capacity of lower funded Centres. Volunteer Ireland is now developing its strategic plan for the period 2018-22 and the Department has participated in the consultation phase of the work.</p>	

No:	20
Action:	Oversee and monitor the implementation of actions to support the Post Office Network, arising out of the report of the Post Office Renewal Board and the Post Office Hub Working Group.
Lead:	DCCAE
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>Responsibility for the post office network has now formally transferred from the Minister for Rural and Community Development to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.</p> <p>An Post is in the process of implementing a comprehensive strategic plan which will impact on both its mail and retail businesses including the post office network. The strategic plan was developed having regard to the reports referred to in this action. In November 2017 the Government agreed to make €30m available in State funding to An Post. The funds will be provided by way of a long term loan advanced from the Exchequer. The €30m will be used to support the renewal of the post office network (€15m) and the continued fulfilment of a 5 day per week mails delivery service (€15m).</p> <p>In terms of the post office network, a sustainable, modern and vibrant network for the future, capable of adapting to the changing environment in which it operates, is envisaged. Government has committed to exploring the potential for extra Government business to be channelled through the network. A new pilot initiative called “Digital Assist”, which will seek to use the local post office as a digital gateway for Government business, will also be pursued.</p>	

No:	21
Action:	Continue to support the use of rural post offices for the delivery of payment services such as social welfare payments.
Lead:	DEASP
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection continues to support the use of rural post offices for the delivery of social welfare payments and there are no plans to change this approach.	

No:	22
Action:	Develop a strategy for the growth and development of the credit union sector, which is an important resource in rural Ireland, and ensure that credit unions benefit from regulatory support, in order to respond to the needs of a changing economy.
Lead:	DoF
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>Credit Unions have a key role to play in providing access to credit and other important services in local communities throughout the country. The sector has undergone fundamental change since 2011, managing many complex and challenging issues. Over the same period loan arrears have fallen from 18% to an average of 7.4% and average reserves now stand at 16.8%.</p> <p>Credit unions are very aware of their role as lenders and are developing a wider range of lending initiatives aimed at the diverse needs of their members. By way of example a small group of credit unions have teamed up to market a lending product, Cultivate, to the agri-sector. Lending growth has returned with an increase to €4.4 billion in the year to September 2017 and delivering approximately 34% of all unsecured consumer lending in 2017.</p> <p>The Government has a clear policy to support the strategic growth and development of credit unions delivering the comprehensive recommendations set out in the Commission on Credit Unions Report of 2012 and the Credit Union Advisory Committee (CUAC) report of 2016, both of which involved extensive stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>The CUAC recommendations are provided under seven specific headings: tiered regulation, section 35, consultation and engagement with the Central Bank, governance, restructuring, business model development and additional matters.</p> <p>An Implementation Group was established to oversee and monitor implementation of these recommendations, which will support Credit Unions in developing their individual strategic plans. Two discussion papers were developed by the Group and submitted to the Central Bank in</p>	

November 2017 on (1) Long-term Lending and (2) Consultation and Engagement which the Central Bank has agreed will be part of their work-plan for 2018. The Group is currently drafting a paper on Tiered Regulation. Discussions on business model development have been held and a paper is being finalised. The term of the Group has been extended to end 2018 to allow sufficient time for the current work programme to be completed in full.

In addition revised regulations for credit unions commenced on 1st March 2018 which make changes to the investment and liquidity requirements and allow for greater diversification of investment income, including provision for up to €700 million investment in social housing, via Tier 3 Approved Housing Bodies.

There are other areas where support has been provided including the establishment of the Credit Union Restructuring Board (ReBo) and the availability of €250 million for voluntary restructuring of credit unions facilitated by ReBo which oversaw 82 restructuring projects involving 156 credit unions during its lifetime as part of an overall reduction of credit unions from 406 at September 2011 to 277 now active as at 30th September 2017, with 54 credit unions above €100 million asset size. These newly merged credit unions are now better positioned to harness the efficiencies of their increased scale to prudently develop products and services that their members are looking for now, and into the future. ReBo concluded its restructuring work on 31 March 2017 and is currently being wound down through primary legislation. Restructuring continues, facilitated by the Central Bank, albeit at a reduced rate. There are 32 projects under consideration at present.

No:	23
Action:	Investigate the potential of the German Sparkassen model and the Kiwibank model for the development of local public banks that operate in defined regions.
Lead:	DRCD, DoF, An Post, ILCU
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	<p>A project team, comprised of officials from the Department of Rural and Community Development (formerly based in the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs) and the Department of Finance, was established in January 2017 to evaluate the Sparkassen model of local community banking in an Irish context. Consultation has taken place with a number of stakeholders, including the German Savings Banks Foundation for International Cooperation, Irish Rural Link and the Public Banking Forum of Ireland. A wider public consultation process also took place.</p> <p>A report on the assessment of the public banking model in an Irish context has been completed by the project team and will be published following its consideration by Government.</p>

No:	24
Action:	Increase the number of GPs in rural areas by 2019 through the implementation of the agreement reached with the IMO on rural GP practices, which covers changes in the qualifying criteria for rural support, an increase in the rural practice allowance and an amendment of the special items of service covered.
Lead:	HSE
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	250 GP practice units are in receipt of supports under the Rural Practice Support Framework, which relates to 309 individual GPs benefiting under the new scheme. This is a significant increase in the number of GPs benefitting from rural supports, which stood at 167 prior to the introduction of the new scheme in May 2016.

No:	25
Action:	In line with the Connecting for Life Programme, provide support for local strategies across rural Ireland to address suicide and improve mental wellbeing.
Lead:	HSE
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	The Cross-Sectoral Steering Group, established to implement the Strategy, has held seven meetings so far and is scheduled to meet quarterly in 2018. The Strategy's Implementation Plan (including Milestones up to 2020) was finalised in early 2018.

No:	26
Action:	Consider the treatment of family farms and small businesses in relation to the 'Fair Deal' Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS).
Lead:	DoH
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	Following an examination of the options available and engagement with Farming Organisations, it is considered that extending the 3 year cap to farm/small business assets transferred to family

successors to be the most appropriate course to follow. This will require amendments to the primary legislation underpinning NHSS. Advice has been sought from the Office of the Attorney General in this regard. On receipt of this advice a policy position will be developed.

No:	27
Action:	Continue the rollout of a multi-year programme of investment worth €435m for circa 90 projects in public nursing home facilities and district and community hospitals in rural areas which could provide up to 5,000 construction-related jobs during their delivery.
Lead:	HSE
Timeline	Ongoing up to 2021
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>7 Primary Care Centres became operational in 2017. These were in Blessington, Co. Wicklow, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, Ballyheigue, North Kerry, Celbridge, Co. Kildare, Borrisokane, Co. Tipperary, Carrigaline/Passage West, Co. Cork, and Tuam, Co. Galway.</p> <p>Since January 2018, a further 4 Primary Care Centres have become operational. These are in Boyle, Co. Roscommon, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, Claremorris, Co. Mayo and Kilcock, Co. Kildare.</p> <p>A further 6 of the 18 Primary Care Centres are expected to be completed by Q2 2018 and become operational during 2018 and one further is expected to be completed and operational in Q3 2018.</p>

No:	28
Action:	Deliver 18 new primary care centres in rural Ireland and support the establishment of primary care teams to allow people to avail of a comprehensive range of health and social care services in their local areas, including access to ultrasound services.
Lead:	HSE
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>7 Primary Care Centres have opened to date in 2017 (Q4) – in Blessington, Co Wicklow; Mullingar, Co Westmeath; Ballyheigue, North Kerry; Celbridge, Co Kildare; Borrisokane, Co Tipperary; Carrigaline/Passage West, Co Cork; and Tuam, Co Galway.</p> <p>Construction on an additional five of the 18 primary care centres is expected to be completed in 2017 and these will become operational in 2018. A further six are expected to be completed and operational in 2018.</p>

The 9 Community Healthcare Organisations are also progressing measures from dedicated funding to support the development and enhancement of diagnostic services in the primary care sector.

No: 29

Action: Plan and resource the Primary Care workforce, including GPs, community nursing and allied health professionals, to address the health and social care needs of the population in rural communities, in conjunction with a wider range of network services.

Lead: HSE

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Between the end of 2014 and the end of 2017 the number of primary care therapy grades (HSE only) has increased by 144.3 whole time equivalents:

- Physiotherapists—increase of 35.46 WTEs (end 2014: 527.59 to end 2017: 563.05)
- Occupational Therapists—increase of 25.99 WTEs (end 2014: 490.3 to end 2017: 516.29)
- Speech & Language Therapists—increase of 82.85 WTEs (end 2014: 462.76 to end 2017: 545.61)

Recruitment is nearing completion for 83 additional posts in Speech and Language Therapy provision. Recruitment is nearing completion for 114 assistant psychologist posts and 20 staff grade psychology posts.

Funding was provided under Budget 2018 for the recruitment of additional occupational therapy posts. These will address waiting lists and enable patients to have earlier access to assessment and treatment. It is anticipated that the occupational therapy posts will be in place by end 2018.

To ensure that resources are effectively managed so that service provision is being maximised, the HSE has established Service Improvement Groups to develop new models of provision for several therapies that will be standardised across all Community Health Organisations. The final reports of the Service Improvement Groups are currently under consideration.

The number of GP training places has increased from 170 places filled in 2017 to 198 places to be offered in 2018. Over 400 applications for the 2018 GP Training Programme were received by the application deadline of 16 November 2017. This represents a significant increase of almost 50% in the number of applications for the 2017 programme.

No: 30

Action: Building on the current number of 14 Community Intervention Teams (CITs), support the full nationwide access to CIT services to facilitate the treatment of patients in their own local community, whether in the

patient's home, primary care centres or public or private nursing homes.

Lead: HSE
Timeline Ongoing
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Total CIT referrals at the end 2017 (38, 207) exceeded expected activity for the year by over 16%.

Funding was provided under Budget 2018 to support the expansion of a number of the existing CITs and the development of new CITs. Expected CIT activity for 2018 reflects the additional Budget 2018 funding to support the expansion and the development of the CIT service in the latter part of 2018.

No: 31

Action: Enhance supports for older people in rural areas through the network of Day Care Centres, continued provision of grant aid to the voluntary sector and through the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy to support older people in staying healthy and involved in their local communities.

Lead: HSE
Timeline 2017-2019

Status In Progress

Progress Update:

The Department of Health has committed to running the Positive Ageing stakeholder forum again in 2018. In preparation for this, the Department will engage with key stakeholders in reviewing the achievements of the first forum and how the 2018 forum may be adapted based on feedback.

A new project is being developed for 2018 that will see the Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (HAPI) collate all positive ageing activities administered by local authorities, NGOs and Government departments. It is envisaged that this collation project will highlight successful activities linked to the positive ageing goals and enable stakeholders to follow good practice in the area. This project is funded by Atlantic Philanthropies.

In relation to day care, as part of its service improvement programme, the HSE is currently undertaking, on a national basis, a mapping exercise of day care services for older people funded /grant-aided by the Executive.

No:	32
Action:	Maintain the network of senior helplines in operation throughout the country, which offer a listening service for older people provided by trained older volunteers, and help address issues such as loneliness and isolation in rural areas.
Lead:	HSE
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update December 2017	
<p>The network of senior helplines provides opportunities for older people to talk to someone of their own age group for the price of a local call from anywhere in Ireland. In particular, Third Age operate a senior helpline 'SeniorLine' that offers a confidential listening service for older people provided by trained older volunteers. The helpline number is 1800 80 45 91 and lines are open every day from 10am to 10pm. This helpline is supported by the Atlantic Philanthropies and the HSE.</p> <p>The senior helplines provide an outlet for elderly people experiencing issues such as social isolation, financial concerns, bereavement and elder abuse. The lines are particularly valuable in rural Ireland, where issues such as those mentioned above can be exacerbated by the lack of social supports in a given area.</p> <p>The network is kept operational on an ongoing basis.</p>	

No:	33
Action:	Support the role of schools in communities across the country by revising protocols to ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents and facilitate amalgamations where desirable.
Lead:	DES
Timeline	2017 onwards
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
<p>Revised Protocol to ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents has been finalised and is published on the Department's website.</p>	

No:	34
Action:	Engage with relevant education stakeholders and school property owners to develop guidelines for schools to facilitate, where feasible, the use of school buildings out-of-hours.
Lead:	DES
Timeline	2017
Status	Completed

Progress Update:

It is recognised that schools play an important role in their wider communities and many schools make their facilities available outside of school hours for a variety of different uses and users.

In October 2017 the Department of Education and Skills published guidelines to provide guidance to schools in relation to their current arrangements for the use of school buildings outside of school hours or for those schools who are considering putting such arrangements in place.

The Guidelines are available on the Department's website, here:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/guidelines-on-the-use-of-school-buildings-outside-of-school-hours.pdf>

No: 35

Action: Develop a new funding scheme for youth services in line with the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes, which will help support the provision of such services across the country.

Lead: DCYA

Timeline 2017

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Under recommendation 8 of the Value for Money and Policy Review (VFMPR) of Youth Programmes, DCYA conducted the mapping of youth service provision across the State. Working with Pobal and the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), the functional areas and service locations of youth services and projects were mapped. The resulting map is now hosted on the Pobal website and will update with population numbers and deprivation levels as Census 2016 data is made available.

22 sample projects have been established under the VFMPR. These projects are across 10 ETBs and facilitate new scheme development as revised approaches and initiatives are trialled. 5 of these projects were established in 2016 in Cavan, Kildare and Louth, with two in Tipperary. With the need for a new project identified in Roscommon, another sample project was established there during 2017. Another 9 new projects and the augmentation of 7 existing ones were approved in 2017 with work now progressing on establishing these during 2018.

DCYA has held consultation events around the country during 2017 in relation to the development of the new scheme, tentatively titled "Revised Youth Funding Scheme (RYFS)". Young people, youth workers, ETB staff and other stakeholders were involved and their contributions were noted and assessed. A follow-up consultation was held on 24th October which involved randomly selected participants from the previous consultation events.

As the ETB represent mid-level governance for DCYA in respect of youth service provision, work has been underway on capacity building both for the Youth Officer function and the overall ETB governance structure.

No:	36
Action:	Expand provision of affordable childcare through the implementation of the Affordable Childcare Scheme, which will assist in delivering greater accessibility to childcare services across the country.
Lead:	DCYA
Timeline	Q4 2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update:	
<p>In April 2017 it was announced that the implementation of the full Affordable Childcare Scheme would not commence in September 2017. This was to give additional time to develop the legal and technical infrastructure needed to underpin the approach.</p> <p>To assist families with accessing affordable childcare in the meanwhile, a suite of measures was launched in September 2017 including a new, non means tested subsidy for all children under the age of three in registered childcare. This new universal subsidy is worth up to €1,040 per child per annum. Subsidies available for families on lower incomes and those returning to work and education were increased by as much as 50%, with subsidies of up to €145 per child up to the age of 15 available to eligible parents. These universal and targeted subsidies are broadly on par with what will be available when the full Affordable Childcare Scheme commences.</p> <p>As of December 2017, the families of almost 30,000 children had availed of the universal supports with more than 30,000 additional children registered for the enhanced targeted supports.</p> <p>The Childcare Support Bill 2017 aims to provide a statutory basis for the Affordable Childcare Scheme and was presented to the Houses of the Oireachtas on 14th December 2017. Further information on the development of the Affordable Childcare Scheme can be found at www.affordablechildcare.ie/nextsteps</p>	

No:	37
Action:	Develop the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) to ensure all local groups can input to local decision making processes by: Providing funding for a Resource Worker for each PPN; Providing a database for each PPN's registered local community organisations; Rolling out local training and capacity building; Developing and improving a practical PPN User Guide; and Establishing a National PPN Advisory Group, fully representative of all PPN stakeholders.
Lead:	DRCD
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>PPN resource workers have been appointed in all 31 local authorities and the database for registered local community organisations is now available and has been rolled out to all PPNs.</p>	

The PPN User Guide has now also been updated and published and the training and capacity building programme for PPNs has been supported.

The 2nd National PPN Advisory Group has been established and its first meeting was held on 11 October 2017 with its second meeting on 5 December 2017

The first National PPN Annual Report was published by Seán Kyne, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development in December 2017.

No: 38
Action: Consult extensively with the PPN Network and sectoral interests in developing Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

Lead: Regional Assemblies

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Report December 2017:

The three Regional Assemblies have commenced preparations on their respective RSEs and have each launched a public consultation process with the publication of an Issues Paper in November 2017, which ran until the end of January. As part of this consultation process, plans are being developed to hold workshops in each region with the PPN network.

No: 39
Action: Implement the Framework Policy on Local & Community Development to ensure greater participation of rural communities in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of policies, strategies and interventions.

Lead: DRCD

Timeline Q2 2017 to end 2019

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

A Cross-Sectoral Working Group was established in 2017 to assist in the development of an Implementation Plan for the framework policy.

Five meetings of the Cross Sectoral Group took place during 2017. The Group comprises of members drawn from the relevant stakeholder groups, including the community development, local development and community & voluntary sectors, as well as local and central government. In November 2016, the Department of Rural and Community Development hosted a national forum, bringing key stakeholders together to consider the Government's Framework Policy for Local and

Community Development in Ireland and to identify actions for inclusion in a multi-annual implementation plan for the Framework Policy. A *Template of Actions*, which includes outputs from the Forum and other relevant sources, has been developed and will form the basis of the Implementation Plan. The fourth meeting was in the form of a workshop which took place on Friday 3rd November 2017 in Local Government House, Dublin. The Working Group was temporarily expanded, for the workshop, to include additional expertise, fresh perspectives and to take the work forward.

The Group's work will culminate in a five-year multi-annual implementation plan for the *Framework Policy on Local and Community Development*. It is anticipated that a draft implementation plan will be agreed by the Group in Q2 2018.

No: 40
Action: Engage with local communities on water quality projects through the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office.
Lead: DHPLG
Timeline: 2017
Status: Completed

Progress Update:

Based on a business case submitted by the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has decided to finance a Community Water Development Fund, to be accessible to community groups who wish to engage in water quality projects to further the achievement of the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive.

No: 41
Action: Through the National Dialogue for Climate Change, ensure that rural communities have a key role in contributing to our transition to a environmentally sustainable, climate resilient, low carbon economy.
Lead: DCCAE
Timeline: 2017 - 2019
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The National Dialogue for Climate Change was announced by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten, T.D., in March 2017.

The Advisory Group on National Dialogue for Climate Action, announced in July, is providing the Minister with advice on the overall strategy, structure and operation of the National Dialogue.

As part of the National Dialogue, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment is also funding An Taisce's Environmental Education Unit to deliver a Green Schools National Climate Change Action and Awareness Programme over two years. This programme

includes Climate Week, piloted successfully in October 2017, which involved schools, individual students and teachers making a pledge to undertake Climate positive actions; teacher training seminars developed and delivered in the weeks leading up to the Green Schools National Climate week; a Climate Change Ambassador programme, which commenced in November with 112 Ambassadors selected from around the country; and a Green-School Expo to take place in the RDS in Dublin in February 2018.

The National Adaptation Framework approved by Government in December 2017 also recognises the role of the National Dialogue as an ongoing platform for engagement in how Ireland plans ahead for climate resilience and to promote a better societal response in the context of the increased risk of extreme weather events in a changing climate.

No: 42

Action: As part of the Energy White Paper, roll out a range of actions to increase the engagement with and participation of citizens and communities in rural areas, to allow for greater involvement in the planning of energy infrastructure in their local areas.

Lead: DCCA

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The proposed new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) will aim to strike an appropriate balance between the need to meet Ireland’s long-term strategic objective to decarbonise the energy sector via renewable energy deployment (via Ireland’s contribution to EU-wide 2030 renewable energy targets as per the recast Renewable Energy Directive RED2) and the need to ensure communities benefit more directly from this transition. A public consultation on the new RESS closed on 10th November 2017 and submissions received have been assessed by Department.

A cornerstone of the new scheme will be policies and supports to increase community ownership and participation in, and benefit from, renewable electricity projects. Communities will have opportunities to participate in developer-led projects or indeed bring their own renewable electricity projects forward under the new scheme. A report into Community Participation in Renewable Electricity Projects in Ireland was completed in June 2017 and was published as part of this public consultation.

Micro Generation (including an element of self-consumption) was also assessed as part of the RESS design and, further to this, the SEAI facilitated a workshop on micro generation in Q4 2017. Subsequent to this workshop, and in consultation with the microgen sector, a pilot support scheme for domestic rooftop solar PV, targeted at self-consumption was announced in January 2018 and is expected to be launched in summer 2018. DCCA will further progress policy development to support micro generation in tandem with the development of the main RESS and the emergence of RED2.

The “Preferred Draft Approach” to the review of the Wind Energy Guidelines have been published for consultation and will be finalised in Q2 2018.

No:	43
Action:	As part of the National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making 2015-2020, support Government Departments and State agencies to involve children and young people appropriately in policies relating to the planning and development of rural communities.
Lead:	DCYA
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>Comhairle na nÓg are local councils for children and young people (aged 12-17) that give them a voice on the development of local policies and services. They are the recognised national structure for participation by children and young people in decision-making in all 31 local authorities. They are supported by the DCYA Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund and DCYA Participation Officers.</p> <p>A five year development plan for Comhairle na nÓg will be commissioned in 2018. The plan will set out the strategic objectives of Comhairle na nÓg over a five year period. The development of the plan will include consultation with stakeholders, an environment scan and a lessons learned review. In its first full year of operation, Hub na nÓg will continue to provide information, guidance, training and practical support to Government Departments and agencies and conduct consultations with young people on a variety of topics.</p> <p>The Participation Hub ‘Hub na nÓg’ was officially launched in November 2017. A website has been developed and the database of publications will be made available through this website. In addition, Hub na nÓg is considering designing a training programme for the One Training scheme providing training and advice for Government departments and agencies, and also providing training and advice for the non-statutory sector.</p>	

No:	44
Action:	Develop a new and effective rural proofing model which will ensure that rural development issues are considered in the decision-making processes of all Government Departments, State bodies and agencies.
Lead:	DRCD, Department of the Taoiseach
Timeline	Q4 2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>The Department of Rural and Community Development examines Memoranda for Government to assess the potential impact of policy proposals on rural development. In addition, a Working Group, comprised of Departmental representatives, rural stakeholders and academics in the area, will be established shortly to consider the issue of a formal rural proofing model which can be applied across Government Departments and State Agencies and bring forward proposals.</p>	

No:	45
Action:	Ensure that, in developing the new National Planning Framework, the long-term needs of rural Ireland are taken into account.
Lead:	DHPLG
Timeline	Q1 2018
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
The National Planning Framework (NPF) was published in February 2018. The Framework places a strong emphasis on protecting our rural fabric.	

No:	46
Action:	Work with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other relevant stakeholders to identify research needs in relation to rural and regional development to inform policy formulation and implementation.
Lead:	DRCD
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Department of Rural and Community Development has ongoing discussions with experts in the rural development research arena with a view to identifying and understanding priority research needs. In particular, discussions are ongoing with a number of stakeholders in relation to the formulation of indicators to assess the impact of the Action Plan for Rural Development on rural communities.	

No:	47
Action:	Deliver the LEADER measure of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, with funding of €250m to support economic development and job creation, social inclusion and the environment in rural areas.
Lead:	DRCD, Leader Local Action Groups, LAs, LDCs, Údarás na Gaeltachta
Timeline	2017-2020
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	

The 2014-2020 LEADER programme is delivered through 29 Local Action Groups (LAGs) in 28 sub-regional areas designated for LEADER funding. Funding Agreements with the LAGs were, for the most part, signed in the second half of 2016. The programme effectively became operational from that date and the LAGs began to seek expressions of interest from project promoters.

In the second half of 2017, activity under LEADER increased significantly and by the end of April 2018, 900 projects with a value of €27 million had been approved by the LAGs for LEADER funding. Over 300 further projects with a value of €17 million were within the approvals process.

An on-going increase in activity under LEADER is expected over the course of 2018, and a Food Initiative strand for Artisan, Micro, and Small Food Producers has also been jointly launched by the Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The Department of Rural and Community Development has committed to implementing 31 actions, identified by the Local Action Groups themselves, to improve the administration of the programme and these improvements are being reflected in the high level of project approvals being seen since the middle of 2017.

No:	48
Action:	Invest €12m in 7 Fisheries Local Action Groups in coastal communities to support a wide range of initiatives targeting job creation, social inclusion, tourism, community regeneration and market development around our coastline.
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	2017-2020
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>The Fisheries Local Area Action Group (FLAG) Strategy for Ireland's seven coastal regions is co-funded by the Exchequer and the EU under Ireland's European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) Operational Programme 2014-20. In that period the FLAG Scheme will deliver €12 million in funding to Ireland's coastal communities.</p> <p>Over the course of 2017, the first year of operation of the seven new Fisheries Local Action Groups, grants of €2.7m were awarded to 190 projects. Payments in 2017 are expected to exceed €1.3m, with remaining projects to be completed in 2018.</p> <p>Approved projects covered a diverse range of activities, including micro seafood enterprises, marine tourism projects, marine leisure projects, marine ancillary services, marine cultural and heritage projects, seafood festivals and marine awareness projects. The Scheme remains open for applications and strong demand is again anticipated in 2018.</p>

No:	49
Action:	Invest €37.5m to implement the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, SICAP, as the main social inclusion programme of Government to support 2,800 local community groups, including low income workers and young people not in education, employment or training, and support lifelong and community education opportunities for disadvantaged communities and individuals.
Lead:	DRCDC
Timeline	Ongoing to end 2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
<p>The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is the largest social inclusion intervention of its kind in the State. The Programme was rolled out in April 2015 to run until 31 December 2017. Its aim is to tackle poverty, social exclusion and long-term unemployment through local engagement and partnership between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations, public sector agencies and other stakeholders. SICAP is a key intervention for the harder to reach, with delivery in each area (or Lot) overseen and managed by the relevant LCDC in the local authority area. In 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,057 Local Community Groups have received SICAP supports; • 22,441 individuals received Goal 2 educational supports; • 6,443 individuals aged 15-24 who were not in education, employment or training received supports; • 7,700 low income workers were supported by SICAP. <p>A mid-year review took place in July, with an end of year review due to take place in Q1 2018.</p>	

No:	50
Action:	Provide 500 additional places on the Rural Social Scheme which employs the skills of farmers and fishermen to provide services which benefit rural communities.
Lead:	DEASP
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>500 additional RSS places were announced in January 2017.</p> <p>At the end of October 2017, there were 2,814 participants on the RSS. Places continue to be rolled out and the Department is working closely with all of the Implementing Bodies (IBs) to ensure all places are filled as quickly as possible.</p> <p>As part of Budget 2018, an additional 250 places have been allocated to the RSS bringing the overall allocation up to 3,350 (3,100 plus the additional 250 new places).</p>	

It is planned to allocate these additional places to the various IBs in January next with a view to rolling out them out, as quickly as possible, over the course of 2018.

No:	51
Action:	Continue the implementation of supports for Social Farming which offers, on a voluntary basis, farming and horticultural participation to people who avail of a range of therapeutic day support services.
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>The Department of Agriculture and Food's Social Farming Initiatives under the Rural Innovation and Development Fund provided funding of €367,000 to three projects in 2017. The first project contract was awarded to the Leitrim Integrated Development Company for the continuation of a national Social Farming Model of Best Practice Project, with funding of €121,000. The second project was awarded to South Kerry Development Partnership with funding of €123,000 for the provision of a Social Farming Project. The third successful award was for Down Syndrome Ireland (Cork Branch) for funding of €123,000.</p> <p>In addition, DAFM extended the contract for one year, with associated funding of €350,000, to the Leitrim Development Company for the continuation of its Social Farming Network. Total DAFM funding to social farming in 2017 therefore amounted to €717,000.</p> <p>A provisional allocation of €419,000 to agri-food tourism schemes in rural areas has been suggested for 2018 from the overall budget allocation of €1.5m for the Rural Innovation and Development Fund (RIDF) under the CEDRA process. The outline of proposals for utilisation of the RIDF in 2018 has been submitted for approval in Q1 2018. It is anticipated that procurement of these services will take place in Q2 2018. It is proposed that the scheme will be operated and managed through Local Authorities (LA) and Local Enterprise Offices (LEO).</p>

No:	52
Action:	Through the Better Energy Homes Scheme, provide over €300m in grants to householders to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, while supporting over 2,000 jobs and helping make approximately 46,500 rural homes more environmentally sustainable.
Lead:	DCCAE
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	

In 2017, the Better Energy Homes Scheme provided €16,329,707 in grants towards the cost of installing 34,353 energy efficiency measures in 14,619 homes across the country. 9,828 (67%) of the homes supported were outside the Dublin area. 2,050 homes have had energy efficiency measures carried out to them up to the end of February 2018 resulting in grants amounting to €2,284,225 being paid.

No: 53
Action: Through the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme, deliver approximately 15,500 energy efficiency upgrades to people living in energy poverty in rural areas, while also boosting regional employment and helping make rural homes more environmentally sustainable.
Lead: DCCAE
Timeline: Ongoing
Status: In Progress
Progress Update:

In 2017, 6,554 homes were upgraded through the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme, with funding of €22,620,901. 4,956 (76%) of these homes were outside the Dublin area. 1,346 homes have been upgraded up to the end of February 2018 at a cost of €2.073m.

No: 54
Action: Through the Sustainable Energy Communities Network, deliver approximately 700 rural community and premises upgrades.
Lead: DCCAE
Timeline: Ongoing
Status: In Progress
Progress Update:

The Sustainable Energy Communities Network is about helping communities to develop and build their own capacity on energy projects and work towards a cleaner energy future for Ireland. It funds networking, advice and mentoring on energy issues to communities.

In 2017, 134 communities across Ireland were part of the network, 85 approximately of these were rural. To date, there are now 153 communities in the SEC Network with 100 approximately of these rural.

In 2018 additional funding has been allocated to allow these community groups to carry out some of the projects identified through working with SEAI on their Energy Master plans. In 2017, there were 27 communities, 18 approximately of these were rural working on their Energy Master Plan. To date, there are now 40 communities, 26 approximately of these rural working on their Energy Master Plan.

No:	55
Action:	Continue to implement the Better Energy Communities scheme which provides competitive funding to community energy projects all over Ireland.
Lead:	DCCAE
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
In 2017, 44 projects received funding under the Better Energy Communities Scheme amounting to €22.7 million. In 2018, €23 million has been allocated to support 37 community energy projects across Ireland under the Better Energy Communities Scheme.	

No:	56
Action:	Recruit 800 Gardai per year, achieving an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.
Lead:	DJE
Timeline	2017-2021
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
As part of the Five Year Reform and High Level Workforce Plan being pursued by An Garda Síochána there was a total intake of more than 800 Garda trainees to the Garda College in 2017. In addition approximately 900 recruits attested as members of An Garda Síochána. Progress is being made and Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 – a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.	
Budget 2018 maintains the high level of investment in the Garda workforce with 800 new Garda Recruits due to enter the Garda College and a further 800 due to attest in 2018.	
The Public Appointments Service undertook a recruitment campaign for Garda Reserves in March 2017 and it is expected that applicants from this campaign will enter training in early 2018. Civilianisation is also key element of the Reform Plan and the number of civilians in An Garda Síochána continues to increase. During 2017 some 200 new civilian posts were sanctioned by the Policing Authority with the consent of the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The bulk were to address critical skills gaps and capacity issues.	
As of 31 December 2017 there were 2,192 civilians undertaking administrative and technical duties within An Garda Síochána. To ensure that progress on civilianisation continues Budget 2018 has provided funding for a further 500 civilian staff.	

No:	57
Action:	The Garda Inspectorate, on behalf of the Policing Authority, will examine the dispersement and use of resources available to the Garda Síochána in the delivery of policing services to local communities and make recommendations to provide a more effective, visible and responsive policing service.
Lead:	Policing Authority
Timeline	2017-2018
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Review is ongoing and is expected to be completed in Q2 2018. The Authority has informed the Inspectorate that the review should take account of:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the changing environments in rural, developing urban, and suburban areas; • the views of local communities; • the allocation to and deployment of Garda resources at the local policing level, including the use of the Garda Reserve, Garda facilities and Garda equipment; and • relevant recommendations made in previous Inspectorate reports. 	

No:	58
Action:	Launch a pilot scheme to reopen six Garda stations both urban and rural, to determine possible positive impacts that such openings will have on criminal activity, with special emphasis on burglaries, theft and public order. The results of this pilot will feed into the wider review of resources being overseen by the Policing Authority.
Lead:	An Garda Síochána
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
The Garda Commissioner recently submitted his final report which recommends the inclusion of six Garda stations in the pilot; namely, Ballinspittle, Co. Cork, Bawnboy, Co. Cavan, Stepside and Rush in Dublin, Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow and Donard, Co. Wicklow.	
The Government noted the report at its meeting of 19 December 2017 and the report was published on the Department of Justice's website thereafter.	
The Garda Commissioner has written to the Office of Public Works to progress the matter.	

No:	59
Action:	Continue to support and prioritise community crime prevention schemes including Neighbourhood Watch and the Text Alert Scheme.
Lead:	DJE
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>In September 2017, at the National Ploughing Championships, the Minister for Justice and Equality announced that approximately €100,000 was being made available by his Department as part of the Community (Text) Alert Rebate Scheme. Similar to 2016, this money would be made available to all Text Alert Groups, who are registered with An Garda Síochána, and will provide modest financial support for the Groups in offsetting the various costs associated with running a Text Alert Group. In January 2018, an additional €50,000 was allocated to the Text Alert Rebate Scheme for 2017, bringing available funds up to €150,000.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the <u>overall</u> funding of Muintir na Tire will also provide for the re-launch of the Crime Prevention Ambassador Scheme. Crime Prevention Ambassadors is a peer to peer volunteer programme, the aim of which is to support and empower older people to make greater use of available Garda resources, and to feel and be safer at home and in their communities. The initiative has so far been piloted in Monaghan, Cavan and Meath.</p> <p>Since it was launched in September 2013, Community Text Alert has grown quickly with a total of 164,000 subscribers and in the order of 3 million text message sent annually. Every Garda Division, rural and urban, now offers the text alert service and An Garda Síochána has published guidelines to assist in the establishment and operation of local groups.</p>	

No:	60
Action:	Introduce a new Community CCTV Grant Aid Scheme which will benefit both urban and rural communities.
Lead:	DJE
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>The new Community CCTV Grant Aid Scheme was launched in April 2017.</p> <p>Applications in respect of some 9 CCTV systems have been received by December 2017 and discussions are ongoing with the applicants. Communities are being actively encouraged to apply for this scheme.</p>	

No:	61
Action:	Significantly invest in the Seniors Alert Scheme, which facilitates valuable community based support for vulnerable older people living alone, particularly those in isolated rural communities, by providing grant assistance towards the purchase and installation of personal monitored alarms to enable them to live securely in their own homes.
Lead:	DRCDC
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Minister for Rural and Community Development launched a new iteration of the Seniors Alert scheme effective from the 1 November 2017, with funding of €2.3 million.	
The scheme has been universally welcomed and demand has increased substantially - in November alone over 2,650 applications under the scheme were received. The Minister made an additional €400,000 available in 2017 to meet this extra demand, bringing total investment in 2017 to €2.683 million.	

No:	62
Action:	As part of the Government's Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021, invest €46m in a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose Garda fleet over the lifetime of the Plan, to provide the Gardaí with additional high-powered vehicles to ensure that Gardaí are mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.
Lead:	An Garda Síochána
Timeline	2017-2021
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Investment is continuing in a planned manner over the lifetime of the Plan. The Government's Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides €46million for investment in the Garda Fleet to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit for purpose fleet.	
In the period 2013 to the end of 2017 almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet with some 2,000 vehicles coming on stream in that period.	

No:	63
Action:	As part of An Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme, a new computer-aided dispatch will be developed to ensure responsive and co-ordinated deployment of Gardaí in the community.
Lead:	An Garda Síochána

Timeline 2017-2021

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The project is under development and will be delivered as part of the Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal programme.

No: 64

Action: Rollout the new Community Facilities Fund, announced in Budget 2017, which will invest over €2m in rural and urban areas, to enhance communities, address disadvantage and improve social cohesion at local level.

Lead: DRCD

Timeline Q3 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

The 2017 Communities Facilities Scheme was launched in March 2017. The scheme is administered on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development by Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) under the remit of the Local Authorities. Each of the 31 Local Authorities was provided with an equal allocation of €64,500. Under the scheme community and voluntary groups applied for grants for small scale capital projects which benefited the local community. The closing date for applications was 30th June 2017.

Funding levels for 2018 remain at €2m. As with the RAPID programme, the Department is currently examining the Communities Facilities Scheme to facilitate improvements for 2018. This review may result in some changes to the administration and criteria that applied previously.

No: 65

Action: Invest €30m in sports and community facilities around the country through the Sports Capital Programme.

Lead: DTTAS

Timeline 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

A total of €60m was allocated to over 1,800 sports capital projects in November and December 2017. 1,726 local applications were allocated a total of €55,831,000 of funding in November. Of these, 1,518 (88%) were based outside Dublin and were allocated a total of €43,067,037.

81 non-local (national and regional) applications were allocated a total of €4,000,000 of funding in December. Of these 49 (60%) were based outside Dublin and were allocated a total of €2,895,500.

Overall, a total of 1,567 allocations totalling €45,962,037 were made outside Dublin under the 2017 Sports Capital Programme.

No:	66
Action:	Support the sustainability of 450 Men's Sheds across rural Ireland which provide a safe space where men can gather and participate in their communities, develop social networks and potentially gain new skills and access information.
Lead:	Irish Men's Sheds Association (IMSA)
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>The growth of men's sheds continued apace in 2017. The Irish Men's Sheds Association continue to receive applications from communities seeking new sheds at a rate of 1.5 per week. Since June 2017, the IMSA Board has approved applications from new sheds in counties Limerick, Tipperary, Meath, Cork, Offaly, Armagh, Waterford, Kildare, Derry, Galway, Clare, Donegal, Armagh, Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Cavan, Wexford, Down, Sligo and from several locations in Dublin. Men's sheds are now present in every single county on the island, with at least three sheds in every county and some boasting dozens apiece.</p> <p>The Shed Support Volunteer programme is now fully hitting its stride, with 26 Volunteers engaged in their roles and representing sheds in their respective counties. A second national training day was attended by all volunteers in October.</p>

No:	67
Action:	Promote the health, wellbeing and skills of up to 15,000 men through the 'Sheds for Life' programme.
Lead:	Irish Men's Shed Association (IMSA)
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>Since its launch in May 2017, Sheds for Life has forged further partnerships with additional national health organisations. The Irish Heart Foundation's Mobile Health Unit was again present on IMSA's autumn 2017 cluster meeting tour, which took in a total of 20 counties throughout the island.</p>

The launch of Malehealth.ie achieved national prominence, being covered by several major national newspapers and broadcasters. The website has racked up 45,299 page views and a new blog feature has introduced visitors to vital and topical health information from twelve major national health organisations.

Pillar 2: Supporting Enterprise and Employment

No:	68
Action:	Implement eight regional Action Plans for Jobs to facilitate each region to achieve its economic potential and raise its employment levels and monitor the impact of these Plans on rural Ireland.
Lead:	DBEI
Timeline	2017-2018
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>Implementation of the eight regional APJs is taking place and the third progress reports are being finalised and are expected to be published in Q2 2018. Progress reports are available on www.regionalapj.ie.</p> <p>The Plans have been embraced within the regions and completion rates for actions described in the published Progress Reports are in excess of 90% for each region. Based on current data, all regions are on target to meet or exceed the job targets to be delivered by 2020.</p> <p>Progress to date is good and employment continues to grow strongly throughout the regions. In 2017, 65% of new jobs created by Enterprise Ireland supported companies, and over half of those created by IDA supported companies, were outside Dublin.</p> <p><i>Regional performance to Q4 2017</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There was an annual increase in employment of 3.1% or 66,800 in the past year (to Q4 2017), bringing total employment to 2,231,000.• Unemployment decreased by 23,400 (-14.0%) in the year to Q4 2017 bringing the total number of persons unemployed to 144,100.• Over the past year employment has grown in 7 of the 8 regions (there was a slight fall in the Midland region).• Employment outside of the Dublin region increased by 56,200, or 84% of the national figure of 66,800.• The fastest growing regions in terms of employment in the year to Q4 2017 were:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– the Border (up 19,500);– the Mid-East (up 14,400);

No:	69
Action:	Provide investment of up to €50m over the period to 2020 to support collaborative approaches to boost enterprise and job creation across the regions. This competitive funding is aimed at accelerating economic recovery in every part of the country by delivering on the potential of local and regional strengths.
Lead:	Enterprise Ireland

Timeline 2017-2020

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

A competitive Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) of up to €60m (in excess of the original target) was launched in May 2017. This funding has been provided by the Department of Enterprise and Innovation, through Enterprise Ireland, to 2020.

The Fund is aimed at accelerating economic recovery in every part of the country by delivering on the potential of local and regional enterprise strengths. The Fund will support significant collaborative regional initiatives to build on specific industry sectoral strengths and improve enterprise capability, thereby driving job creation. The Fund will also support the development of industry clusters which will facilitate knowledge transfer, innovation and collaboration among organisations.

Under a competitive call process, Enterprise Ireland sought applications for funding under four streams with varying investment levels:

- Stream 1. Major Change Projects - €2m up to €5m per project
- Stream 2. Regionally Significant Projects - €250,000 up to €2m per project
- Stream 3. Local & Community Enterprise Development Projects - €50,000 up to €250,000 per project
- Stream 4. Industry Clusters - €50,000 up to €250,000 per project.

On 11 December 2017, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys T.D. announced the results of the first call under of the €60m REDF. Twenty-one successful applicants representing all regions of the country have secured up to €30.5m for their projects in the first competitive call. Over €14m has been approved for projects in the southern region, over €11m for projects in the eastern and midlands region and over €5m has been approved for the northern and western region, subject to grant conditions.

14 projects were funded in Streams 1 and 2, and 7 in Streams 3 and 4. The balance of the €60m fund will be made available in the second call which opened for applications in April 2018.

No: 70

Action: Increase FDI in each of the 8 NUTS III regional areas by 30-40% in the period to 2019.

Lead: IDA

Timeline Ongoing to Q4 2019

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Significant progress is being made towards the goal set out in the Action Plan. The regions saw increases in IDA employment in 2017, with over 50% of the 19,851 new jobs created being located outside of Dublin.

IDA's 2017 mid-year results showed continued growth with approvals up to 54% from 37% for the same period in 2016. Announcements in 2017 included Northern Trust in Limerick, 330 jobs in MSD in Carlow and Cork, 100 jobs in Element Six in Clare, 200 jobs in Regeneron in Limerick, 200 jobs in Yapstone in Drogheda and 300 jobs in Wasdell in Dundalk.

No: 71
Action: As part of the IDA's €150m property investment programme, complete the construction of three new advance buildings in Tralee, Castlebar and Sligo and accelerate the development of six new advance buildings in Limerick, Dundalk, Galway, Athlone, Carlow and Waterford.
Lead: IDA
Timeline: 2017-2019

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Following the securing of tenants for new property locations in Waterford and Athlone, the buildings in Sligo, Castlebar and Tralee were completed in 2017. The Sligo Advance Technology Building is now under lease and Tralee and Castlebar are now included in IDA's Marketing programme.

The next construction phase includes Galway, Dundalk and Limerick which are all due to commence in 2018 along with the remaining buildings in the programme, Carlow, Athlone and Waterford.

No: 72
Action: Support the creation of 500 new jobs per annum and continue to maintain existing jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Gaeltacht, including through supports for post-research and pre-commercialisation units in the life sciences, food and business support services and creative enterprise sectors, as well as for community development initiatives.
Lead: Údarás na Gaeltachta
Timeline: Ongoing (2017-2019)

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

630 new full-time jobs were created in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in 2017. This culminated in a net increase of 155 jobs on the previous year, which means that there were 7,503 full-time and 606 part-time jobs in companies in receipt of support from Údarás at year end.

No:	73
Action:	Through the LEOs, strengthen local enterprise development and job creation with the following supports, which include indicative projections, on an annual basis, for outside Dublin: 1,400 jobs through Measure 1 approvals, 2,800 Start Your Own Business (SYOB) participants, 23,000 participants on LEO training courses, 2,100 mentoring participants, 18,500 Student Enterprise Awards participants, – 350 MicroFinance Ireland (MFI) loan applications.
Lead:	LEOs
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2019)
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>Targets have been set for two years and the results for 2017, excluding Dublin, are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure 1 job projections - 2419 (These are Measure 1 jobs that are projected as a result of the Priming and Business Expansion Grant supports given to LEO clients). • Start Your Own Business Programme participants – 3,245 • Training courses/programme participants – 1,646/25,045 • Total number of mentoring participants – 5,925 • Student Enterprises Awards participants 17,610 • Micro Finance Ireland Applications – 316

No:	74
Action:	Continue to build on the LEO Communications Strategy to communicate the range of supports and services available at local level
Lead:	LEOs
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>The LEOs continue to drive a communications strategy that communicates their supports and services through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actively using traditional media (national and local), digital and social media 2. Organising local information sessions and events <p>In Q1 2017 and again in Q1 2018, LEOs organised over 300 events during ‘Local Enterprise Week’ across every local authority area. These events included one-to-one business clinics, start your own business bootcamps, finance workshops, trading on-line seminars, data protection briefings and Brexit-themed workshops.</p>

A new LEO Communications and Marketing team was appointed as part of the Enterprise Ireland Corporate Marketing and Communications Department in Q1 2018. This team will develop a new co-ordinated communications strategy to promote LEO supports and services, building on the LEO brand and utilising all relevant communication channels. Enterprise Ireland will continue to work with the Local Government Management Agency and LEO committees to drive communication activities and strategy.

No: 75

Action: Determine the feasibility of enabling Local Authorities to introduce rates alleviation schemes to support rural development policy objectives.

Lead: DHPLG

Timeline End 2017

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Provision to allow local authorities to introduce rates alleviation schemes to support local and national policy objectives, including the Rural Development Strategy, has been included in the General Scheme of a Rates Bill. The Government approved the drafting of this Bill in April 2017. The drafting of the Bill is with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel and it is expected that it will be published in Q2 2018.

No: 76

Action: Conduct a revaluation of commercial properties in nine rural counties to ensure fairness and equity in the levying of commercial rates on business with a view to rolling out to further counties in 2017.

Lead: DHPLG

Timeline 2017

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Certificates of Final Valuation issued in September 2017 to all commercial ratepayers in the 9 counties of Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Offaly, Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath. A second revaluation of South Dublin was also completed in the same timeline. The valuations shown on the certificates will be used as the basis for the assessment of rates by the local authority with effect from 1 January 2018.

The next phase of the National Revaluation Programme (REVAL 2019) was commenced in October 2017 by the Commissioner of Valuation making the Valuation Orders for the 7 counties of Cavan,

Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Tipperary, Wexford and Wicklow as well as for the 2nd revaluation in the local authority area of Fingal County Council.

It is expected that a Valuation Order for Laois was made in December 2017. The revaluation of commercial properties in the Laois County Council rating authority area is a pilot project using “Occupier Assisted Valuation” principles for the first time.

Proposed Valuation Certificates, and ultimately Certificates of Final Valuation, will be issued to all commercial ratepayers in the Laois County Council rating authority area in 2018. In addition, REVAL 2019 will be progressed in line with the statutory timelines associated with this phase of the programme.

No: 77

Action: As part of the National Planning Framework, develop planning guidance for a positive approach to enterprise development in rural areas, where appropriate.

Lead: DHPLG

Timeline Q1 2018

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is in the final stages of publication of a guidance leaflet on Enterprise Development in Rural Areas.

The contents of the leaflet considers how and to what extent enterprise development in rural areas should be accommodated in the context of the Planning and Development legislation with the aim of providing clear guidance for those engaging in rural enterprise to support the development of sustainable rural communities.

The guidance is due to be published shortly.

No: 78

Action: Progress the proposal for an Atlantic Economic Corridor to attract Irish and multinational investment, and grow jobs and economic opportunities in the western regions in the context of the new National Planning Framework.

Lead: DRCD

Timeline 2017-2018

Status In Progress

Progress Update:

The Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) is a collaborative initiative which emerged from a Chambers of Commerce proposal to create an economic area of scale along the western part of Ireland from Kerry to Donegal, to attract investment, support job creation and contribute to effective regional development.

Minister Michael Ring established a Taskforce in March 2017 to develop the initiative. The Taskforce, which includes senior representatives from the business sector, key Government Departments, public bodies, the Third Level sector, and the community sector, has met five times since it was established and will continue to meet on a regular basis throughout 2018. A number of sub-groups of the Taskforce have also been established to progress specific aspects of the overall proposal, such as examining infrastructure needs and enterprise property assets, and developing a communications strategy.

The AEC is highlighted in the National Planning Framework (NPF) as a model which can contribute to the NPF's objectives of regional growth

No:	79
Action:	Implement Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth which aims to double the value of the blue economy and deliver 29,000 additional jobs across the various maritime sectors.
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
	<u>Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth and the Marine Coordination Group</u> <i>Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth</i> (HOOW), published in mid-2012, sets out a roadmap for the Government's vision, high-level goals and integrated actions across policy, governance and business to enable Ireland's marine potential to be realised. The Plan is an initiative of the Inter-Departmental Marine Coordination Group chaired by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Group generally meets every six-weeks, to bring together senior officials of Departments with an involvement in marine issues, together with the Marine Institute, to drive forward the Government's marine strategy and coordinate issues that require cross-departmental action.
	<u>European Maritime Day 2020</u> Cork City was designated as the host city for European Maritime Day in 2020 by the Council of the European Union in June 2017. European Maritime Day is the flagship event in the European Union's maritime calendar, consisting of a two day Conference with over 1,000 stakeholders from across the European Union coming together to discuss the development of this sector. This will be the first time that Ireland has hosted this flagship event. <i>SeaFest</i> , Ireland's national maritime festival, will take place in Cork in conjunction with the Conference.
	<u>SeaFest 2018 and the Our Ocean Wealth Summit</u> The <i>Our Ocean Wealth Summit</i> will be held in Galway on 28 - 29 June 2018 and forms a key part of the Government's integrated plan for Ireland's marine sector by bringing together national

and international speakers, industry experts, business development agencies and the Irish business and marine research community. The Summit is part of a range of industry and innovation events which will take place in Galway as part of *SeaFest 2018* from 29 June - 2 July. A wide range of public events are also taking place in Galway Harbour and Docks and the city over the weekend. The *Our Ocean Wealth Summit* and *SeaFest* are initiatives of the Inter-Departmental Marine Coordination Group.

Now in its fifth year, the *Our Ocean Wealth Summit* forms a key part of the Government's integrated marine plan - *Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth*. The Summit is a key event for the marine sector and related industries, offering a platform for discussion on the future of Ireland's marine sector and will take place in Galway on the 28 and 29 June.

This year's theme is '**Investing in marine Ireland**' and the Summit will focus on progress towards the Government's ambitious targets to double the value of the blue economy by 2030.

The diverse programme planned for this year's Summit reflects strong collaboration between BIM, Bord Bia, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI) and the Marine Institute with individual sessions addressing environmental, economic and societal opportunities and challenges to creating a sustainable ocean economy for Ireland.

No:	80
Action:	Introduce a Marine Development and Investment Strategy for the Gaeltacht in line with Harnessing our Ocean Wealth.
Lead:	Údarás na Gaeltachta
Timeline	2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update:	
<p>Plans are currently being prepared in consultation with Marine Ireland. A consultative committee is in situ, with representation from BIM, Foras na Mara, Galway County Council, NUIG, GMIT and Údarás na Gaeltachta with a view to advancing the development of a marine park at Páirc na Mara, in Cill Chiaráin In the Galway Gaeltacht, which will become a flagship project for the marine sector.</p> <p>Following on from a public consultation process, An tÚdarás have received Expressions of Interest (EoIs) from a number of potential investors in the marine sector. The overall development investment and plan for the site will take into consideration the range, scope and scale of the proposed developments as set out under the EOI process.</p> <p>The preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement has been commissioned which will guide the overall development plan and the sustainable potential development of the site. The full application for planning permission is scheduled for Q3 in 2018.</p> <p>In the meantime, An tÚdarás will continue to liaise with potential investors and support them in the development of their commercial and research proposals.</p>	

An tÚdarás are currently working with the Marine Spatial Planning Section of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Over the coming period An tÚdarás will liaise with the Department and support the research and consultation phase of the new Marine Spatial Plan. This will integrate the overall marine development objectives for the Gaeltacht districts within the overall national spatial strategy.

No: 81
Action: Invest €21m over five years to provide new and upgraded property solutions to attract FDI and indigenous Irish industries to locate in the Mid-West region.
Lead: Shannon Group
Timeline: Ongoing
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Shannon Commercial Properties completed work on 100,000 ft² of property upgrade works in 2017. Tenants have been acquired for all of these facilities including new companies in the region focused on the motor, aviation and medical device sectors. Companies that have signed leases in these facilities include Jaguar Land Rover, STSJet, Aerozone and Edwards Life sciences. Approx. 150 staff will be employed in this facility.

Construction is ongoing on a €10 million, 56,000 ft² Grade A office block office, due for completion in Q3 2018 and a 33,000 ft² Grade A advance technology manufacturing unit with construction also to be completed by Q3 2018. These facilities will have the capacity to cater for approximately 500 people.

No: 82
Action: Provide a new incubation space in Shannon to encourage start-up businesses and rural entrepreneurs.
Lead: Shannon Group
Timeline: Q4 2017
Status: Completed

Progress Update:

The Gateway Hub, Shannon Commercial Properties' new co-working and service office facility, was completed in 2017 and formally opened in November 2017 by the Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, Pat Breen T.D. The facility has been well received in the region and has significant demand for its serviced office facility. Shannon Chamber has expanded to larger premises adjacent to the Gateway Hub and provides reception and administration support to the facility.

Companies that are initially in occupation include Parc Aviation and Edwards Lifesciences. Bank of Ireland have proposed a strategic partnership to promote co-working in the location. In addition,

Shannon Group's International Aviation Services Centre (IASC) in partnership with DCU Ryan Academy for Entrepreneurs, Boeing, Datalex and Enterprise Ireland launched 'Propeller Shannon' an aviation/aerospace start-up accelerator programme. This will drive the development of innovative Irish and international start-up companies in the aviation sector, providing them with the opportunity to tap into the unique aerospace ecosystem that has seen almost 60 companies employ over 2,600 people in Shannon Free Zone, reaffirming its position as the largest Aviation/Aerospace cluster in Ireland.

No: 83
Action: Develop advanced property solutions for innovative companies seeking to move from the incubator phase to market-led and competitive commercialisation in the Gaeltacht area.
Lead: Údarás na Gaeltachta
Timeline Ongoing (Incorrect timeline of 2017 originally specified)
Status: In Progress
Progress Update:
 Údarás has continued in upgrading its property portfolio to meet its existing and potential clients' requirements.

No: 84
Action: Create appropriate incentives and attract further businesses to join the existing aviation industry cluster in the International Aviation Services Centre in Shannon.
Lead: Shannon Group
Timeline Ongoing
Status: In Progress
Progress Update:
 International Aviation Services Centre (IASC) and Shannon Commercial Properties launched an incubation/enterprise centre in Shannon Free Zone in 2017 to support aerospace, aviation and other start-up companies in the region. The centre is based in the newly completed Gateway Hub in the Shannon Free Zone (see No. 82).

No: 85
Action: Develop four Innovation Hubs in Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Kerry to support entrepreneurship and start-up companies in the Gaeltacht Regions.
Lead: Údarás na Gaeltachta
Timeline 2017

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

County Donegal: Áislann Ghaoth Dobhair

The work on the Digital Hub in Áislann Ghaoth Dobhair has now been completed and the hub was opened to the public in June 2017. The hub can accommodate 40 people and currently employs 20 people.

County Kerry: Mol Tech – Daingean Uí Chúis

This digital hub opened to the public on 28 April 2017. It is being managed by local community groups under the umbrella of the Dingle Chamber and supported by Údarás na Gaeltachta and Kerry County Council. Daingean Uí Chúis was successful in accessing funding under the Enterprise Ireland Regional Enterprise Development Fund.

Co. Mayo: Digital Unit, Béal an Mhuirthead

This digital hub was officially opened in September 2017 and is managed by Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Co. Galway: Digital Unit, An Spidéal

Capital provision is being set aside by Údarás na Gaeltachta to adapt a former factory in An Spidéal as the digital hub and Enterprise Development Centre to serve the Connemara Coast. Planning application has been lodged with Galway County Council in respect of this unit.

Co. Galway: Digital Hub in Carna and An Cheathrú Rua.

In addition capital funding has been approved by the Board to develop a digital hub in both Carna and An Cheathrú Rua.

No: 86

Action: Review the recommendations of the CEDRA Report and the Charter for Rural Ireland and identify how best to progress any recommendations that have not yet been implemented.

Lead: DRCD

Timeline: Q1-Q3 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

A review of the recommendations in the CEDRA report and the commitments in the Charter for Rural Ireland was completed in Q3 2017. The review found that the majority of the recommendations had either been implemented or were incorporated into the Action Plan for Rural Development where they are subject to on-going monitoring and reporting. The small number of recommendations/commitments which are outstanding from the original reports will be addressed through the Action Plan process.

The review is currently being updated to reflect the most recent developments, with a view to its publication on the Department of Rural and Community Development's website.

No:	87
Action:	Enhance awareness amongst SMEs and entrepreneurs of State business supports to raise their financial capacity in either starting a business, or in growing and expanding an established business.
Lead:	SME State Bodies Group
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The SME Communications Group met on 18 th October 2017 to discuss the draft of the revised integrated communications strategy. The Group met again on 6 th December 2017 to discuss the progress made in 2017 and the promotion of Online Tool in 2018 (see www.localenterprise.ie). The Group is currently exploring new types of marketing materials and advertisement.	

No:	88
Action:	Conduct a review of the credit application process with a focus on the administrative burden for SMEs and the time costs to them.
Lead:	DoF
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Credit Review Office (CRO) with support of the SME Representative Bodies conducted a review.	
The Credit Review Office has met with Banking and Payments Federation Ireland (BPF) about the review. Now more in-depth research is planned via the DoF Credit Demand Survey.	

No:	89
Action:	Deliver, through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, effective financial supports to SMEs that address failures in the Irish credit market by sourcing additional funding from international organisations and securing new on-lenders.
Lead:	SBCI
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	

To the end of December 2017 there has been €925 million of SBCI supported lending, supporting 22,928 SMEs and 113,841 jobs. The SMEs who received SBCI finance are from all sectors of the Irish economy and have a wide geographical spread, with approximately 85% of loans going outside Dublin and 24% of loans going to the Agriculture sector.

The SCBI currently has 7 on-lenders; 3 bank and 4 non-bank lenders.

The Brexit Loan Scheme, which was announced by the Minister for Finance in Budget 2018 and launched on the 28th March 2018, is offered by the SBCI, through their partner financial institutions. This is a €300 million scheme offering loans from €25,000 to €1.5 million to eligible SMEs and small mid-caps of up to 499 employees. Loans under the Scheme are at an interest rate of 4%, which represents a meaningful reduction to the current cost of credit. The scheme is supported by a partial counter guarantee from the European Investment Bank Group and the European Commission, under their InnovFin programme.

No:	90
Action:	Examine procurement policies with a view to enhancing measures to support SMEs to access public procurement markets, including through training and information events and the development of guidance and information notes.
Lead:	DPER
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress

Progress Update:

Guidance in relation to facilitating SME participation in Public Procurement is contained in the National Policy Framework of the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) which consists of five strands:

- Legislation (Directives, Regulations)
- Policy (Circulars etc.)
- The Capital Works Management Framework
- General Procurement Guidelines
- More detailed technical guidelines, template documents and notes issued periodically by the Policy Unit of the OGP

The National Policy Framework is helping to deliver a more consistent approach to procurement throughout the State, making it easier for SMEs to deal with procurers.

Meetings of the SME Advisory Group take place on a quarterly basis to address industry concerns. This group includes representatives of the OGP, Dept. of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI), InterTradeIreland (ITI), Enterprise Ireland (EI), Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC), Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), Irish Small and Medium Enterprises (ISME), Small Firms Association (SFA), Construction Industry Federation (CIF) and Chambers Ireland and is chaired at Minister of State level. There has been regular proactive engagement with SME Representative Bodies through this Group. Evidence of the work and co-operation in the area can be seen in events such as "Go-2-Tender" workshops. These workshops take place across Ireland and events in Q1 2018 were held in Dundalk, Galway, and Naas. Further workshops in 2018 are planned for Monaghan, Carlow, Westmeath and Cork. "Meet-the-Buyer" events are being reviewed in response to feedback from the SME sector. Future events will focus

on specific categories of procurement and will be held when competitions are actively being planned. This will allow for a more streamlined and effective engagement with SMEs.

An SME Communications Strategy subgroup has also been established to help increase awareness of potential opportunities and supports available for SMEs. The SME Communications Strategy subgroup, chaired by the OGP and consisting of communications experts in the representative bodies, ITI, EI and DBEI has developed an aligned approach to supporting SMEs. Its aims include to:

- Encourage potential suppliers to build their awareness, understanding and ultimately skills in public tendering,
- Understand the role respective bodies play in the communications strategy,
- Work in partnership with industry representative bodies to considerably improve understanding and awareness of public procurement in the target supplier community,
- Focus on efficient and effective use of scarce resources in investing time and money in proposed interventions.

The strategy includes producing a series of informative YouTube videos explaining specific public procurement topics. Videos produced to date include three animations describing the model for public procurement in Ireland and Europe as well as an explanation of different types of procurement processes. Three case study videos of successful SME suppliers have also been produced. Forthcoming videos will provide more detailed instruction on using the eTenders website as well as the 'dos and don'ts of tendering'. The strategy also includes the introduction of focused breakfast briefing events and more proactive engagement from industry in promoting and planning events. Breakfast briefings provide a more concise introduction to public procurement for businesses considering opportunities in this area than the formal Go-2-Tender course. Breakfast briefings have been held in Dublin and Waterford and further briefings in 2018 will take place in Athlone, Limerick, Galway, Kildare, and Cork.

In addition, regional public procurement briefings on SME access were held by the Minister of State with special responsibility for Public Procurement in Cork, Galway, Louth, Cavan and Limerick in 2017. Further briefings are scheduled to take place in 2018.

The OGP pipeline of procurement activities (Schedule of Frameworks and Contracts) is published on www.ogp.gov.ie on a quarterly basis so that a rolling nine month forward view is always visible. The OGP also releases a mid-quarter update of the Schedule, with a view of project progress. This advanced notice of forthcoming tendering processes can assist SMEs in planning and preparing to compete in public procurement contracts.

The OGP will be considering appropriate refinements to enhance the significant measures already in place to support SME access. These will take account of the lessons learned to date in the procurement reform programme as well as feedback received through the SME Advisory Group and regional briefings.

No:	91
Action:	Agree and finalise a protocol between DBEI and DRCD in relation to the Local Enterprise Offices and LEADER to ensure a collaborative approach to supporting enterprise at a local level.
Lead:	DBEI
Timeline	Q1 2017

Status: **Completed**

Progress Update:

Under the Government's Action Plan for Jobs 2017 and Action Plan for Rural Development, both DBEI and DRCD were tasked with putting in place a formal Protocol regarding the facilitation of agreements at local level between Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and Local Action Groups (LAGs) and associated Implementing Partners.

A Protocol between the two Departments has now been agreed and signed by both Departments and has been distributed to all LEOs and LAGs for implementation. The Protocol recognises the respective mandates vested in both LEO and LAGs to support local enterprise development, and the purpose of the Protocol is to ensure the key players reach agreement in relation to local level co-operation and collaboration. The implementation of the Protocol will be closely monitored by both Departments.

No: **92**

Action: As part of the Trading Online Voucher Scheme under the National Digital Strategy, approve a minimum of 1,000 vouchers per annum to micro businesses across the country of which approximately 60% will be from rural Ireland.

Lead: DCCA

Timeline 2017-2019

Status: **In Progress**

Progress Update:

In 2017, as part of the National Digital Strategy, almost 1,200 vouchers were approved to micro-businesses under the Trading Online Voucher Scheme, the distribution of which was in line with the target of approximately 60% to businesses in rural Ireland.

No: **93**

Action: As part of the EU Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020, roll out the women's entrepreneurship initiative to promote female entrepreneurship and develop their entrepreneurial capabilities.

Lead: DJE

Timeline 2017

Status: **Completed**

Progress Update:

Four projects are funded under the PEIL 2.9 Gender Equality, Women's Entrepreneurship strand and contracts are in place until 2019. Two projects are based rural areas: GMIT in Galway, Mayo

and Roscommon and SECAD CLG in rural catchment areas in Cork and Limerick. The two projects will receive a total allocation of €611,515 over three years.

No:	94
Action:	Continue the implementation of supports for the Rural Female Entrepreneurs Initiative (Acorns programme).
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>The ACORNS programme, sponsored by DAFM, addresses the skills, enterprise and capability gaps of rural start up female entrepreneurs. It provides participants with the knowledge, support and networking opportunities to meet and even exceed their business goals.</p> <p>The third year of ACORNS was announced in August 2017. There was a strong demand, with 131 applications for 56 places. The 2017 cycle also included a further development phase of ACORNS pilot and ACORNS 2. 134 female entrepreneurs from rural Ireland are currently being actively supported through ACORNS. These consist of ACORNS year 3 (56 participants), the further development of ACORNS year 2 participants (43) and the continued development of ACORNS pilot participants (35).</p> <p>Progress made by participants on the 2016 programme demonstrates the benefit of ACORNS. Nine business began trading for the first time, there was a 21% increase in turnover among the 47 trading businesses during the six-month cycle of the programme and eight participants made export sales, including three that were first time exporters.</p> <p>Three topic based workshops have taken place in Q1 2018 – Social Media, How to approach your bank, and Legislation for Food Companies.</p>	

No:	95
Action:	Create an industry-wide, long-term plan, for Ireland as a global hub for the production of Film, TV Drama, and Animation.
Lead:	DCHG, Irish Film Board
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>The Report entitled <i>Economic Analysis of the Audiovisual Sector in the Republic of Ireland</i> measures the economic value of the Irish audiovisual industry and proposes policy changes to support its future growth. It is anticipated that the report will be published shortly.</p>	

No:	96
Action:	Develop and launch a new www.ruralireland.ie website which will act as a central portal to provide information on relevant supports, and showcase best practice examples of rural development.
Lead:	DRCD
Timeline	2017
Status	Completed
Progress Update December 2017:	
<p>The ruralireland.ie portal was launched in June 2017. The site is intended to deliver information on developments affecting rural Ireland from across Government, provide updates on the delivery of the Action Plan for Rural Development, and showcase best practice examples of rural development.</p> <p>Subsequent to the launch of the portal, a new central Government portal, gov.ie, was developed to provide a platform for citizen access to all Government services. The Department of Rural and Community Development's associated websites, including ruralireland.ie, will migrate to the gov.ie platform. Further development of ruralireland.ie will be examined in the context of the migration to gov.ie.</p>	

No:	97
Action:	Conduct a review of the REDZ initiative to measure its impact on rural communities, and to support the development of future calls for projects under the scheme.
Lead:	DRCD
Timeline	2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update:	
<p>A pilot Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ) initiative was run in 2015 and a further round of the programmes was delivered through Local Authorities in 2016. REDZ is a model which seeks to support economic activity between defined functional, rather than geographic, areas in rural Ireland. While there are some good examples of successful REDZ projects throughout the country, a formal review of the programme as a whole has not yet been conducted. However, the concept of towns and villages working across administrative boundaries was incorporated into the Town and Village Renewal Scheme in 2017 and 2018.</p>	

No:	98
Action:	Through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), support the establishment and development of social enterprises in rural areas.
Lead:	DRCD

Timeline Q4 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

One of the objectives of SICAP is to support social enterprises operating in disadvantaged communities in providing services to these communities and linking people from SICAP target groups to employment opportunities within the sector.

The number of social enterprises assisted under SICAP in 2017 was 287 (161% of annual target of 178). 7 new social enterprises were established and 19 social enterprise grants awarded.

No: 99

Action: Develop and publish a National Policy on Social Enterprise which will encompass the full range of activity in this sector.

Lead: DRCD, relevant Departments and Agencies

Timeline Q3 2017

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The development of the National Policy on Social Enterprise is underpinned by a research and consultation exercise conducted by the Department of Rural and Community Development in partnership with the Social Finance Foundation. A Steering Group, which includes practitioners from the social enterprise sector, was established in the middle of 2017 to oversee the research.

As part of this project, a number of consultation workshops were carried out in 2017 to obtain the views of the sector on key elements of the policy development, and an on-line survey was also conducted with sectoral interests. In addition, a series of meetings were held with relevant Government Departments and other bodies on specific thematic issues.

The Social Enterprise Policy is being finalised on foot of this research, with a view to publication in Q2 2018.

No: 100

Action: Commission a specific piece of research in relation to the impact of Brexit on rural areas, particularly rural areas in the Border region.

Lead: DRCD, WDC

Timeline Q1 2017

Status: Closed

Progress Update:

Since the publication of the Action Plan for Rural Development a significant number of papers and commentaries have been published on the potential impact of Brexit on Ireland, including rural Ireland. In addition, a number of sectorial workshops on the issue have been held with local communities and other stakeholders by Government Departments, including the former Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

In light of the body of work already carried out (and continuing) in relation to the impact of Brexit, it was decided not to proceed with the specific measure in the Action Plan.

A common finding from the research/studies which have been carried out is that the type of sectors which rural-based SMEs tend to be involved in are likely to be particularly vulnerable to the impact of Brexit. The Government is continuing to work, through various State agencies, to provide support and advice to businesses on how to prepare for and address the possible impacts of Brexit and updates are provided on a number of these initiatives in this Progress Report.

No:	101
Action:	Fund the development of a programme of initiatives to increase the awareness and capacity of SMEs to deal with the practical consequences of Brexit for cross border trade.
Lead:	Inter Trade Ireland
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress

Progress Update:

The Department of Enterprise and Innovation provided additional funding to InterTrade Ireland (ITI) specifically for this initiative. This work was ongoing throughout 2017 and the full range of Brexit awareness initiatives will continue as the Brexit process rolls out. ITI has a dedicated Brexit Advisory Service and details of events to help businesses plan for Brexit are available on www.intertradeireland.com.

The Brexit Loan Scheme was formally announced in Budget 2018 (October 2017) and will make a fund of €300 million available to eligible SMEs and small mid-caps that have been negatively affected by Brexit. The Scheme leverages €23 million of exchequer funding (€14 million provided by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and €9 million provided by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine). Given that many of the sectors most exposed to Brexit-related difficulties are also significant regional employers, the Brexit Loan Scheme is of particular relevance to businesses in rural and border regions.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is providing 40% of the initial funding, so 40% of the funds made available by the Scheme will be ring-fenced for food businesses.

The Brexit Loan Scheme was opened for applications in March 2018.

No:	102
Action:	Complete the planned programme of courthouse refurbishment works in seven locations with an investment of €135m over two years and estimated employment of 700 over the construction period.
Lead:	DJE
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
During 2017 work progressed on all seven sites. Drogheda Courthouse was completed in June 2017, followed by Letterkenny Courthouse in November 2017, Wexford Courthouse in December 2017, Limerick Courthouse in February 2018 and Waterford Courthouse in March 2018. The remaining courthouses in Cork and Mullingar are expected to be delivered by early summer 2018.	

No:	103
Action:	Continue to deliver the National Waste Prevention Programme on behalf of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, including country-wide programmes such as Green Enterprise, Green Business, Green Hospitality, Green Healthcare, Smarter Farming and 'Stop Food Waste'.
Lead:	EPA, DCCA
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The National Waste Prevention Programme (NWPP) continues to deliver programmes across all regions in Ireland; this includes Green Healthcare, Green Enterprise, Green Business, Stop Food Waste and Smart Farming amongst others. The Annual Report for 2016 was published in July 2017 and is available on the EPA's website.	
Stop Food Waste works with communities throughout Ireland to build capacity for reducing food waste at grass roots level, in partnership with local authorities and other networks. The Stop Food Waste Challenge, which has been run in nearly 50 mainly rural communities, is very successful achieving typical reductions in household food waste of up to 45%.	
Through the NWPP-led Local Authority Prevention Network, local authorities around the country have been supporting local businesses, schools and citizens to live more sustainably through a variety of community-based activities.	
Farm Hazardous Waste collection schemes have been held in each county. From 2013-2016 nearly 7,000 farmers safely disposed of a total 800 tonnes of hazardous materials from farms. Smart Farming has worked with more than 1,000 farmers across all regions, saving an average of €5,000 p.a. per farmer and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from their farms by 7 to 10%. Farm Hazardous Waste collections took place at 10 sites nationwide in October/November 2017.	

No:	104
Action:	Continue to provide SEAI supports for small businesses across the country, including provision of advice through www.seai.ie , to help them to be more energy efficient and therefore more competitive and environmentally sustainable
Lead:	EPA, DCCA
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
SEAI continues to provide advice and support to small businesses across the country to help them improve their energy efficiency and thereby reduce costs and improve competitiveness. Assistance includes guidance, best practice supports and training. More information on these supports is provided in (Section 5.1.3) of Ireland's recent National Energy Efficiency Action Plan and on the SEAI website www.seai.ie .	
SEAI launched pilot schemes in 2017 aimed at the SME sector, focused on lighting upgrades for specific SME sectors and supporting dairy farmers to reduce energy use in milking parlours. SEAI are collaborating with Teagasc on this initiative.	
The Dairy Pilot Scheme supports the installation of variable speed technology in milking parlours, as well as Vacuum Pumps, milk pumps and smart meters. The subvention level was 50%, with 50 applications processed in 2017 when scheme closed in October.	

No:	105
Action:	Through Food Wise 2025, support the creation of additional jobs along the supply chain from producer level to high-end value-added product development (target to 2025 is 23,000 jobs).
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The CSO's Labour Force Survey (LFS) has replaced the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) from quarter 3 2017 which has resulted in a recalculation of employment figures. The agri-food sector continues to make a significant contribution to employment at national and regional levels accounting for 173,800 (7.9%) of total employment. The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed T.D. launched Steps to Success 2017, the second annual progress report of Food Wise 2025 on 5 July. It highlights the importance of the agri-food sector and the continued support for this sector to continue to make a vital contribution to the Irish economy, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner.	

No:	106
Action:	As part of Food Wise 2025, increase the value of food exports, which will support rural and coastal economies (target to 2025 is 85% increase in exports to €19bn).
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress

Progress Update:

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine launched Steps to Success 2017, the second annual progress report of Food Wise 2025 on 5 July 2017. It highlights the importance of the agri-food sector and the continued support for this sector to continue to make a vital contribution to the Irish economy, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner.

Total agri-foods exports in 2017 were €13.6billion, up from €12.2 billion in 2016.

Q4 2017 Food Wise 2025 updates:

- A: Target Achieved (37) (10%)
- B: Substantial action undertaken and ongoing (184) (50%)
- C: Action commenced and progressing (137) (37%)
- D: Action at commencement stage (5) (1%)
- E: Action not yet commenced (5) (1%)

DAFM hosted the successful conference, Food Wise: Challenge, Ambition, Opportunity in Croke Park on 4 December 2017. 580 people attended the event. The purpose of hosting the conference was: To acknowledge the achievements of the sector in recent years under the Food Harvest 2020 strategy and its successor Food Wise 2025; and assess and prepare for the challenges ahead.

There were four sessions: Global Markets Insights; Policy Drivers; Environment Sustainability and Agri-Food; Food Wise: Impact in a new era. The conference provided a forum to review progress to date, understand the significant challenges ahead, including in particular Brexit and environmental challenges, and renew the Government's commitment to provide an enabling environment for the sustainable growth of the sector.

Minister Creed stated at the Conference in December that he intended to lead a step up in the work of the Food Wise High Level Implementation Committee. This Committee has the ability to deliver on the joined-up Government approach.

The Department will now initiate a programme of meetings of the High Level Implementation Committee with key stakeholder groups to determine how we can all reinforce the Food Wise strategy, through real and practical actions.

Food Wise 2025 is a living strategy which can and must react and adapt to developments both inside and outside our sector. It should respond to changing circumstances while remaining loyal to the core vision and objectives of the plan itself.

No:	107
Action:	Develop, enhance and promote the effectiveness of the Origin Green Programme as a key marketing tool for the Irish agri-food sector.
Lead:	Bord Bia
Timeline	2017-2020
Status:	In Progress

Progress Update:

Ireland’s national food sustainability programme, Origin Green, contributes to improving the environmental, as well as the economic and social, sustainability of the sector. It brings together our food industry – from farmers to food producers, retailers to food service operators – with the common goal of sustainable food production.

At farm, level progress is being made towards 100% membership of the Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme, with over 15,500 out of 18,000 dairy farmers now participating. Over 50,000 farmers are participating in our Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme. In the fourth quarter of 2017, Bord Bia completed the transition of the Poultry and Horticulture Quality Assurance Schemes to the Sustainable Assurance Schemes and continues to work on transitioning the remaining assurance schemes (pigmeat, eggs) to be completed in 2018.

At company level, there are 275 verified members, representing 90% of total Irish exports. A further 297 companies are preparing plans for verification. The retailer and foodservice charter has now been adopted by 7 major retail and foodservice companies.

At the end of August 2017, Bord Bia launched an Origin Green Irish public awareness campaign, including TV, print and online activity. The aim of the 3 year campaign is to drive awareness amongst the general public of the programme and the need to produce our food in a sustainable manner. The campaign achieved its target of 10% of all adults being aware of Origin Green by the end of the 2017 activity.

Over 90% of all dairy farmers now certified: 16,076. At the end of February 2018, at company level, there are 310 verified members of Origin Green, representing over 90% of Ireland’s total food and drink exports portfolio.

To increase Irish consumers’ understanding of the Bord Bia Quality Mark and to encourage them to choose ham and bacon with the Quality Mark – two promotion campaigns are running on TV in Q1 – a QA Ham & Bacon and a QA Pork. Bord Bia has also sponsored ‘Nevin Maguire’s food trails’ also running on RTE. Starting in late February, the 2018 series features seven episodes with Neven Maguire visiting a range of quality assured producers and cooking with ingredients with the Quality Mark. This will be supported by PR and online activities. Campaigns still running.

Consumer food companies exhibited under the Origin Green banner at Gulfood in Dubai in February, where a record number of 93,000 attended with 5,000 exhibitors from 181 countries.

In March, Bord Bia hosted a pavilion for the first time at Internorga, Germany’s leading foodservice and hospitality tradeshow where consumer food companies exhibited under the Origin Green banner. The show showcased products, innovations, and trends for the whole of the foodservice and hospitality markets, attracting 1,800 exhibitors and over 95,000 national and international trade visitors.

No:	108
Action:	Support a further cohort of new food entrepreneurs under Food Works and develop the Food Works Plus supports for those entrepreneurs continuing to pursue their ventures.
Lead:	Bord Bia
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
<p>Food Works is a Government-supported accelerator programme that helps develop the next generation of scalable and export-driven Irish food businesses.</p> <p>Following an application period and screening process involving the Food Works team and external stakeholders, nine companies were selected to progress on to Food Works 5 programme which began in October 2017. This programme will continue until May 2018 during which time participants will focus on developing their investor ready business plans. In the October to December period four workshops (facilitated by the three agencies: Bord Bia, Teagasc and Enterprise Ireland) covering Consumer & Proposition Development, Finance, Manufacturing and Introduction to Marketing were scheduled. Participants are also being supported on a 1:1 basis by dedicated business advisors and four of the participants were commencing consumer research with Bord Bia.</p> <p>Food Works Plus alumni gathered on 12 December in Bord Bia to mark the fifth anniversary of the Food Works programme. This was the second group networking event of the year and included a showcase display of current Food Works participants.</p> <p>A number of the new cohorts were existing Teagasc clients and all are working with the Teagasc Food Industry Development Department as part of the Food Works programme. A number of Food Works Plus initiatives have also been rolled out.</p> <p>The Food Works programme is currently in the middle of the fifth cycle of the programme. The nine participants most recently met with a number of the prominent public and private funding entities, to better understand the options available to their businesses' as they grow. The programme will culminate in May with all participants presenting their investor ready business plans.</p>	

No:	109
Action:	Support food start-ups through initiatives with retailers including the Food Academy Advance with Musgraves SuperValu and the Taste Buds Programme with Tesco.
Lead:	Bord Bia
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	

The period from October to December 2017 saw a total of 48 companies participating on four Food Academy Start programmes and one of these programmes (17 participants) started in the third quarter. These Food Academy Start programmes were all delivered in the Leinster area with two of the groups offered to combine LEOs in the Dublin area. Other LEOs that ran the programme included Laois and Wicklow, with ten participants on each programme.

12 companies graduated from the Food Academy Advance programme in late October 2017. This represented the third wave of the Advance programme, with participating companies from across the country, though strongest representation from Co Dublin and Co Cork.

A full evaluation of the Food Academy Start programme was conducted early in the year and actions resulting from this have been progressed in late 2017. These include comprehensive revisions to the programme content. Programme delivery is being revised also with a tender from Enterprise Ireland sent out for LEO network delivery of the programme from Quarter 2 2018. In addition to this, Bord Bia and LEOs have agreed to collaborate in developing a 'Food Starter' programme. Work on this started in November 2017 and sign-off and finalisation of full content is taking place for delivery by individual LEOs as an entry-level programme (and a prerequisite for Food Academy Start).

The development of the new Food Starter Programme is one of the key focus areas for Q1 2018. This programme is being developed in response to an outcome from the 2017 evaluation of the Food Academy Start programme. A need for a standardised national elementary stage food training programme was identified. This elementary stage programme, named Food Starter, will have its content developed by Bord Bia in collaboration with LEOs. The programme will be delivered throughout the country at local level by LEO offices. A pilot of the two-day programme was run on 8 and 22 February 2018. Final revisions based on the pilots will be made prior to launch and national rollout. The Food Starter programme is to become a prerequisite for early stage companies looking to participate on Food Academy Start.

No:	110
Action:	Support the agri-food sector through the financial services industry to ensure that financial products are developed for all sectors of farming across the industry.
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	The Agriculture Cashflow Support Loan Scheme was developed by DAFM in co-operation with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI), and made €150 million available to farmers throughout Ireland at low-cost interest rates of 2.95%. One of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine's priorities has been to address the impact of the change in the sterling exchange rate and lower commodity prices in some agriculture sectors during 2016. The Scheme provided farmers with a low-cost, flexible source of working capital, allowing them to pay down more expensive forms of short-term debt, ensuring the ongoing financial sustainability of viable farming enterprises. The Scheme was launched on 31 January 2017 and by the beginning of March, all of the participating banks had reported that their funds were committed.

Based on this model, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine announced a “Brexit Loan Scheme” in Budget 2018, which will provide affordable, flexible financing to Irish businesses that are either currently impacted by Brexit or who will be in the future. The new Scheme aims to make up to €300 million of working capital finance available to SMEs and mid-cap businesses (up to 499 employees). The finance will be easier to access, more competitively priced (at a proposed interest rate of 4%), and at more favourable terms than current offerings. This will give Brexit-impacted businesses time and space to adapt and to grow into the future. The new Scheme will be delivered by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) through commercial lenders and is expected to be in place in March 2018. Given their unique exposure to the UK market, DAFM’s contribution of €9 million out of total public funding of €23 million funding ensures that at least 40% of the fund will be available to food businesses.

The €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme was opened for applications on the 28 March 2018. In October’s budget, €14 million was secured by the then Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, together with €9 million by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, for the Brexit Loan Scheme. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine’s share of funding ensures that at least 40% of the fund will be available to food businesses. The Scheme will be open to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees, and has the potential to benefit over 5,000 companies.

No:	111
Action:	Implement the Seafood Development Programme (2014-2020) through a range of supports for fishermen to adapt to the new Common Fisheries Policy, seafood processing, aquaculture, inshore fisheries and the Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGS).
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>€28m was announced in February 2017 for on-going capital investment in Ireland's 6 fishery harbour centres and smaller harbours to support safety, maintenance and fisheries processing and development. €12m in funding is being provided for seven Fisheries Local Action Groups for the period of 2017 – 2021 and is focused on local development in coastal areas and communities.</p> <p>Grants of €3.1m have been announced for 13 seafood enterprises under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme. €1.6m in grants have been awarded to 11 aquaculture enterprises and four 3rd level research institutions under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme for the seafood sector.</p> <p>An investment of €3.6m was announced for 153 projects under the EMFF Fisheries Local Area Action Group Strategy for Ireland’s seven coastal regions.</p>

No:	112
Action:	Implement supports for the fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors under: the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme to achieve sales of seafood worth €1 billion by 2020; the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development; and Harnessing our Ocean Wealth.
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
<p>Following its launch in 2016, implementation of Ireland’s European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme accelerated in 2017 with 16 schemes operational. Supports are focussed on fostering innovation, adding value, increasing production, enhancing sustainability, and increasing competitiveness in the seafood sector. Sixty six grant awards totalling €7.8m were announced in 2017 under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme supporting investment of €19.2m in aquaculture, fisheries and seafood processing.</p> <p>The 2016 Report on Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth shows significant growth in the ‘blue economy’ with a 10% increase in employment along with a 23% increase in turnover and 20% increase in gross value added.</p>	

No:	113
Action:	Finalise the Draft Bioenergy Plan, which will capture the potential of the bioenergy sector and help generate employment opportunities.
Lead:	DCCAЕ
Timeline	Q1 2017
Status	Delayed
Progress Update:	
<p>The draft Bioenergy Plan is being updated to reflect policy developments such as the publication of the Energy White Paper (Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future) and the National Mitigation Plan. An updated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and NATURA Impact Statement (NIS) are also currently being prepared. The draft plan, SEA and NIS are expected to be published for public consultation shortly.</p>	

No:	114
Action:	Create a Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) designed to encourage investment in renewable electricity generation in a cost effective manner and help support economic growth and job creation in rural Ireland.
Lead:	EPA, DCCAЕ
Timeline	Q4 2017

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The final reports to underpin the new RESS (Economic report and Community report) were finalised in Q2 2017 and published in Q3 2017 as part of the public consultation on the RESS. The public consultation presented the emerging design principles of the new RESS and over 1,250 submissions were received. These have now been assessed and a final scheme design will be brought to Government for approval in Q2 2018. Following this, the RESS will be subject to an EU State Aid approval process and it is expected the new scheme will open to new applicants in the summer of 2019.

RESS will provide a framework for renewable electricity technologies to deliver renewable generation in a cost effective manner, while simultaneously delivering increased opportunities for community ownership and participation in and benefit from renewable electricity projects. Opportunities will be developed for communities and citizens to participate in renewable electricity projects in their own local areas.

No: 115

Action: Create a Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH) which will help stimulate demand for biomass and support economic growth and jobs in rural Ireland.

Lead: DCCA

Timeline Q3 2017

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Government approval has been secured for the introduction of the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat. Budget 2018 allocated €7 million to fund the initial phase of the Scheme in 2018 which will consist of two types of support mechanism:-

- An ongoing operational support (paid for a period of up to 15 years) for new installations or installations that currently use a fossil fuel heating system and convert to using biomass heating systems or anaerobic digestion heating systems
- A grant (of up to 30%) to support investment in renewable heating systems that use heat pumps (air source, ground source or water source heat pumps).

The administrators of the Scheme, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), are currently developing the detailed Terms and Conditions for the Scheme. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment is engaging with the European Commission to secure State Aid approval. Subject to this approval, it is expected that the Scheme will commence operation in 2018.

No:	116
Action:	Establish a baseline assessment of the current level of Bioeconomy activity and opportunities across the various sectors in Ireland.
Lead:	D/Taoiseach
Timeline	Q1 2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
An Interdepartmental Group on the bioeconomy was established in November 2016. A scoping exercise was conducted with Departments to identify the current/potential activities in the area, and a workshop with key stakeholders was held in February 2017.	

No:	117
Action:	Hold a consultative seminar on the Bioeconomy with key stakeholders, including the development agencies and the private sector.
Lead:	D/Taoiseach
Timeline	Q1 2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
In conjunction with Teagasc, a workshop with key stakeholders was held in February 2017.	

No:	118
Action:	Publish a high-level Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy in Ireland.
Lead:	D/Taoiseach
Timeline	Q2 2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
The Department of the Taoiseach published the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy on the 12 March 2018.	

No:	119
Action:	As part of the International Financial Services (IFS) Strategy 2020, showcase the competitive and operational advantages of regional locations for new and existing international financial services activities.
Lead:	IDA
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
IDA Ireland does its utmost to encourage clients to locate in areas that are most in need of investment. The Agency continues to actively engage with its existing client base to support them in growing their business to retain jobs and expand their existing footprint in the different regions. The Funds Working Group is an important component of IFS2020. The Group includes participation from Industry, IDA Ireland, Trade Associations and Government Departments.	

No:	120
Action:	Through the Regional Action Plans for Jobs process, identify, in consultation with EI, IDA and other stakeholders, areas for further IFS-related actions at regional level.
Lead:	DBEI
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
In all, 24 actions from across the 8 Regional Action Plans were identified as IFS specific. All of these were commenced, with 12 actions completed and 12 actions which remain ongoing.	
A number of these actions aimed to build on existing expertise in certain regions and included actions such as the initiation of apprenticeships, collaboration between industry and third level institutions and other similar initiatives designed to ensure the availability of a pool of suitably skilled talent, meeting industry needs in a region.	
Other actions were aimed at building on existing bases and promoting the development of hubs for certain sectors within the regions, such as the development of a Financial Services hub in Wexford town and the promotion of Limerick and Shannon as suitable locations for 2nd site operations.	
D/BEI will continue to monitor the ongoing actions and seek further engagement from the regions in line with the expected follow-on strategy as the Regional Action Plans come to their conclusion.	

No:	121
Action:	Through the Regional Skills Fora, facilitate close co-operation between education and training providers and enterprise in addressing identified skills needs in the regions and a local link with the implementation of other strategies including the Regional Action Plans for Jobs and Pathways to Work.
Lead:	DES
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Regional Skills Fora (RSF) are engaging with small, medium and large enterprises as well as representative organisations. In 2017, the RSF engaged with over 700 individual companies and associations. Over 60% of this engagement was with SMEs, with an increasing level of engagement with micro enterprises.	

No:	122
Action:	Increase the number of young people accessing employment in their communities through: strengthening the apprenticeship and traineeship systems, enhancing the range of courses and increasing student, places, achieving Government targets of over 100 apprenticeship schemes, and a cumulative target of 50,000 apprenticeship and traineeship registrations to 2020.
Lead:	DES
Timeline	2017-2020
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Currently eleven new apprenticeship programmes have been formally validated. Nine of these programmes are underway, with 349 registered apprentices. A total of 8 new traineeships have now been developed with 222 enrolments to date. A Ministerial briefing was held on traineeships and a new five step guide and website was launched in this period.	
Following a second call for apprenticeship proposals earlier in 2017, 26 new programmes have been approved for further development into national apprenticeships. The recommended proposals span a wide range of skills and sectors including construction, engineering, horticulture and agriculture. It is estimated that the development process will take 12-15 months.	

No:	123
Action:	Increase options for post-secondary school leavers in rural Ireland through agreeing Annual Service Plans between SOLAS and Education Training Boards (ETBs), and monitoring progress against agreed quality and performance targets.
Lead:	SOLAS

Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>Under the FET Strategy 2014-2019, the annual planning process of FET services provision is being enhanced and improved. Full implementation this year of the Programme Learner Support System (PLSS) will contribute significantly, as will the full development of the new strategic <i>inputs</i> and <i>outputs</i> model over the life of the Strategy.</p>	

No:	124
Action:	Enact the Technological Universities Bill to underpin the development of a new model of higher education in Ireland, so that these regional institutions will have greater industry links, support enterprise, underpin diversity and promote access and participation on a regional basis with a view to significantly boosting our capacity to create and retain jobs in regions.
Lead:	DES
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
<p>The Bill was reintroduced at Committee Stage in the Dáil on 15 November 2017 and completed its passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas on 8 March 2018. It was signed into law by the President on 19 March 2018.</p>	

No:	126
Action:	Fund research proposals in Smart Agriculture/ Precision Agriculture to improve farm management and increase quality of life for farmers in rural Ireland.
Lead:	SFI
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>SFI received 15 proposals in the agricultural research domain for the 2016 Investigators Programme. Several of these proposals were potential co-funds with Teagasc or the EPA. These proposals were reviewed during 2017. Resulting from these proposals, SFI made four Investigators Programme awards in this domain in 2017, with a total value of €4.9 million. These four awards focus on: dairy cattle breeding; protecting crops against diseases and pests; using ultraviolet LEDs to improve plant quality; and reducing emissions from fertiliser production. Two of the awards are funded in partnership with Teagasc; one of the awards is funded in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency. Additionally, the 2017 TIDA programme made one</p>	

award in this domain in 2017, with a total value of €125,000. This TIDA award studies the detection of pathogens in food.

In 2017 SFI announced funding for two Research Centres which are related to agriculture. One Research Centre called Beacon focusses on the bioeconomy. Beacon researchers how waste products can be reused into useful products. SFI is investing €15 million into Beacon. Ten industry partners are investing €6.5 million in cash and in-kind support for Beacon.

Another Research Centre, currently called Future Milk, is funded in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine. Future Milk studies how the Internet of Things, sensors and software can be brought together to benefit the dairy industry. As of December 2017, SFI is in the final stages of making a formal offer of funding to Future Milk.

No: 127

Action: Strengthen links between Údarás and Institutes of Technology and Universities to build capacity in the Gaeltacht region and promote research and innovation.

Lead: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

A partnership has been established between Letterkenny I.T. and Gaioth Dobhair. Letterkenny I.T. has established a base in Páirc Ghnó Ghaioth Dobhair to support local businesses to establish themselves. Údarás has also entered into a partnership with I.T. Tralee on a tourism research project.

LYIT is liaising with business on the estate and surrounding areas to establish their needs, which require research, skills and product development.

An tÚdarás has approved funding for I. T. Tralee to do research on a tourism project examining the potential of developing local projects within the Wild Atlantic Way routes and communities.

No: 128

Action: Develop stronger links with the diaspora to access investment, establish networks and source skills and experience for the Gaeltacht area.

Lead: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Diaspora na Gaeltachta project has been established and is funded by Údarás na Gaeltachta and is working at the initial stage with Gaeltacht companies to identify the skills and services required so that people with suitable skills and qualifications can return home to the Gaeltacht to take up key positions in these industries. The Diaspora project also supports new start-ups and remote working opportunities.

No: 129
Action: Work with public and private sector stakeholders to identify and address skills training needs in traditional building skills and architectural conservation through the development and implementation of a Traditional Building Skills and Conservation Education Action Plan to assist the regeneration of our historic cities, towns and villages.
Lead: DCHG
Timeline: 2017-2018
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Good progress has been made on this Action to date. A number of key steps have been drafted in a consultation report which will be circulated to stakeholders. When finalised, the actions will provide a national framework for architectural conservation curriculum development and the design and delivery of training provision for traditional skills.

No: 130
Action: Improve knowledge transfer and exchange to farmers by developing a network across all State agencies and relevant advisory bodies to deliver clear advice on how farmers can adopt sustainable practices that deliver both environmental and economic benefits.
Lead: Teagasc
Timeline: 2017-2020
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Teagasc ConnectEd is a new and exciting initiative which has been designed to provide businesses and professionals working with the agri-food sector structured access to Teagasc research, education, knowledge resources and online tools.

The Teagasc ConnectEd programme has been set up and has established a credible client base of almost 500 users in the first full year. Teagasc maintains regular contact with all stakeholders. A seminar and workshop were held on 30 May to engage with all stakeholder groups to address Brexit and environmental challenges.

The Teagasc ConnectEd programme is expanding its client base and additional supports for the programme are being put in place.

During Q1 2018, 1,103 training places were provided to industry professionals through the ConnectEd Programme. 400 members have renewed their ConnectEd membership in this period. 11 regional economic briefings were delivered across the country during February and March.

No: 131

Action: Develop and deliver training and education programmes for farmers to:
– ensure that the appropriate skillsets and knowledge are applied at each stage of development of the primary producer’s business; and – Up-skill farmers as employers, in areas such as improving farm practices, employing staff and responsibilities as an employer.

Lead: Teagasc

Timeline: Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

On foot of the Teagasc Education Strategic Vision project, Teagasc submitted proposals for the development of apprenticeships to the recent Apprenticeship Council call for new apprenticeships. The proposals involve agriculture, horticulture and equine.

DAFM held a workshop on skills needs at farm level in April 2017 with representatives from farm operatives, farmers and farm managers and next generation farmers. DAFM is working to progress the recommendations arising from this workshop.

In October 2017, the Food Wise High Level Implementation Committee (HLIC) agreed that research needed to be carried out on addressing farm labour shortages for the dairy sector which arose from the Food Wise 2025 Workshop on Skills Shortages in the agri food sector that was held in April 2017. The Dairy Labour Industry Stakeholder Group Action Plan will be available in Q2 2018.

No: 132

Action: Continue to develop and implement the ‘Options Plus’ programme for improving off-farm income generation of farmers and to link farm families with a variety of learning opportunities provided by other agencies including the ETBs, LEOs, LDCs , third level institutions and the Department of Social Protection.

Lead: Teagasc

Timeline: Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Expand Your Horizons meetings were completed in 28 locations around the country in 2017 in conjunction with the National Rural Network. The central focus of the meetings was the provision of information for rural dwellers who wish to explore new possibilities for improved economic and social development for their own lives and for the betterment of their community.

The most frequent requests for additional information received at the regional Teagasc Options Diversification Workshops relate to tourism and food. In 2018 Teagasc plan to host a Food Tourism conference in late September in Galway. The conference has been planned to coincide with Galway's designation as European Region of Gastronomy for 2018.

No: 133

Action: Continue the rollout and promotion of www.opt-in.ie (a website aimed at helping rural dwellers find the means and skills necessary to increase their income generating options), currently piloted in Limerick and Tipperary.

Lead: DAFM, Teagasc

Timeline: Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:
The Opt-In pilot is now fully operational in Limerick and Tipperary. Preparations are now underway for a national rollout in Q2 of 2018.

Further roll-out and preparation for launch of Opt-In ongoing in Q1 2018. The award of Enterprise Ireland regional funding to Teagasc and Galway County Council to develop the BIA food campus at Teagasc Athenry will add substantially to supports for artisan food training, product development, marketing and scale-up opportunities for rural dwellers.

No: 134

Action: Provide in the region of €1m per annum for the Advanced Irish Language Skills Initiative, aimed at training Irish speakers for employment in the EU institutions and at developing the freelance Irish language translation sector at home.

Lead: DCHG

Timeline: 2017-2019

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:
A number of specialised courses were sanctioned for 9 institutions at diploma, degree, higher diploma and masters levels over a period of 8 years 2015/16 -2023/24.

A total of 12 courses were offered in 2016/17. At this point it is envisaged that 12 courses will progress for 2017/18.

No: 135

Action: Continue to support jobseekers through the network of local Intreo offices and DSP case workers.

Lead: DEASP

Timeline: Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The Department's case officers continue to support and meet the needs of jobseekers through the network of Intreo Offices spread throughout the country.

The Department will continue to provide jobseekers with the necessary supports and training to help them secure employment in the open labour market.

No: 136

Action: Through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), increase work-readiness and support individuals in accessing employment and self-employment.

Lead: DRCD

Timeline Q4 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

SICAP Goal 3 is to engage with marginalised target groups/individuals and residents of disadvantaged communities who are unemployed but who do not fall within mainstream employment service provision or who are referred to SICAP to move them closer to the labour market and improve work readiness, support them in accessing employment and self-employment and creating social enterprise opportunities.

As of 20 December 2017, 29,850 individuals received SICAP Goal 3 employment supports (116% of annual target 25,589). 2,267 individuals progressed to employment (part-time or full-time) within 6 months of receiving employment supports (this is 133% of annual target of 1,708). 5,330 individuals progressed to self-employment within 6 months of receiving a Goal 3 employment support (89% of annual target of 5,997).

No: 137

Action: Review impact of SICAP in rural areas and consider this review in the development of a re-designed SICAP for 2018.

Lead: DRCD

Timeline Q4 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2015 – 2017 ran to 31 December 2017. Between 2015 and 2017 with the assistance of SICAP:

- 110,000 people were supported on a 1:1 basis

- 5,030 local community groups received assistance
- 9,720 gained a higher qualification
- 5,801 people got jobs
- 15,923 people set up a new business – which created 1,695 full-time jobs
- 38,352 people took part in life-long learning courses

Over 29% of these recipients lived in disadvantaged areas and 40% of them came from a jobless household.

In April 2018 SICAP 2018-2022 was launched by the Department of Rural and Community Development, which will provide €190 million over the five year period.

No:	138
Action:	Through the Dormant Account Funds, support disadvantaged groups in rural and urban communities through measures that assist their access to employment.
Lead:	DRCD
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>In April 2017, a new Dormant Accounts Disbursement Scheme for the period 2017-2019 was approved by Government, setting out the objectives to be achieved by making disbursements from the Dormant Accounts Fund over that period and the strategies for achieving those objectives. Following on from this, in July 2017 the Department of Rural and Community Development published a new Dormant Accounts Action Plan 2017 which allocated funding of €40.4m to 40 measures to be delivered by a range of Government Departments and Agencies assist specific disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>The Department has begun the preparation of the 2018 Dormant Accounts Action Plan which will allocate funding towards additional projects to supports disadvantaged groups and the disabled.</p> <p>In June 2017, Minister Michael Ring announced a funding allocation of €1.648 million from the Dormant Accounts Fund to support 41 social enterprise projects around the country that assist disadvantaged people and the disabled, with an emphasis on rural areas.</p>	

No:	139
Action:	Implement changes to the Farm Assist Scheme, as announced in Budget 2017, which will increase the value of the weekly Farm Assist payments for low income farmers, in particular for those with children, which will ensure that farm families are supported in actively farming their land.
Lead:	DEASP
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed

Progress Update:

This action has been implemented. In addition, as part of Budget 2018, all Farm Assist recipients will receive an increase of €5 per week in the personal rate of payment from 26th March 2018, with proportionate increases for qualified adults and for qualified children.

No: 142**Action:** Maintain the provision of schemes such as the Rural Social Scheme, Community Employment, Back To Education Allowance and Tús in rural communities and the Gaeltacht, having regard to the declining numbers on the Live Register and the need to ensure that these schemes are targeted to the needs of jobseekers and others.**Lead:** DEASP**Timeline** 2017**Status:** In Progress**Progress Update:**

In February 2017, the Government approved a number of changes to the terms and conditions governing the operation of employment programmes such as Community Employment, Tús and the Rural Social Scheme. While there has been a 40% fall in the Live Register in the period 2012 – 2017, over the same period CE participation has remained relatively constant with the numbers on schemes in June 2012 almost the same as at the end of October 2017 (circa 21,000).

As approved by Government, the changes broaden access to CE to a wider range of people and emphasise the importance of training and upskilling of participants. The main changes are as follows:

- the qualifying age for CE places has been reduced from 25 to 21 years;
- all CE placements for new entrants aged between 21 and 55 years are for 1 year. However CE participants working towards a major award can seek to extend their participation by up to a further two years;
- those over 55 years of age can remain on CE for three consecutive years; and
- it is now easier for previous participants to re-enter CE as CE participation prior to 2007 is disregarded (previously the year used was 2000).

As stated in relation to Action 50, 500 additional places on the Rural Social Scheme were announced in January 2017. At the end of October 2017, there were 2,814 participants on the RSS, 21,116 participants on CE and a further 6,359 on Tús.

The operation of CE and other schemes, such as the Back to Education Allowance, are kept under ongoing review by the Department. This is to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of jobseekers and that they reflect the changing employment opportunities available in urban and rural areas as the overall numbers of people who are unemployed continue to fall.

No:	143
Action:	As part of the EU Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020, roll out training under the “women returning to the workforce” strand, targeting women who are currently detached from the labour market and who are interested in entering/re-entering employment.
Lead:	DJE
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
14 projects are funded under the PEIL 2.7 Women Returning to the Workforce strand and contracts are in place until 2019. Ten of these projects have a focus as part of their programmes on rural areas and include: Ballyhoura CLG, Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board, Equal Ireland, IRD Duhallow, NCCWN, North East and West Kerry Development, People 1 st , South East Training and Education Centre Limited, St. Catherine’s Community Services Centre and Westmeath Community Development Limited. These ten projects will receive just under €3 million in total over three years.	

No:	144
Action:	Continue to support farm incomes through the roll-out of CAP payments of over €1.2 billion annually.
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Payments worth some €1.1bn to 121,000 farmers have commenced under the 2017 Basic Payments Scheme.	
The application process for the 2018 Basic Payments Scheme opened on the 7 February, which is the earliest the application process has opened and is over a month ahead of the opening of the 2017 application process. This is to provide additional time for farmers and their agents to submit their applications online as, under EU regulations, all applications must be submitted online from 2018.	
Following on from the European Commission’s public consultation on CAP in early 2017 and the CAP Communication on 29 November 2017, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine commenced its own public consultation on CAP post 2020 on 26 January. The consultation runs until 23 March and included six public meetings hosted by Minister Creed and Minister of State Doyle during February 2018. The public meetings were held regionally throughout the country and were well attended. Views expressed at the public meetings along with submissions received will help frame Ireland’s position in the upcoming negotiations. It is now expected that the MFF (EU budget) proposals will be published in early May 2018 with the draft CAP regulations soon thereafter.	

No:	145
Action:	Support on-farm investment through the Rural Development Programme (RDP) (2014-2020) and national funding to improve competitiveness and sustainability.
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress

Progress Update:

€626m has been allocated to the Rural Development Programme in the Budget for 2018 and will be invested in the rural economy, direct to farmers, through the RDP schemes. Schemes which support competitiveness and sustainability include: the Beef and Genomics Programme, which has 23,700 farmers participating, the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (under which payments for approved investments continue to issue on an ongoing basis) and Green Low-Carbon, Agri-Environment, which has 51,000 farmers participating.

The Rural Development Programme (RDP), which is worth over €4 billion over seven years, is strongly targeted towards environmental benefits. It contains a range of measures built around the themes of innovation, efficiency and economic/environmental sustainability and contains a number of agri-environment and climate actions designed to deliver overarching benefits for the rural environment while addressing issues regarding climate change mitigation, water quality and the preservation of priority habitats and species.

In January, funding of approximately €11m was announced for 12 new European Innovation Partnerships initiative (EIP) projects from the first open call, funded under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. A start up workshop was held on 27 February 2018. The projects selected align well with the Rural Development Programme and national priorities particularly on environmental sustainability and will address challenges such as biodiversity, profitability and sustainability.

Another 19 projects have been approved to develop a detailed project plan as part of the European Innovation Partnership second open call and a number of these will then be selected to move forward to the full implementation phase.

Implementation of Ireland's 2014-2020 RDP is ongoing – some 50,000 farmers are participating in GLAS, some 25,000 farmers are participating in BDGP, some 1,800 participating in the Organic Farming Scheme.

No:	146
Action:	As agreed in Budget 2017, increase the earned income tax credit to self-employed farmers.
Lead:	DoF
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
The Earned Income Credit (EIC) was increased by €400 to €950 per annum in Budget 2017, and the increase has taken effect from January 2017. The EIC tax credit is available to self-employed individuals, including farmers, who do not have access to the PAYE employee tax credit.	

No:	147
Action:	Support the Government Initiative to (a) use the taxation system strategically to encourage greater land mobility, increased productivity and greater profitability at farm level (b) Investigate taxation measures aimed at supporting farmers through periods of volatility (c) Land leasing, partnership and mobility measures will be developed further to ensure the next generation of farmers are supported and the sector is developed strategically for future growth.
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Agri-taxation Review was published in Budget 2015 and over the past three budgets, in cooperation with the Minister for Finance, DAFM has implemented this comprehensive review of the agri-taxation system. Its implementation has strengthened existing measures and introduced new measures such as the “Succession Farm Partnership Scheme”, which the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine launched in June 2017.	
Support to the primary agriculture sector in Ireland through the taxation system has been estimated at some €350 million per annum, demonstrating the strong commitment to the agriculture, fishing and forestry sectors. The Minister has stated that he is confident that the measures now in place are contributing to real structural changes in Irish agriculture, especially in the areas of land mobility and succession. The Minister has committed to continuing to work closely with the Minister for Finance and his Department on taxation issues.	
The Finance Bill was enacted to enable the measures announced in Budget 2018. A review of progress on the implementation of the Agri-taxation Review is being undertaken by DAFM and the Department of Finance. This will include an examination of the issue of income stabilisation from a taxation perspective.	

No:	148
Action:	As agreed in Budget 2017, roll out new income averaging ‘step out’ for farmers. (The Income Averaging regime allows a farmer’s taxable profit to be averaged out over a 5-year period. This is being amended to allow an “opt out” in a single year of unexpectedly poor income, which may be availed of for the 2016 tax year).
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
This measure was legislated for in the Finance Act 2016 and is currently available to farmers.	

No:	149
Action:	As agreed in Budget 2017, roll out new tax credits for fishers to assist the viability of the fishing sector (Fishers who have fished for wild fish or wild shellfish for at least 80 days in a tax year can claim an income tax credit of €1,270 per annum).
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
This measure was legislated for in the Finance Act 2016 and is currently available to fishers.	

No:	150
Action:	As agreed in Budget 2017, extend Farm restructuring Capital Gains Tax (CGT) relief to end 2019.
Lead:	DoF
Timeline	Ongoing to end 2019
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
Legislated for under Finance Act 2016. Amendment of section 604B of Principal Act (relief for farm restructuring) 29. Section 604B(1)(a) is amended in the definition of “relevant period” by substituting “31 December 2019” for “31 December 2016”.	

No:	151
Action:	As agreed in Budget 2017, provide an exemption from Capital Gains Tax (CGT) for payments made by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (on or after 1 October 2016) under the Protected Raised Bog Restoration Incentive Scheme.
Lead:	DoF
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	Legislated for under Finance Act 2016. Amendment of section 613 of Principal Act (miscellaneous exemptions for certain kinds of property).

Pillar 3: Realising our Rural Tourism Potential

No:	152
Action:	Through the Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018, increase tourism volume in rural areas to 8.3 million visits by 2019 (an increase of 12%).
Lead:	DTTAS
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update: As part of the response to Brexit in 2018, there will be a focus placed on addressing regionality and seasonality issues in rural Tourism to help counteract the decline experienced from the Great Britain market in 2017. While final figures for tourist visits to rural areas in 2017 are not yet available, CSO figures show overseas visits to the country as a whole (i.e. both urban & rural areas) in 2017, have increased for the seventh consecutive year.	

No:	153
Action:	Carry out a feasibility study in relation to the development of the 'Ireland's Lakelands' brand as a separate proposition to sit alongside the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East.
Lead:	Fáilte Ireland
Timeline	Q1 2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update: On 12 th April Fáilte Ireland unveiled 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' as its latest new tourism brand - designed to boost tourism and drive visitor growth across the Midlands region. The brand elements including the name, logo and what the brand stands for were developed following extensive research with consumers in Ireland, US, UK, Germany and France. Over 10,000 consumers were interviewed in the process giving Fáilte Ireland great insight and confidence that Ireland's Hidden Heartlands has the potential to be both appealing and motivating to visitors. The River Shannon will be a central focus of the brand with a Shannon Master Plan currently being developed by Fáilte Ireland in partnership with Waterways Ireland to drive tourism opportunities both on and off the water, and in the towns surrounding it. Another asset for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands will be the Beara Breifne Way, which spans the whole region, and where a compelling walking and trail experience will be developed to international standards. An Activation Master Plan will be developed which will see a number of towns along the route identified as walking hubs to support this ambition and drive visitors into nearby areas. A series of food networks and trails will also be developed as part of the new brand.	

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands will now become a tourism development zone with Fáilte Ireland allocating investment and resources across the region.

An initial €2m has been allocated to start the development stage of the brand, with further funding to follow. This first round of investment will help to develop visitor experiences, support industry development and develop marketing campaigns for the region.

No:	154
Action:	Develop a Tourism Investment and Development Strategy for the Gaeltacht.
Lead:	Údarás na Gaeltachta
Timeline	Q1 2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
<p>A new dedicated tourism development scheme in support of the sustainable development of the tourism sector within the Gaeltacht has been agreed. Applications are currently being sought and decisions on funding support for strategic tourism development projects are due to be concluded in February 2018.</p>	
<p>This scheme forms a centrepiece development in the implementation of the new Tourism Strategy adopted by the Board in June of 2017. A range of related promotional and marketing development initiatives are currently being developed and will be implemented over the coming period.</p>	

No:	155
Action:	Provide practical support to the local authorities in the development of comprehensive tourism strategies and support collaborative approaches at Local Authority and community levels.
Lead:	DTTAS
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>Following on from the successful Local Authority Tourism Conference in March 2017, the Tourism Action Plan for the period 2018-2020 will continue to drive the implementation of the Government's Tourism policies, one of which is to continue to collaborate with and support local authorities all around the country, to grow and develop regional tourism. One practical step towards a collaborative approach is the funding agreement between Fáilte Ireland and Local Authorities to bring greater focus to the development of tourism focused festivals and participative events. This new funding arrangement will replace Fáilte Ireland's annual Regional Festivals and Participative Events Programme for 2018. All applicants and promoters seeking funding for 2018 will now apply directly to their local City or County Council.</p>	

In addition, Fáilte Ireland and the County & City Management Association (CCMA), the representative body for Local Authority Managers signed a Memorandum of Understanding in March 2018 which commits both organisations to work together in strategic areas including capital investment projects, training supports, information provision and joint marketing campaigns to attract domestic and overseas visitors.

No: 156

Action: Ensure that supports for festivals and events are updated to reflect changing market needs – including identifying key indigenous events with the greatest potential for attracting international visitors and off-setting seasonality to be supported by a multi annual framework; and reviewing arrangements for regional and community festivals to ensure maximum value for money in terms of incremental visitors.

Lead: Fáilte Ireland

Timeline Q4 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

Fáilte Ireland administers the National Festivals and Participative Events Programme on an annual basis, awarding grants totalling €2,372,000 in 2017.

Fáilte Ireland's Regional Festivals and Participative Events Programme 2017 supported 218 regional festivals and events, with total funding of €690,750.

In line with the enhanced tourism role for Local Authorities, Fáilte Ireland and the Local Authorities have now established a funding agreement to bring greater focus to the development of tourism-focused festivals and participative events. This new funding arrangement will replace Fáilte Ireland's Regional Festival and Participative Events Programme for 2018. Accordingly, Fáilte Ireland is transferring funding currently provided under its competitive regional festivals and participative events programme directly to Local Authorities, based on the equivalent 2017 funding awarded to individual regional festivals. Applicants and promoters will now be applying directly to their Local Authorities for regional festival funding.

No: 157

Action: Support direct access to the regions outside of Dublin by extending the Regional Co-operative Market Access Scheme, which promotes air and sea access to regions outside of Dublin, until 2018.

Lead: Tourism Ireland

Timeline 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

The Government's Tourism Policy Statement "People Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025", published in 2015 recognised that tourism brand experiences like the Wild Atlantic Way

and Ireland’s Ancient East provide compelling reasons for our best-prospect overseas visitors to travel throughout the country and help us achieve our longer term tourism targets. €1 million was made available to Tourism Ireland in 2016 and 2017 (and maintained in Budget 2018) for co-operative marketing activity to encourage new access and maximise the potential of existing services to the regions. The annual €1m of Exchequer funding, supported by contributions from regional tourism stakeholders, was then matched by air and sea carriers and resulted in total overseas marketing expenditure of €2.6m in 2016 and €2.4m in 2017*. In January 2018, Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland launched a joint initiative, specially designed to boost tourist numbers from Britain to the Wild Atlantic Way. A €1.35 million marketing campaign in Britain by Tourism Ireland is being complemented by a Fáilte Ireland €500,000 programme to support businesses along the Wild Atlantic Way to position themselves to benefit from the campaign, as well as to boost its own marketing campaigns in Northern Ireland. The next Tourism Action Plan (2018-2020) which is due to be finalised in mid 2018, will set out actions aimed at further developing the regional access strategy. Region and season extension remain key priorities for Tourism Ireland in 2018

* *Provisional figure.*

No:	158
Action:	Include Eircodes in Satnav and digital spatial mapping platforms to help simplify navigation in rural areas and enhance the tourist experience.
Lead:	DCCAIE
Timeline	Q2 2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
<p>The Eircode is now fully integrated in Google Maps and members of the public and businesses can now use Google Maps to accurately locate addresses and get directions. This should help simplify navigation in rural areas and enhance the tourist experience.</p> <p>TomTom have recently integrated the Eircode into their maps enabling retailers to easily capture addresses, delivery agents to deliver to Irish households more reliably and efficiently, and users of Tom Tom products to more easily find locations. Eircode is now fully integrated with both TomTom and Google Maps, meaning members of the public and businesses can now use a variety of SatNav products with Eircode to accurately locate addresses and get directions. This should help simplify navigation in rural areas and enhance the tourist experience. This also facilitates better access for consumers and businesses to digital goods and services.</p>	

No:	159
Action:	Develop cultural digitisation initiatives to enhance “Ireland’s Roots” tourism offering.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is working to develop cultural digitisation initiatives to enhance Ireland’s roots tourism offering. A Genealogy Policy Working Group has been established with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, National Library of Ireland and the National Archives to develop an updated National Genealogy Policy.</p> <p>In October 2017, the Department announced that a new cultural Digitisation Scheme will fund a number of digitisation projects planned by National Cultural Institutions and cultural heritage organisations, with over €2m in funding being granted across 14 projects. It will operate as a pilot scheme as part of the Creative Ireland Programme.</p>	

No:	160
Action:	Work with representatives from Government agencies and voluntary action groups for the development of targeted tourist mapping to assist in the promotion of rural tourism locations.
Lead:	OSI
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>Up to the end of 2017 OSI worked with Failte Ireland in the production of localised Map Pads for use in Tourist Information Offices. OSI produced a WAW Map of Ireland for Failte Ireland.</p> <p>In 2017 OSI produced an Ireland map in conjunction with Tourism Ireland for the overseas tourist. Two new 1:25,000 maps of Clew Bay and Croagh Patrick as well as a new updated Road Atlas will shortly be released to the market.</p>	

No:	161
Action:	Accelerate diversification of overseas tourism to Ireland to reduce the impact of possible decline in visits from Great Britain.
Lead:	Tourism Ireland

Timeline 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

CSO statistics for the number of visits to Ireland in 2017, in comparison with 2016, show that:

- Trips from Mainland Europe were up by 5.5%
- Trips from North America were up by 16.2%
- Trips from Other (i.e. long-haul) markets were up by 12.1%
- Trips from Great Britain were down by 5.0%

In terms of revenue generated from overseas visits, CSO figures for 2017, compared to 2016, show that:

- Revenue from Mainland Europe visits increased by 6.6%
- Revenue from North America visits increased by 14.1%
- Revenue from "Other" (long-haul) visits increased by 10.3%
- Revenue from Great Britain visits decreased by 5.1%.

These statistics show that the current strategy to implement market diversification is working well and Tourism Ireland's Marketing Plans for 2018 include measures to continue this diversification with a focus on markets offering the best prospects.

No: 162

Action: Continue to develop Irish language based tourism in the Gaeltacht through the provision of Gaeltacht scholarships for Irish language learners in international 3rd level institutions.

Lead: DCHG

Timeline 2017-2019

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

46 European students attended the various Irish Language courses in the Gaeltacht in Summer 2017. 12 international universities has been funded by the DCHG to support the Gaeltacht Scholarship Programme for the 2017/18 academic year and it is anticipated that c. 55 European students from these various universities will be attending Irish language courses in the Gaeltacht regions in summer 2018. In addition to this, the Fulbright Commission and the Ireland Canada University Foundation have students attending Irish courses in the Gaeltacht regions on an annual basis, the numbers are yet to be confirmed for summer 2018.

No: 163

Action: Support Agri-Food tourism initiatives by local authorities, including local markets and food and beverage trails.

Lead: DAFM

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

DAFM awarded funding of over €277,000 across six separate agri-food tourism initiatives, following a competitive process under the Rural Innovation and Development Fund. The agri-food tourism projects also encompass local food, farmer and artisan market schemes that support local and seasonal food producers and artisan crafts.

A provisional allocation of €419,000 to agri-food tourism schemes in rural areas has been suggested for 2018 from the overall budget allocation of €1.5 million for the Rural Innovation and Development Fund (RIDF) under the CEDRA process. The outline of proposals for utilisation of the RIDF in 2018 has been submitted for approval in Q1 2018. It is anticipated that procurement of these services will take place in Q2 2018. It is proposed that the scheme will be operated and managed through Local Authorities (LA) and Local Enterprise Offices (LEO).

No: 164

Action: Develop cross-Border tourism initiatives to support the tourism potential of the Border region, building on projects such as the Ulster Canal Greenway from Smithborough (Co. Monaghan) to Middletown (Co. Armagh), the Carlingford Lough Greenway, and historic literary trails.

Lead: LAs

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The Ulster Canal Greenway draft development strategy and draft Strategic Environmental Assessment have been out to public consultation and are currently being reviewed for final publication. These strategic documents will allow phased development of sections of a proposed 190km greenway through mid-Ulster. Phase 1 of the Ulster Canal Greenway, a 4.2km section through Monaghan Town, opened in 2013. Phase 2 of the Ulster Canal Greenway is currently at design stage – this €4.95m INTERREG VA funded project will extend 22km from Smithborough, Co. Monaghan to Middletown, Co. Armagh and is due for completion in 2021.

Carlingford Lough Greenway is the plan for an off-road trail across the border that will connect Newry to Omeath and Carlingford Marina to Carlingford Village. Including the existing section between Omeath and Carlingford Marina will be a total of over 19km of Greenway against the majestic backdrop of the Cooley and the Mourne Mountains.

This cross border project has EU Interreg VA funding approval in 2017 for this Cross Border Greenway. This will enhance the Greenway network along the East Coast of Ireland and lead on more sustainable mobility on this cross-border route.

Construction is approaching completion on a section of Greenway from the Albert Basin in Newry to Victoria Lock (April 2018), but it is not yet open to the public.

The overall Carlingford Lough Greenway is programmed to be completed by 2020.

No:	165
Action:	Examine the potential to promote rural Ireland as the destination of choice for US colleges wishing to avail of a rural based learning or study abroad experience.
Lead:	Connemara West
Timeline	Ongoing
Status	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Expanding the pilot	
Scoping study on the independent/faculty-led US study abroad sector in Ireland is to commence in Q1, 2018, co funded by Galway County Council, Western Development Commission and Connemara West plc.	
Discussions continued with 2 new US colleges, one from the east coast the other from the mid-west, to begin study abroad programmes in Tullycross, Co. Galway in 2018/2019. This would bring the total number of colleges coming to Tullycross to eight.	
Deepening the pilot	
Planning was completed for <i>Interchanges 2018</i> a micro conference to be held in Renvyle from June 13 to 15, 2018, whose primary aim is to provide a forum where intending or existing US Ireland study abroad programme directors and other faculty and students can network with each other and Irish collaborative partners, on location in rural Ireland. Personnel from up to 7 US colleges expected to attend. Call for papers and registration to open in Q1, 2018. This is the fourth year that <i>Interchanges</i> will be held.	
Discussions held with personnel from NUI Galway, GMIT and Equal Ireland about possibilities for future collaboration around the Global Learning Centre in Tullycross.	
Publicising and marketing the pilot	
Article by Lorna Siggins in the Irish Times on September 14 th 2017, publicising Connemara West's plans for a Global Learning Centre in Tullycross and its positive impacts together with its link with the government's Action Plan for Rural Development (https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/why-us-college-students-are-flocking-to-connemara-1.3220856)	
A 5-part Connemara Lecture Series was delivered in Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, by an Irish Studies scholar from Renvyle during the third week of October, 2017. Funded by Aquinas College, the lecture series was part of International Education week at Aquinas College and was attended by over 100 people. A goal of the lecture series was to use it as a marketing tool to publicise the opportunity to study abroad in Tullycross, Renvyle. It is likely that that lecture series will be repeated in the future.	

No:	166
Action:	Provide assistance for the promotion of island development and island tourism, to maximise the benefit of the Wild Atlantic Way to our offshore islands.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht continues to subsidise transport services to the islands and to support the improvement of infrastructure on the islands. DCHG will actively engage with Fáilte Ireland on their WAW Island's campaign.	
The Department has worked to renew transport contracts as they arise, and is working with the ferry operators to enhance the services being provided, including developing the marketing plans for the services.	

No:	167
Action:	Develop a strategy to underpin the development, funding and promotion of Greenways to support activity tourism in rural areas.
Lead:	DTTAS
Timeline	Q2 2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update:	
Tourism Development Division are in the process of completing the <i>draft</i> Greenway Strategy and are consulting further with key stakeholders prior to publication.	
DTTAS aim to publish the <i>draft</i> Strategy shortly. The final Strategy will be published later in 2018 following which a funding call to local authorities will be announced with funding awarded in 2018 for drawdown in the period 2019-2021.	
A report on the approx. 5,365 submissions received as part of the public consultation process to inform the development of the Strategy has also been drafted.	

No:	168
Action:	Develop and promote Blueways (multi-purpose activity trails on or beside water) on the Royal, Grand and Barrow Canals and on the Shannon Navigation to expand the recreational and tourism offering, with a capital investment of €6m over the period 2017-2019.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

All infrastructure work on the development of the 1st stage of the Royal Canal Blueway has been completed. The Blueway will provide 22km of paddling centred around Mullingar, 140 Km of walking from McNead's Bridge in Westmeath to Richmond Harbour in Longford, along with 60km of cycling and will be officially launched in the summer of 2018. A marketing plan is currently being developed for the Blueway which is anticipated will be operational in June 2018. Waterways Ireland are working with Westmeath County Council to erect suitable signage and to undertake capacity building in May 2018.

The Lough Derg Blueway was officially launched in March 2018. All infrastructure is in place and the 1st round of capacity building was been completed with the aid of REDZ funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development. An intensive marketing campaign has taken place using social media, newspaper articles, brochures and via the radio and has proven to be a great success with interest levels and participation in the very early part of the season at very high levels. The very strong partnership approach taken in the development and marketing of the initiative between the local authorities, Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and other public sector and private sector organisations has proven that success can be achieved with collaborative effort.

Carlow Sports Partnership in conjunction with Carlow LEADER, Carlow Tourism and Waterways Ireland launched a very successful Carlow Town Park Activity Hub in July 2017. The Hub provided a central location for on and off water activity providers and was successful in attracting 100's of new users to the various activities including Canoeing, paddle boarding and hiking. It is hoped that the partnership approach will continue in 2018, and indeed to expand the model to other sites along the inland navigations.

Acres Lake Boardwalk in Co. Leitrim was officially opened on 5/9/2017 by Minister Ring and got widespread media coverage including prime RTE news reports. The Boardwalk has attracted 1,000's of visitors in its 1st few months of operation.

Waterways Ireland continued to develop and deliver Blueway promotion and capacity building on the Shannon and Shannon-erne Blueway including a spring campaign - 'Head into the Blue', attendance at the ITB Travel Trade Show in Berlin, production of 'Life Aquatic on the Shannon-erne Blueway' and associated on-line promotional campaign, and promotion of the Blueways.org website which has successfully lengthened the season for activity providers on the Shannon and Shannon-erne waterways. The Blueways Ireland website attracts over 21,000 visitors annually with Social media showing an 80% increase in 'likes' on Facebook from 2015 levels and an increase of 56% followers on twitter from the same period.

No:	169
Action:	Enhance infrastructure on and along the inland navigation system to support increased recreational and economic activity in rural Ireland.
Lead:	Waterways Ireland
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2019)

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

- Development work continued using 3rd party funding and focused on development of towpaths along the 140km of the Royal Canal working in partnership with the local authorities along the route and with support from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. It is hoped that in excess of 130km of the trail will be completed by December 2018.
- Development of recreational infrastructure on the Shannon – Erne Waterway continued with funding provided through the Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme 2017. With a total cost of €1.01m the approved projects are being delivered in partnership with two local authorities and will deliver in total 10.4km of recreational trails:
 - Lock 16 Killarcan to Kilclare recreational trail – 4.9km; €0.26m project cost; partners Leitrim CC/ WI
 - Ballyconnell to Bellaheady recreational trail – 5.5km; €0.75m project cost; partners Cavan CC/ WI

A Project Steering Group has been developed for both projects made up from members of the relevant local authority and Waterways Ireland. External Consultancy Services will be engaged to assist in the delivery of both projects.

- The Acres Lake section of the Shannon Blueway is complete. The floating boardwalk, which was funded from the Department of Rural and Community Development's Outdoor Recreation Scheme, is an iconic attraction in the Drumshanbo area linking the town to recreational Blueway activities.
- Works to the canoe trail on Lough Derg (supported by capital funding through the Lough Derg Stimulus Fund administered by Fáilte Ireland) at 14 sites are complete and capacity building among the private, public, and the community and voluntary sectors has also been completed supported by REDZ funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development.
- In Portumna development work of Castle Harbour concluded, this involved doubling mooring capacity, upgrades to the service block and the installation of camper van parking. The work was delivered in conjunction with Galway County Council and The Office of Public Works and was funded through the Lough Derg Stimulus Fund administered by Fáilte Ireland. Waterways Ireland is also progressing plans to develop a trail from Castle Harbour to Connaught Harbour in Portumna which will link into the Hymanny Way in Banagher and the network of trails in Portumna Forest Park.
- Carlow County Council, County Carlow Sports Partnership, Carlow Tourism, Carlow Regional Youth Services, in conjunction with Waterways Ireland, piloted the hugely successful Carlow Town Park Activity Hub in August 2017. The hub offers bicycle hire, kayak and stand up paddling, rowing and dragon boat taster sessions as well as eco trails and photo orienteering.
- The Ulster Canal Greenway project from Smithborough, Co. Monaghan to Middletown, Co. Armagh secured €4.95 million in December 2016 from the INTERREG VA programme

managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. Waterways Ireland have partnered with Monaghan County Council; Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; and East Border Region Ltd to develop the 22 km route as part of a wider and longer-term Ulster Canal Greenway Strategy which proposes a total of 190 km of greenway through the central Border/central Ulster region, which will connect with the route of the Ulster Canal navigation. A project manager has been appointed to deliver the development of the INTERGEG funding. The Ulster Canal Greenway draft development strategy and draft Strategic Environmental Assessment have been out to public consultation and are currently being finalised in advance of publication in Q2 2018. Phase 1 of the Ulster Canal Greenway, 4.2km through Monaghan Town, opened in 2013. Environmental Studies have been completed for Phase 2, a Technical Scoping Study is nearing completion, and procurement is about to commence to appoint a Design Team to develop the project, to secure planning and acquire lands. Project construction activity is programmed to commence in 2020 and work is expected to be completed by 2021.

- The final phase of works to complete navigation to Castle Saunderson is currently on target with completion due in May 2018 as part of reopening the Ulster Canal to Clones.

Work is complete on lock gate replacement at Roosky and Victoria locks on the Shannon. On the canal network, building and installing the smaller canal lock gates continued in Tullamore with an in-house team ensuring the transfer of skills as older craftsmen retire. This work will renew these assets for the next 50 years and will enable the navigations to remain open – opening up rural Ireland to boating traffic.

No:	170
Action:	Through the Rural Recreation Scheme, provide funding for new recreation infrastructure and the maintenance of existing structures resulting in the creation and retention of jobs in rural areas.
Lead:	DRCD
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The 2017 Outdoor Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme was launched in April 2017. The scheme provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure, and the maintenance, enhancement and promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in Ireland.	
Under the 2017 scheme, funding was available under four Measures as follows:	
Measure 1:	Small Scale Maintenance/Promotion and Marketing (grant aid up to €10,000)
Measure 2:	Medium Scale Repair/Upgrade and New Trail Development (grant aid up to €100,000)
Measure 3:	Large Scale Repair/Upgrade and New Strategy Trail Development (grant aid up to €1 million)
More than 240 projects were approved for funding to the value of €13.6million across the three Measures. This funding supports the development and maintenance of greenways, blueways and walking trails in rural areas. Investment in recreational infrastructure of this nature supports	

increased tourism and consequent job opportunities for rural communities. It is proposed to launch a further round of the scheme in 2018.

No: 171
Action: Expand the National Walks Scheme with a view to doubling the number of walks in the scheme by 2019.
Lead: DRCD
Timeline: 2017-2020
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The Walks Scheme currently covers 39 trails, with payments made to approximately 1,900 landholders to maintain those trails.

The Department of Rural and Community Development will look at the scheme's operation in 2018 to determine how best to expand it. Significant consultation will be required with both landholders and other stakeholders, but by the end of the year, progress is expected to be made on identifying a number of additional priority walks to be covered in the initial expansion of the scheme.

No: 172
Action: Ensure co-ordination of major outdoor recreation projects with all main State land owners to maximise potential for sustainable tourism in rural areas through the Inter-Agency Group on Outdoor Recreation.
Lead: DCHG
Timeline: Ongoing
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The Outdoor Recreation Group continues to meet on an on-going basis.

No: 173
Action: Through the Inter-Agency Group on Outdoor Recreation, develop a Public Outdoor Recreation Amenities Plan (PORA) to transform the provision of outdoor recreation facilities and services on public-owned land and waterways over the next five years which will add a potential €142 million of economic activity per year across rural Ireland.
Lead: DCHG
Timeline: 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

Building on the National Countryside Recreation Strategy published by Comhairle na Tuaithe in 2006, the Outdoor Recreation Group has now developed the *Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP) for State Lands and Waters*. The Plan sets out a strategy to revolutionise the provision of outdoor recreation facilities and services on public-owned land and waterways and identifies that a total investment by Government of €165 million over the next 5 years is needed in order to manage, maintain, upgrade and expand the recreation assets. As a result of this investment it is calculated that a further €142 million of economic activity could be added to the State on the foot of the development.

The finalised plan will be referred to the relevant Ministers for their consideration early in 2018.

No: 174

Action: As part of the PORA, progress four flagship, co-operative projects to enhance outdoor recreational activities to drive tourism in rural Ireland, viz: – Midlands Cycling Destination; – Barrow Blueway Flagship Project; – Connemara Cluster; and – Spatial Geodatabase.

Lead: Coillte

Timeline: 2017 onwards

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The launch of the *Outdoor Recreation Plan for State Lands and Waters* is led by Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) with each of the four flagship projects above led by a different public body. Coillte lead on the Midlands Cycling Destination, with the current position as follows:

The **Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike (MTB) Trail Centre** is one of the key elements of the Midland Cycling Destination project. It achieved planning approval from Laois and Offaly local authorities in March 2017. The first phase was granted funding approval from Dept of Rural and Community and Development in August 2017 and is currently out to tender for its development. Expected commencement in Spring 2018.

In terms of the other projects, the relevant public body leading each initiative is as follows:

Barrow project – Waterways Ireland submitted planning in February 2017 for the upgrade and development of the Barrow towpath from Robertstown in Co Kildare to St Millins in Co. Carlow – a 116km off-road walking and cycling network. Significant additional information was requested from planners in all 3 local authorities (Kildare, Laois and Carlow) in March 2017 and this information was supplied to the planning authorities in December 2017. The planning applications were not approved by the 3 local authorities for the river sections of the Barrow navigation as the planners felt that the case for the ecological impact of an unbound surface during times of flood had not been satisfactorily proven. Waterways Ireland have appealed these decisions to *An Bord Pleanála* and await the outcome of these appeals.

The upgrade of the Barrow towpath is of regional and national significance in providing a direct off-road link between Dublin and the South-East of the country – effectively linking Dublin Port with Rosslare and effectively driving activity tourists south from Dublin along one of the most scenic waterways in the country. The development has massive potential to provide real economic benefit to rural areas in the South and to revitalise forgotten communities. The initiative also has to potential to provide real health and well-being and social benefits to local communities in terms of access to recreational infrastructure which is available for all for the entire year.

Both the economic and health and well-being and social agendas meet the requirements of the detail included in the Outdoor Recreation Plan.

No:	175
Action:	Progress the development of niche outdoor activities in our National Parks and Nature Reserves drawing on their unique attributes which will contribute to sustainable tourism in rural areas.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
As part of the Department’s (NPWS) Strategic Partnership with Fáilte Ireland, which has the aim of enhancing the tourism offering at Ireland’s National Parks, the Department has commissioned the production of a Tourism Interpretation Master for all six National Parks and Coole Park and a Visitor Management Plan for Glenveagh National Park.	
Work on the Tourism Interpretation Masterplan has significantly advanced with a finalised document expected to be launched during Quarter 2 2018. In December 2017, the Department announced the expansion of Ballycroy National Park with the addition of the Wild Nephin area, expanding the total size of the National Park to over 15,000 hectares.	

No:	176
Action:	Agree and implement a scheme to indemnify private land owners with regard to recreational users of their lands.
Lead:	DRCD, State Claims Agency, Farming Organisations
Timeline	2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update:	
This action involves the development of a scheme linked to the Occupiers Liability Act 1995 and also involves a number of potential changes to the Act. Legal advice in relation to the matter has been received by the Department of Rural and Community Development and it is intended that this action will be progressed in 2018 on the basis of that advice.	

No:	177
Action:	Reorganise the operation of structures such as Comhairle na Tuaithe to ensure the most appropriate/effective mechanisms are in place to progress rural recreation policy/implementation issues.
Lead:	DRCD, DTTAS
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
An independent review of the role of Comhairle na Tuaithe was completed in February 2017 and was discussed with the members of Comhairle. The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring, T.D., also met with the members of Comhairle na Tuaithe in February 2018 to get their views on the structures and operations of the group. These engagements will inform decisions on the future direction of Comhairle in Q2 2018.	

No:	178
Action:	Implement the new tourism capacity maintenance programme under the National Strategy for Angling Development to ensure that the capacity of the inland fisheries resource is maintained and continues to deliver social and economic benefits to rural communities.
Lead:	IFI, DCCA
Timeline	Ongoing to 2020
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
A comprehensive audit of angling structures is on-going nationally. As at the end of October 2017, 930 sub-standard structures have been removed, 546 have been replaced and an additional 70 new structures have been provided in strategic locations. Work continues on the programme to ensure appropriate and safe access to angling. A full assessment of storm damage will identify additional work in many catchments.	

No:	179
Action:	Continue to deliver the annual Inland Fisheries Ireland Sponsorship Scheme to assist rural communities to engage with angling, angling tourism and environmental issues.
Lead:	IFI
Timeline	2017-2019 Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The 2017 Scheme is at close off stage with final claims and reports due early 2018. Twenty sponsored international angling events and sixteen national events contributed significantly to	

rural economies while approximately thirty novice catching and training initiatives attracted large numbers of newcomers to angling in rural and urban areas.

The 2018 Sponsorship scheme was launched in January 2018.

No: 180
Action: Implement the Minor Capital Angling Access Scheme under the National Strategy for Angling Development to help in sustaining the capacity of the inland fisheries resource.
Lead: IFI, DCCAE
Timeline Ongoing to end 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

50 projects have been approved for funding under this scheme in 2017. Of these, 47 projects are in rural areas.

IFI is continuing to work with project promoters to move projects through to completion. Given the nature of the projects this will continue into 2018. Funding has been awarded to a further 100+ projects in December 2017. IFI is to appoint 5 project animators in early 2018 to further enable communities to develop and deliver on fisheries enhancement and angling development projects. This will contribute to upskilling the sector as well as delivering on improving Ireland's inland fisheries and sea angling resource.

No: 181
Action: Develop and promote Ireland's angling tourism offering abroad to assist in generating tourism in rural Ireland.
Lead: IFI, DCCAE
Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

A full programme of trade shows, journalist facilitation and promotional work took place during 2017 in partnership with North South body, The Loughs Agency, and the inland fisheries division of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (NI) under the Angling Ireland brand. A memorandum of agreement is under discussion to formalise the arrangement.

Inland Fisheries Ireland has tendered for a consultant to deliver an Angling Marketing Strategy. The new strategy will facilitate industry engagement and harness the support of the tourism agencies. Inland Fisheries Ireland is also in discussions with Failte Ireland regarding the completion of a memorandum of understanding. Significantly, the tourism agency has recently appointed a Head of Activities and angling contacts which confirms the importance of angling in Ireland's activity offering.

No:	182
Action:	Rollout the Capital Works Scheme under the National Strategy for Angling Development to help deliver an accessible and sustainable, world class inland fisheries resource.
Lead:	IFI, DCCA
Timeline	2017-2018
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	See Action 180.

No:	183
Action:	Continue to deliver the annual Inland Fisheries Ireland Something Fishy National Schools Programme to inform and educate students on fish, water, angling and the environment in their local areas.
Lead:	IFI, DCCA
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>Inland Fisheries Ireland's <i>Something Fishy</i> Programme is an educational initiative which allows students to learn about fish and the environment in a local context. As part of the programme, Inland Fisheries Ireland's Fisheries Officers visit schools and provide classroom based assistance with a full range of resource for teachers and children also available on the 'Something Fishy' website (www.somethingfishy.ie).</p> <p>Gartan National School of Churchill, Letterkenny, County Donegal, was named the winner of 2017 national 'Something Fishy' competition. The students were presented with the National 'Something Fishy' perpetual trophy and a money prize for the class by Joe Mc Hugh T.D., Minister of State at the Department of an Taoiseach at the school. 103 schools are currently enrolled to take part in 'Something Fishy' for 2017/2018.</p>

No:	184
Action:	Issue a blog content on walking routes in Ireland to promote the use of the outdoors for recreation purposes.
Lead:	OSI
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	

OSI continues to issue blogs promoting rural locations and activities such as premier walking and hiking locations in Ireland.

No: 185

Action: Support the inclusion of the voices of children and young people in the development of tourism and recreation opportunities, through the Children and Young People's Participation Hub.

Lead: DCYA

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Hub na nÓg was officially launched in November 2017. It is currently consulting with children and young people on a number of consultations, e.g. National Standards for Oberstown Children Detention Campus; the design of the new Children's Court, Dublin; Adoption legislation regulations, and has also provided training to Sports Ireland.

Hub na nÓg will support implementation of the Strategy through the provision of information, training and advice for Government departments and agencies and the non-statutory sector.

No: 186

Action: Develop Ireland's six National Parks and Nature Reserves through a capital programme of up to €10 million over 4 years, in partnership with other State agencies, to support marketing initiatives such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East, by developing the trails network and improving visitor experience to drive sustainable tourism in rural areas.

Lead: DCHG

Timeline Ongoing from Q2 2017

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's National Parks and Wildlife Service has launched a formal Strategic Partnership with Fáilte Ireland with the aim of enhancing the tourism offering at Ireland's National Parks.

Work on the Strategic Partnership with Fáilte continues. The Tourism Interpretation Masterplan has significantly advanced with a finalised document expected in Quarter 1 of 2018. The first capital project proposals arising from the partnership are expected to be considered for funding approval early in 2018.

Following on from the successful opening of the restored ornamental gardens in April 2016, the Department's phased completion of the Killarney House & Gardens project at Killarney National Park continued with the opening of the House to members of the public for the very first time on July 3rd 2017. Three Historic Rooms within the House (the Dining Room, the Living Room/Library and the Drawing Room) have been refurbished and are presented as they were when the McShain

family was in residence. More than 26,000 people have visited the rooms since their opening in July 2017 with some 275,000 visitors to the Garden since their opening in April 2016. The final stage of the project is opening of the remaining rooms of the House in 2018 which form a Visitor Centre for Killarney National Park.

In December 2018, the Department announced the expansion of Ballycroy National Park with the addition of the Wild Nephin area, expanding the total size of the National Park to over 15,000 hectares. This was the culmination of constructive engagement between Coillte and the Department addressing a long-standing strategy to align key environmental assets. The National Parks and Wildlife Service will now manage this transfer of land and a public amenity conversion plan will be put in place. Overall, the project reflects the on-going commitment of all stakeholders to improve the recreational potential of this area whilst ensuring the highest standards of nature conservation.

No:	187
Action:	Explore the potential for the development of new tourism and recreation activities within the context of the National Peatlands Strategy, including the consideration of a National Peatlands Park and centre of excellence.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The development of a National Peatlands Park and centre of excellence continues to be considered by the Peatlands Strategy implementation group.	
Under the EU LIFE Irish Active Raised Bog Restoration project 2016-2020 (LIFE NAT/IE/000032) consideration is been given to the tourism and recreational benefits of the project for 12 raised bog Special Areas of Conservation sites.	
In 2017 the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht supported a small number of local community organisations in the conservation and maintenance of areas around raised bog Special Areas of Conservation. It is intended in 2018 to enhance the programme to support local organisations, communities, individuals and schools in relation to the conservation of designated peatlands and to promote an appreciation and awareness of bogs as part of our natural heritage.	
The Peatlands Strategy Implementation Group, tasked with monitoring the delivery of actions within the National Peatlands Strategy - https://www.npws.ie/peatlands-and-turf-cutting/peatlands-council/national-peatlands-strategy - is considering the development of a National Peatlands Park. This park could provide an opportunity to develop a centre of excellence for applied integrated peatland research, a national database for peatland related data, a recreational amenity and information, as well as communicating information regarding peatlands.	

As a starting point, an examination of existing and potential visitor facilities has been undertaken. This examination has shown that there are fifteen Peatlands sites, mainly in public ownership with visitor facilities.

Bord na Móna has participated and contributed to the discussion and consideration of the development of a Wetlands Heritage Park in Co Longford and has provided information for a feasibility study being undertaken on behalf of interested parties, including Longford County Council. Bord Na Móna's views on this development will be guided by its 'Strategic Framework for the Future use of Peatlands' and its rehabilitation and restoration Plans for peatlands in that region. In addition, Lough Boora Discovery Park already provides many of the features to be expected in a peatlands park.

Under the EU LIFE Irish Active Raised Bog Restoration project 2016-2020 (LIFE NAT/IE/000032) proposals regarding the development of visitor facilitation are being advanced in conjunction with local groups and relevant authorities at four raised bog sites: Ferbane Bog Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Co. Offaly, Clara Bog SAC Co. Offaly, Carrownagappul Bog SAC Co. Galway and Carrowbehy Bog SAC Co. Roscommon.

Further survey work and consultations with local communities will help to inform decisions regarding the development of amenities facilities including walking trails at a number of other raised bog SAC sites in due course.

A new scheme is being developed by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in 2018 to support and encourage communities to become involved in the conservation and revitalisation of protected raised bogs and to promote public engagement and awareness of our natural heritage.

No:	188
Action:	Develop and publish an updated National Heritage Plan to protect, manage and promote our built and natural heritage.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update:	
The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht steering group has been established to bring forward development of a revitalised National Heritage Plan to be known as Heritage Ireland 2030. Work is ongoing on a review of key actions from the previous plan to help frame future priorities. The group is preparing a consultation framework assisted through liaison with key heritage stakeholders. The public consultation process is programmed to commence in Q1 2018 when consultation with other government departments will also commence.	

No:	189
Action:	Co-ordinate a programme for the management of Ireland’s uplands areas, expanding on the pilot already carried out in Wicklow.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Following extensive study of upland vegetation management, the decline in farming activities and the impact it was having on these environmentally significant habitats, the ‘Sustainable Uplands Agriculture-environment Scheme (SUAS)’ pilot project announced in January 2018, aims to use innovative means to address these issues. The development of SUAS follows from recommendations emanating from the 2013 LEADER funded ‘Study to Identify the Best Management of Upland Habitats in County Wicklow’ prepared in 2013 on behalf of Wicklow Uplands Council.	

No:	190
Action:	Progress the designation of additional sites to UNESCO for inclusion in Ireland’s World Heritage list which will assist in the development of sustainable tourism and also preservation of our natural and built heritage.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Stakeholder engagement continues with regard to the sites included on Ireland’s current World Heritage Tentative List. The Department has begun to prepare its call for applications for inclusion on the 2020 World Heritage Site Tentative List.	

No:	191
Action:	Continue the rollout of the programme of investment in State heritage sites with a view to developing the tourism potential of our heritage sites and assisting in the creation of local employment opportunities in tourism-related industries.
Lead:	OPW
Timeline	Ongoing (2016-2021)
Status:	In Progress

Progress Update:

Work continues to progress in relation to investment in sites within Ireland's Ancient East including UNESCO World Heritage Site at Brú na Bóinne.

A major investment of €4.3m has been announced in four key heritage sites along the Wild Atlantic Way which will enhance the visitor experiences at each location. The four sites to benefit from this investment are: The Blasket Island Visitor Centre, Céide Fields, Inis Mór and Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery. Tenders are due to issue in Q2 2018.

In March 2018, Céide Fields won the Carlo Scarpa International Landscape Award for Gardens, further enhancing the site's attractiveness for visitors.

No: 192**Action:** As part of the implementation of Fáilte Ireland's Tourism Investment Plan 2016-2021, work to enhance the presentation of key State Heritage Sites to help encourage greater employment in the tourism sector including the rural areas covered by the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East.**Lead:** DCHG**Timeline** Ongoing (2017-2021)**Status:** In Progress**Progress Update:**

See Action 191.

No: 193**Action:** Through the Built Heritage Structures at Risk Fund, with an estimated €2.4m of matched funding available between 2017-2019, encourage investment of private capital in labour-intensive projects to conserve historic structures in public/ private ownership.**Lead:** DCHG**Timeline** Ongoing (2017-2019)**Status:** In Progress**Progress Update:**

The Structures at Risk Fund is administered through the local authorities.

Funding in the sum of €1,338,222 was provided in 2017 in respect of 74 projects. This covered projects originally approved under the Structures at Risk Fund 2017, together with additional funding for projects where an urgent need had arisen, e.g. due to storm damage in Q4. The total cost of all projects was over €2.5m with matching funding of €1.2m provided. More than 5,000 days of employment were created.

A total of 76 heritage projects across the country will benefit from €1.3m under the Structures at Risk Fund 2018, which was announced in April 2018.

No:	194
Action:	Support the development of conservation and heritage tourism in rural areas through the Community Heritage Grants Scheme, with an estimated investment of €2.5m between 2017 and 2019.
Lead:	Heritage Council
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2019)
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Heritage Council approved funding for 198 projects during the year under the Community Heritage Grants scheme in 2017.	
Project organisers also undertook activities during Heritage Week that engaged the public contributing to the profile and access to our built, natural & cultural nationwide.	

No:	195
Action:	Raise the profile of, and access to, our built, natural and cultural heritage nationwide, through the roll out of Heritage Week, thus helping to preserve our unique heritage assets.
Lead:	Heritage Council, LAs
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2019)
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
National Heritage Week (NHW) events reached an all-time high in 2017 with almost 2,300 registered events and an estimated attendance of 572,760 (12% of the Irish population) - an increase of 137,080 since 2016. The majority of events (55%) were organised by community or voluntary groups, representing significant community mobilisation. Audience satisfaction levels continue to be excellent (99% would recommend NHW events to a friend). Awareness levels increased in 2017, with 60% aware of NHW compared to 50% in 2016.	

No:	196
Action:	Through the Historic Towns Initiative, invest in our historic towns to encourage tourism, foster traditional building skills and regenerate historic towns.
Lead:	Heritage Council
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Heritage Council continues to support the Irish Wall Towns Network and is working with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to develop a Historic Towns Initiative.	

Criteria for an Historic Towns Initiative, based on a previous pilot programme, is currently being drafted. It is expected that a call for proposals under this scheme will be made in early 2018.

No:	197
Action:	Encourage the conservation and reuse of historic properties and lettings to tourists in rural communities.
Lead:	Irish Landmark Trust
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
In the second six months of 2017, some 2,700 guests stayed in Irish Landmark properties. Approximately 3,500 people attended open days during Heritage Week and other 'open day' events. Gross revenue generated in 2017 from tourism activity at Irish Landmark properties was €577,700.	

No:	198
Action:	Implement the Action Plan for Irish Historic Houses to assist in the promotion and development of Historic Irish Houses as centres for employment, tourism and innovation.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Department has a dedicated allocation for grants for Historic Houses in 2017 and recently launched the scheme again for 2018.	
A review of the operation of Section 482 of the Taxes (Consolidation) Act was initiated in early 2017 and is currently being concluded. Section 482 aims to help with the preservation of our built heritage by giving tax relief to the owners or occupiers of significant buildings or gardens to repair, maintain and restore such properties. A condition of the scheme is that the property is required to be open to the public for a minimum numbers of days each year, or in use as a registered guest house.	
The review is being undertaken by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Finance, with support from the Revenue Commissioners.	

No:	199
Action:	Support the Irish Walled Towns Network to ensure that these heritage assets are appropriately managed and conserved as a tourism asset to their areas.
Lead:	Heritage Council
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>The Irish Walled Towns Network supports and celebrates Irish walled towns through strategic input and funding of conservation, training and promotional programmes. The Heritage Council provides support for the Network in co-ordinating the strategic efforts of local authorities involved in the management, conservation and enhancement of historic walled towns in Ireland, both North and South. The Council is also working with the DCHG to develop ongoing awareness in this area.</p> <p>During 2017 funding of €276,000 was provided for fifteen conservation projects and €144,000 was provided for 24 events and heritage interpretation projects. In the region of 35,000 people attended events in member towns. During the Summer an advisory document 'Tourism for Towns' was published.</p>	

No:	200
Action:	Enhance animation and interpretation at key heritage sites and augment existing networks and trails with additional sites and materials to create new visitor experiences.
Lead:	DCHG, OPW, Waterways Ireland
Timeline	2017-2020
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>A working group has been set up to drive implementation of this Action. The group comprises representatives from OPW, Waterways Ireland and National Parks and Wildlife Service, National Monuments Service and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage from Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</p>	

No:	201
Action:	Seek to forge links internationally to key monastic and historic sites to draw more international visitors as part of pan European heritage, cultural and ecclesiastical networks.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2020)
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is in consultation with Fáilte Ireland in relation to progressing this action.

The Department is also liaising with Heritage partners in The Discovery Programme to prepare information on ecclesiastical sites including European historical links, to develop potential for creation of themed heritage trails in partnership with other stakeholders as well as others involved in pilgrim path development in Ireland.

No:	202
Action:	In the context of the National Landscape Strategy, develop dedicated actions that assist in the promotion and development of Ireland's national landscape characteristics with regard to management, employment, tourism and innovation pilots.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2019)
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's primary focus in 2017 was to prepare the documentation for a National Landscape Character Assessment which is on-going. In addition, the Department is supporting community projects such as the landscape forum community event held in Abbeyleix in June 2017 and has engaged via the Council of Europe on dedicated workshops on a European wide basis.	

Pillar 4: Fostering Culture and Creativity in Rural Communities

No:	203
Action:	Roll out a new small grants scheme which will provide essential upgrades to existing regional arts and culture centres to support the revival of the cultural sector in rural Ireland.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>The Arts and Culture Capital scheme 2016-2018 is focused on the refurbishment and enhancement of the existing stock of arts and culture facilities including theatres throughout the country. This scheme is running from 2016 to 2018 over three complementary grant streams. Grant funding of between €20,000 and €2m is being offered to projects on a matched funding basis with a maximum of between 50%-70% provided by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Stream 3 in particular focused on community and voluntary groups many of which received grants under the scheme.</p> <p>To date, funding of €10.214m has been allocated to 134 projects under the 3 streams.</p>

No:	204
Action:	Increase funding supports to regional museums across the country ensuring access to our cultural heritage for rural dwellers.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2019)
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>The Local & Regional Museum Scheme has been finalised for 2017. A total of €125,757 was drawn down by 21 projects in regional museums across the country ensuring access to our cultural heritage for rural communities.</p> <p>Approval is pending for a further €150,000 to support exhibitions in regional museums in 2018.</p>

No:	205
Action:	Facilitate access by rural communities to our National Collections through increased loans of art works between our National Cultural Institutions and regional museums.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2019)

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

A total of €10,391 was allocated across 4 projects in 2017. The 2018 scheme is now open for applications.

No: 206

Action: Through the Arts Council's Touring and Dissemination of Work Scheme, increase investment in 2017 to €1.4m and annually thereafter to support quality professional productions to tour venues across Ireland, increasing access to the arts for rural communities.

Lead: Arts Council

Timeline Ongoing (2017-2019)

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

This scheme is designed to support the touring and dissemination of work in certain arts disciplines for tours starting between January 2019 and July 2019, and is open to applicants who are resident in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland. Tours may travel to both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

No: 208

Action: Increase our investment in small festivals from 2017 to support greater participation in the arts throughout the country.

Lead: Arts Council

Timeline 2017 onwards

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The Arts Council increased its investment in this scheme in 2017 by 22% with a budget of over €1m. All decisions for 2017 have been made. Details of festivals supported can be found at <http://www.artscouncil.ie/funding-decisions/>.

The Arts Council will deliver a revised and refreshed Festivals Investment Scheme for 2018.

No: 209

Action: Provide grant assistance of €0.48m to refurbish and develop a theatre in Gaoth Dobhair, Co. Donegal, in order to provide a suitable space to develop Irish language theatre in the North West.

Lead: DCHG
Timeline 2017-2018

Status: **Completed**

Progress Update :

The Amharclann theatre in Gaoth Dobhair has been completed and opened in March 2017. The theatre provides a focus for the West Donegal Gaeltacht and also for the service towns of Letterkenny and Donegal.

No: **210**

Action: As part of the Creative Ireland Programme, develop a nationwide network of culture teams and creativity hubs which will co-ordinate cultural activities in each local authority area. This will have a particular benefit for rural communities who will be encouraged to participate and engage with culture in their communities.

Lead: DCHG

Timeline 2017 onwards

Status: **In Progress**

Progress Update:

All the local authorities have now appointed Creative Ireland co-ordinators and have established Culture Teams. Public workshops outlining the ambitious scale of the Creative Ireland Programme took place in every local authority area earlier this year.

€1m was allocated to the local authorities to enable them to develop their Culture and Creativity Plans and an associated programme of events and initiatives in each county. This was bolstered by an additional €1m from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government ensuring that each local authority received approximately €64,000 each to implement their Culture and Creativity Plans for 2017. In total, the plans listed over 750 local cultural projects, events and initiatives taking place nationwide in 2017 of which 250 were directly funded by the Creative Ireland Programme.

Creative Ireland Culture teams and coordinators are currently preparing a strategic 5 year Culture and Creativity Strategy to focus on the breadth of creativity and the strategic priorities for the next 5 years focusing on the five pillars of Creative Ireland.

No: **211**

Action: Develop a Culture and Creativity Plan in every county as part of the Creative Ireland programme.

Lead: LAs

Timeline End 2017

Status: **Completed**

Progress Update:

In May 2017, 31 Local Authority Culture & Creativity Plans were launched. They are available at: <https://creative.ireland.ie/en/local-plans>.

Each Culture and Creativity Plan reflects the overall structure and aims of the national Creative Ireland Programme but also to engage citizens through a local programme of cultural events and projects. Each plan includes information on the importance of the arts, heritage, culture and the Irish language locally and celebrates that legacy through a comprehensive listing of events, festivals, concerts, exhibitions, etc. Work has commenced on drawing up five year Culture and Creativity Strategies for each local authority.

No: 212

Action: Allocate a dedicated budget to each local authority with the primary objective of citizen engagement with their Culture and Creativity Plans.

Lead: DCHG

Timeline 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

Funding of €1m was allocated by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to implement the Culture and Creativity plans this year. This is being matched by a sum of €1m from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Each local authority will therefore receive funding of approx. €64,000.

No: 213

Action: Develop a new Creative Place Programme in partnership with Local Government which draws on the work of artists and arts organisations to animate local communities, particularly in rural areas.

Lead: Arts Council

Timeline Q4 2017

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The *Invitation to Collaboration* programme supports regional and national initiatives in the field of local-authority-led arts development. The scheme is rooted in the policies set out in the Arts Council's ten-year strategy. The emphasis is placed on supporting partnerships that focus on developing projects, resources or services that are ambitious and are testing new ground. Six projects were funded in 2017.

No:	214
Action:	As part of the Creative Ireland Programme develop and implement Cruinniú na Cásca, an annual programme of arts activities and cultural reflection over Easter weekend which will take place all over Ireland and will have a positive effect on culture and arts activities in rural Ireland.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	2017 onwards
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The first Cruinniú na Cásca was held on Easter Monday 2017. Large crowds attended events in each of the 31 local authority areas and in the major cities including Dublin, which was the focal point of celebrations this year.	
Preparations are in train to refocus Cruinniú in 2018 and to encourage greater participation in rural communities and other communities outside of Dublin.	

No:	216
Action:	Review the requirements of rural Ireland in the context of the development of the five year capital investment programme for the culture and heritage sector.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	End 2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Under the National Cultural Institutions Investment Programme of €460 million as part of Project Ireland 2040, a total of €40 million programme will be invested in cultural infrastructure across all regions. This will support the maintenance and development of regional arts centres, theatres, regional museums, galleries, archives, multi-use facilities, artist studios etc. This will facilitate the reopening of the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme later this year.	

No:	217
Action:	Develop a national plan to enable every child in Ireland to access tuition in music, drama, art and coding.
Lead:	DCHG and DES
Timeline	End 2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
Creative Youth – A Plan to Enable the Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person was launched on 7 December 2017. Creative Youth sets out 16 measures to deliver on one of the key	

goals of the Creative Ireland Programme, to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022.

While a number of the initiatives encompassed by the Creative Youth Plan are in development, a number of initiatives under the Creative Youth Plan have been launched and successful schools and participants are now being selected for participation in these initiatives. These include:

- Action 1: Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools – this initiative was launched in February 2018 and 150 Schools are now being selected to participate in this pilot initiative over the 2018/2019 academic year. This initiative is being led by the Arts Council in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- Action 2: Music Generation will be extended to provide nationwide coverage by 2022. Music Generation currently reaches 41,000 children and young people, a number that will increase substantially as a result of nine new Music Education Partnerships announced in 2017. Nationwide coverage will increase the participant numbers still further. Discussions are ongoing between the Department of Education and Skills and the Board of Music Generation in relation to this development of this initiative.
- Action 3: Creative Clusters - Creative Clusters is a pilot initiative of the Department of Education and Skills, led by and in partnership with the 21 full-time Teacher Education Centres (ATECI) and funded through the Schools Excellence Fund - Creative Clusters Initiative. There will be one Creative Cluster selected per 21 full-time Education Centre area resulting 105 nationally. A Creative Cluster will typically consist of between three and five schools (Primary and Post-primary) collaborating on the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of an innovative arts and creative learning project which supports them to address a common issue or challenge. Each Creative Cluster will receive funding of up to €2,500 for one year to implement their project in the 2018-2019 school year.
- Action 5: A Primary Schools CPD Project - Teacher/Artist Partnership as a CPD model to support and enhance Arts Education is an arts-in-education initiative in which artists work in partnership with teachers in the domain of formal education. It consists of training courses and in-school arts projects in which artists and teachers participate together. The initiative is a Department of Education and Skills initiative led by ATECI in partnership with ETAI and will take place in all 21 Education Centres in 2018 and in future years.
- Action 6: A Post-Primary Schools CPD Project - Arts in Junior Cycle consists of a series of professional development experiences for teachers to support engagement with the arts and learning in junior cycle. The workshops embody the principles and key skills which underpin the Framework for Junior Cycle and the Arts in Education Charter and provide teachers with practical and creative methodologies to engage with learning outcomes in their classroom. The initiative is based on partnership and collaboration with key elective partners across the arts and education sectors. Workshops commence on 14th April 2018 and forty-two such workshops will take place between spring and autumn 2018 and will be carried forward into future years.

- Action 7: There will be increased opportunities for schools to offer courses in coding and computational thinking. The development of coding and programming as part of the school curriculum is underway at Leaving Certificate level. There are also currently opportunities for schools to offer coding to students through a 100-hour junior cycle short course. Additionally, The NCCA is currently in the process of developing a new primary mathematics curriculum. It is anticipated that this will lead to the introduction of computational thinking in ways that are practical, creative and engaging.
- Action 16: Implementation of additional elements of the Arts in Education Charter including support for the Arts in Education Portal, Digital Mapping, National Arts in Education Research Repository and other Charter initiatives is ongoing. The National Arts in Education Portal Day is taking place on 21st April 2018 and is being held in the Froebel Institute of Education at Maynooth University. In addition work on the Arts in Education Portal, National Digital Mapping, Development of Ireland's National Arts Education Research Repository and other Arts in Education Charter initiatives is progressing and ongoing.

No:	218
Action:	Increase funding to Local Authorities across the country to roll out an enhanced culture night experience which will be of particular benefit to rural communities.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
Additional funding of €50,000 to the overall Culture Night budget was announced by the Minister in January 2017. In July, the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Rural, Regional and Gaeltacht Affairs announced almost €200,000 in funding for Local Authorities across the country to help them stage events for Culture Night 2017.	
Culture Night 2017 turned out to be the most successful to date with over 400,000 people attending events nationwide.	

No:	219
Action:	Implement the Arts in Education Charter, a joint initiative between D/AHRRGA and D/ES to ensure that arts and cultural engagement in schools at all levels will be attained across the country.
Lead:	Arts Council, DCHG, DES
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress

Progress Update:

Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child is the aim of Pillar 1 of the Creative Ireland Programme 2017 -2022. Over the course of the programme the Charter for Arts in Education will be embraced, fast-tracked, and resourced as a core element of the Creative Ireland agenda. Work is ongoing in three relevant Departments to develop a national plan to enable every child in Ireland to access tuition in music, drama, art and coding.

- The third National Arts in Education Portal Day is taking place on 21st April 2018 and is being held in the Froebel Institute of Education at Maynooth University and will attract a very large attendance of practitioners from both the arts and education. In addition work on the Arts in Education Portal, National Digital Mapping, Development of Ireland's National Arts Education Research Repository and other Arts in Education Charter initiatives is progressing and ongoing.
- The Exploring Teacher/Artist Partnership as a Model of CPD for Supporting & Enhancing Arts in Education CPD Summer Course was delivered in 20 Teacher Education Centres, to provide up to 421 trained teachers and up to 107 trained artists. In 2017, each Education Centre will now have the capacity to implement this model locally and regionally through strategic planning involving collaboration and co-operation with the various Art organisations, Educational Institutions and School communities. The initiative is a Department of Education and Skills initiative led by ATECI in partnership with ETAI and will take place in all 21 Education Centres in 2018 and in future years.
- A Post-Primary Schools CPD Project - Arts in Junior Cycle consists of a series of professional development experiences for teachers to support engagement with the arts and learning in junior cycle. The workshops embody the principles and key skills which underpin the Framework for Junior Cycle and the Arts in Education Charter and provide teachers with practical and creative methodologies to engage with learning outcomes in their classroom. The initiative is based on partnership and collaboration with key elective partners across the arts and education sectors. Workshops commence on 14th April 2018 and forty-two such workshops will take place between spring and autumn 2018 and will be carried forward into future years.
- The development and establishment of a Digital Arts in Education Provision Map of Ireland will provide schools and teachers with information on arts organisations, events, trained artists for working in a school setting and CPD opportunities. Work on this initiative is underway and it is hoped to have it established by end of 2018. It will require ongoing update and maintenance post establishment.

Work on the ongoing enhancement and content management of the Arts in Education Portal, establishment and development of Ireland's National Arts Education Research Repository and other Arts in Education Charter initiatives are progressing and ongoing.

No:	220
Action:	Introduce formal agreements with individual Local Authorities from 2017 to assist in clarifying shared and individual responsibilities in the context of regional and local planning and the national perspective of the Arts Council.
Lead:	Arts Council

Timeline 2017 onwards

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The Arts Council is developing formal agreements with the Local Authorities in association with the City and County Management Association. Five agreements are now in place, in Fingal, Kildare, Leitrim, Kerry and Offaly.

No: 221

Action: Develop an integrated Arts Strategy for the Gaeltacht and Irish Language Arts in conjunction with Foras na Gaeilge, Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Arts Council.

Lead: DCHG

Timeline 2017

Status: Delayed

Progress Update:

Work is in hand in the context of better supporting the implementation of the language planning process (thereby the 20-Year Strategy) in advancing a revised work plan for Ealaín na Gaeltachta which will also have downstream benefits in supporting the *Creative Ireland* project in the context of education.

A grant of €40,000 was sanctioned by Foras na Gaeilge for the Aisling? project at a Board meeting on the 8th December, 2017. The Director of the Aisling? project is making arrangements and plans for dates and venues for the National tour which will take place in the summer.

No: 222

Action: As part of the Town & Village Renewal scheme, provide competitive funding for public art works which contribute to public spaces and reflect the culture and characteristics of the town or region.

Lead: DRCD, Local Authorities

Timeline 2017-2020

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The 2017 Town and Village Renewal Scheme was launched in April 2017. While Local Authorities were invited to apply for optional funding for art works to enhance public spaces, the primary focus of the scheme in 2017 was on supporting projects that could demonstrate an economic benefit for small towns and villages and their hinterlands. There was a substantial level of demand for projects of this nature, whereas the request for funding for art works under the scheme was relatively small.

Given the limited resources available under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme in 2017, all funding was allocated to projects directly supporting the regeneration of rural towns and villages. However, some of the projects in question included elements of public art works. A further round of funding (€15 million) under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme was announced in April 2018.

No: 223
Action: Advance the implementation of the Language Planning Process through the provision of funding, advice and technical support in order to foster the Irish language as a key resource in Gaeltacht areas.
Lead: DCHG
Timeline Ongoing
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The language planning process has been progressing during 2017 with three plans approved by the Minister up to December 2017. Two further plans have been submitted to the Department for approval. Preparations of the remaining plans will proceed during 2018 in the case of the remaining 21 Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, approx. 8 Gaeltacht Service Towns and 3 Irish Language Networks.

With regards to Gaeltacht Service Towns, lead organisations have been appointed in Letterkenny, Cork, Galway, Dingle and Dungloe. Applications have been received from organisations in Dungarvan and Tralee and appointments will be made within the next month. The application process is also due to be announced shortly for Castlebar.

The 3 Irish Language Networks held a very successful launch of their “Gaeilge Le Chéile” campaign in Croke Park in February and are currently working towards a July deadline to have their language plans finalised and submitted. Requests are coming in from other areas like Kildare and Lucan for the second call for applications for Irish Language Networks to be initiated.

No: 224
Action: Continue to support and invest in the language and community infrastructure of the Gaeltacht by way of a wide range of schemes, measures and initiatives (capital and current) currently administered by the Department.
Lead: DCHG
Timeline Ongoing
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Grant assistance was sanctioned for 53 capital projects in 2017. Current funding is providing continuing support to 22 organisations engaged in a range of activities in support of the language and, in turn, the implementation of the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030*.

No: 225

Action: Roll out the Techspace as Gaeilge Initiative, currently operating in the Connacht region, to all other regions.

Lead: DCHG

Timeline 2017-2019

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Techspace assists youth organisations and schools to help young people create digital and technological content.

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht provides funding to have online training material translated into Irish and organises training for those interested in establishing a Techspace as Gaeilge.

Development work has commenced to roll out TechSpace as Gaeilge to the Munster region. Two day Digital Media training course was held in Tralee and in Cork in September with a total of 16 schools/youth organisations in attendance.

The annual Creative Tech Fest Event took place in Google Foundry in November 2017 with a strong presence from the Clár TechSpace of 60 young people from schools in the Connacht and Munster region. They had workshop tours as Gaeilge and had two workshops delivered through Irish. The event included an Irish Language media awards.

No: 226

Action: Roll out An Diplóma sa Chultúr Dúchais to assist community capacity building through tourism development and professional development for Heritage Officers in the Gaeltacht.

Lead: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The second year of the course commenced Autumn 2017.

No:	227
Action:	Continue to provide funding for Ealaíon na Gaeltachta Teo to foster creativity and the arts in the Gaeltacht.
Lead:	Údarás na Gaeltachta
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Funding is in place for 2018 for Ealaíon na Gaeltachta Teo to continue its programmes.	
In addition to funding from Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Arts Council, Ealaíon na Gaeltachta Teo was approved €70,000 from the <i>Creative Ireland</i> fund to support the provision of a number of Gaeltacht based arts events and initiatives. Ealaíon na Gaeltachta is now recognised as a strategic partner of <i>Creative Ireland</i> . One of the initiatives, 'Aisling?' has secured funding from Foras na Gaeilge as part of the Bliain na Gaeilge initiative and will support the plans to bring the Gaeltacht show on a nationwide tour. Funding is in place for 2018 for Ealaíon na Gaeltachta to continue its arts development programme.	

No:	228
Action:	Continue to support the development of cultural tourism in the Gaeltacht by administering the Irish Language Learners scheme.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Some 26,000 students attended various colleges under this scheme in 2017.	

No:	229
Action:	Implement Foras na Gaeilge schemes such as the Festival scheme and Drama scheme to foster culture and creativity.
Lead:	Foras na Gaeilge
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Following successful implementation of the Festival Scheme in 2017, the 2018 scheme was advertised. Applications for the 2018 scheme closed on 1 December 2017 and are currently being assessed.	

The Festivals' Scheme has a maximum grant available of €5,000 or £3,500. Applications under the Scheme for festivals taking place between up to May 2018 were sanctioned by the Board on Friday, 13 April. Applications for Festivals taking place up until November are being assessed at present and will be discussed at a Board Meeting in May.

The Drama Companies Scheme offers a maximum grant available of €50,000 or £30,000. Applications for Drama Companies' Scheme 2018 are currently being assessed.

No: 230

Action: Implement Foras na Gaeilge Schemes which create capacity building for young people in the Irish language community such as summer camps and special youth events.

Lead: Foras na Gaeilge

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Following successful implementation of the Summer Camps Scheme in 2017, the scheme for 2018 will be advertised on 10 January 2018 with a closing date of 23 March 2018. Application forms and supporting documentation will be available on the website.

Again, following successful implementation of the Youth Events Scheme in 2017, the scheme for 2018 was advertised with a closing date for applications of 20 April 2018.

No: 231

Action: Continue to support three NUIG Outreach Centres in Gaeltacht areas (Gaoth Dobhair, Carna and An Cheathrú Rua) in order to maintain Irish-medium educational opportunities at local level.

Lead: DCHG

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is supporting Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta with annual funding of €900,000 under a 3 year funding programme – 2017/2018 is the third year of the funding programme.

Pillar 5: Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity

No:	232
Action:	Implement the National Broadband Plan to provide high speed broadband to every premises in Ireland.
Lead:	DCCAIE
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The National Broadband Plan has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector so that to date over 69% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband. This is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020.</p>	
<p>On 4 April 2017, Minister Naughten:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ signed a commitment agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide broadband to an additional 300,000 rural premises on a commercial basis.▪ published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie.	
<p>The updated Map shows that there are approximately 1.8m premises in the BLUE areas, representing 77% of the total premises in Ireland including eir's 300,000 premises planned rural deployment. These premises will be provided with high speed broadband by commercial operators. The remaining 23%, which comprises some 542,000 premises are in the AMBER areas and are expected to be served by the State led Intervention under the NBP.</p>	
<p>There has already been progress in the eir rollout to 300,000 rural premises. As at Q4 2017, eir have passed 121,000 premises.</p>	
<p>The updated Map finalises the State Intervention Area for the procurement process.</p>	
<p>The Department's formal procurement process to select a company who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area is now in its final stages.</p>	

No:	233
Action:	Establish an Implementation Group to drive and monitor the recommendations in the report of the Taskforce on Mobile Phone and Broadband Access to accelerate the rollout of broadband infrastructure and mobile phone access in rural Ireland.
Lead:	DRCD, DCCAIE
Timeline	Q1 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce published its report in December 2016. The report included 40 measures to be taken in response to recommendations in the report.

The Taskforce Implementation Group, which is co-chaired by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development, was established in March 2017 to oversee the timely implementation of all of the actions in the Taskforce report. All State action holders identified in the Taskforce Report are represented on the Implementation Group. This ensures that strong momentum and timely delivery is maintained, with proactive management of any emerging challenges faced by action holders. The Implementation Group was also tasked with comprehensively reviewing progress made after twelve months, and producing an annual report summarising progress across all actions. The Group is also mandated to recommend further actions that would result in an improved mobile phone and broadband service for consumers.

In line with Action 1 of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce report, an annual forum was held in October 2017. The primary goal of the Forum was to bring together key stakeholders under one roof to engage in open dialogue, to discuss issues impacting on broadband and mobile phone coverage, and to identify solutions to those challenges in order to enhance and improve services.

An Implementation Review, reporting on the progress of measures deliverable in 2017, was published on 21 February 2018. The Review also provided details of the work programme for 2018, encompassing 34 measures, which will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Implementation Group. The Implementation Review is available on the websites of both the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (www.dccae.gov.ie/mobilephoneandbroadbandtaskforce) and the Department of Rural and Community Development (<http://drcd.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Implementation-Review-2017-PDF-with-cover.pdf>)

No: 234

Action: Work with local authorities to plan for and facilitate early access to high-speed broadband to rural communities in Ireland by identifying and addressing barriers and through the rollout of Strategic Community Access Hubs across Ireland.

Lead: DRCD, DCCAE

Timeline: Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The list of Strategic Community Access Hubs agreed with the local authorities has been submitted to DCCAE for inclusion in the listing of locations to be prioritised for high speed broadband connection during the NBP rollout process.

DRCD continues to engage with local authorities through the Regional Action Groups and on a bilateral basis. DRCD provided financial support in 2017 to all 31 local authorities to co-fund the

employment of a Broadband Officer in their area. Financial support will continue to be provided in 2018 with funding payments currently being processed for all local authorities.

No: 235

Action: Assign an officer with responsibility for broadband in each Local Authority area who will act as a single point of contact for telecommunications operators who are building out broadband infrastructure.

Lead: LAs

Timeline: Q1 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

A Broadband Officer has been appointed by each Local Authority, with co-financing from the Department of Rural and Community Development. The Broadband Officer is the dedicated local point of contact in each local authority with responsibility for promoting telecommunications infrastructure development and will act as the liaison with operators on coverage and rollout issues. The appointment of the Broadband Officers is already paying dividends in terms of a much greater degree of consistency in engagement with telecommunications operators and assisting in clearing obstacles to the rollout of infrastructure.

No: 236

Action: Develop Local Digital Strategies in each Local Authority area to ensure that businesses and communities are in a position to realise the full benefit of the National Broadband Plan once it is rolled out.

Lead: DRCD, DCCA, LAs, Údarás na Gaeltachta

Timeline: 2017

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The development of local digital strategies will ensure that local authorities are primed to take advantage of high-speed broadband coverage over the coming years.

Following the completion of a tender process, DRCD has engaged external consultants to work with all 31 local authorities to provide support for the development of a local digital strategy for their area. Work on this project has now commenced, with digital readiness assessments due to issue to local authorities in Q2 2018. Work will then commence on preparing a local digital strategy for each of the 31 local authorities with the aim of having the strategies in place by end 2018.

No:	237
Action:	Implement a new Digital Skills Training Programme under the National Digital Strategy, to support 25,000-30,000 citizens who have never used the internet, thereby assisting in upskilling rural communities ahead of the rollout of broadband across the country.
Lead:	DCCAIE
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
By end of December over 22,000 citizens had received training across all Counties including 2,700 unemployed people.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% of participants have stated their key objective is to improve their job prospects • Over 49% of trainees have reported that they feel less isolated as a result of completing the training • 65% will use their skills to stay in touch with family/friends • 63% of all trainees now feel competent to use online Government services 	
The Scheme provides, ten hours of training to specific target groups such as the farming community, unemployed persons, small business owners, persons aged over 45, disadvantaged persons, etc.	

No:	238
Action:	Remove development contribution charges for the placement of telecommunications infrastructure across all Local Authorities as a matter of priority.
Lead:	LAs
Timeline	Q1 2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update:	
The application of waivers of Development Contributions for telecoms infrastructure is vital for the roll-out of improved services. By end of 2017, 29 of the 31 local authorities were effectively in compliance with the 2013 guidelines, which exempt broadband infrastructure (masts and antennae) from development contributions. Of the remaining two schemes, one draft scheme is currently out for public consultation and the second commenced consultation on a draft scheme in February 2018. DHPLG will continue to engage with relevant Councils and monitor the reviews of schemes in this context, recognising the role of the elected members in this matter.	
During 2018 the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government intends to review and update the planning guidelines for Development Contribution Schemes to clarify the scope of the waiver.	

No:	239
Action:	Complete the duct installation on 95km of roadway on the M7/M8 corridor to enable operators to deploy end-to-end telecommunications infrastructure between Dublin and Cork.
Lead:	TII
Timeline	Q2 2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Works have been completed on the installation of ducting on two sections totalling approximately 80km on the route. Works have been completed on the M8 between Cork and the junction with the M7.	
Works are ongoing on the northbound carriageway of the M7 between Kildare Town and Newbridge. Some delay can be anticipated along the Kildare Town Bypass section due to the presence of a tanking membrane beneath the motorway, which will necessitate ducting being installed along the fence line.	
In addition to the M7 & M8 works, TII has completed ducting work on 14km of the N25 in Cork between Little Island and Middleton which proved slower than on the M7/M8 corridor because of higher traffic volumes, the necessity for night time works and the restricted verge widths.	
In 2018 TII will continue the installation of ducting on the N40. In addition TII will undertake limited additional ducting works on the M6 and M9 so as to eliminate existing short un-ducted sections.	

No:	240
Action:	Explore whether take up of the Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) can be improved, including through a review of the pricing and other arrangements relating to connections.
Lead:	DCCA
Timeline	Q2 2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update:	
The review of the pricing and other arrangements relating to access to the Metropolitan Area Networks is almost complete. The review has taken longer than expected because of the complexity of the MANs and their unique position as wholesale open access fibre networks in 94 regional towns and cities. Following finalisation of the review, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment will be engaging in discussions with enet, which manages and operates the MANs on behalf of the State, about recommendations arising from the review. It is hoped that the outcome of this process will facilitate improved access to the MANs by retail service providers.	

No:	241
Action:	Review the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book) on an ongoing basis and, building on existing arrangements, establish an appropriate Stakeholder Forum to provide for a clear and transparent engagement process for formal dialogue between the relevant stakeholders in relation to road openings.
Lead:	DTTAS
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>Following extensive consultation (including with utilities/telecos) over some three years, the latest version of the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book) was published in April 2017. Training to support implementation is being rolled out. The revised guidelines and supporting technologies (including on-site apps and web based application system) along with the support provided by the Road Management Office will improve the management of road works by utilities and local authorities.</p> <p>DTTAS oversaw and facilitated the establishment of the Stakeholder (User) Forum on 14 November 2017. Among other things, this Forum will seek to address ongoing operational issues relating to the Purple Book. The Forum met again on 30 January and 26 April.</p>	

No:	242
Action:	Optimise State assets to facilitate the roll out of strategically-placed telecommunications infrastructure, leading to improved broadband and mobile phone coverage.
Lead:	Relevant Non-Commercial State Bodies
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>Enabling reasonable access to State assets is vital for the roll-out of telecoms infrastructure. In light of discussions on the issue in 2017, a new action has been included in the Taskforce Implementation Group's 2018 Work Programme to "Develop and publish a standardised policy, lease and costing arrangement for accessing and utilising State assets for the deployment of telecoms infrastructure".</p> <p>The quarterly progress report published by the Taskforce Implementation Group during 2018 will report on progress on this action. The impact of delivery of this action will be greater use of State assets to house telecommunications infrastructure in order to deliver improved broadband and mobile phone coverage.</p>	

No:	243
Action:	Develop revised 'Exempted Development Regulations' to allow industry to accelerate the rollout of 4G services by exempting 4G antennae from requiring planning permission.
Lead:	DHPLG
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	
Draft Planning and Development (Amendment) No. 3 Regulations 2018, which propose amendments to existing exempted development provisions relating to certain works by statutory undertakers in providing telecommunications services to support the rollout of the National Broadband Plan and extended mobile phone coverage, were laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas on 13 December 2017 and presented for approval to the Oireachtas in January 2018. The Minister signed the regulations on 8 February 2018, to bring them into operation with effect from that date.	

No:	244
Action:	Develop a licensing scheme allowing for the use of mobile phone repeaters to improve the quality of indoor mobile coverage, particularly in rural areas.
Lead:	COMREG, DCCA
Timeline	2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update:	
ComReg is developing a scheme for the use of mobile phone repeaters, which will allow householders and businesses to boost signals into their premises, and bring immediate improvements in mobile phone coverage.	
ComReg has completed the feasibility research. It began a consultation on 8 December 2017, which closed on 19 January 2018. A Final Decision is expected to be published in Q2 2018.	

No:	246
Action:	Assess the extent of mobile phone reception blackspots being experienced across the country, which affects rural areas in particular, and identify actions to rectify this. This could include consideration of how spectrum in the 700MHz band is allocated.
Lead:	DCCA
Timeline	Q2 2017
Status:	In Progress

Progress Update:

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment are actively engaged with local authorities and mobile phone operators to address the issue of mobile phone blackspots. Specific measures in progress include: a mapping exercise to identify priority mobile phone blackspots and identify any infrastructure that could potentially be used to improve mobile coverage in these blackspot areas; and the initiation of a focus group to identify specific categories of locations where high quality mobile coverage should be available to inform future policy development and initiatives. This work will continue during 2018 under the work programme of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce Implementation Group.

No: 247**Action:** Convene a forum of all stakeholders annually to discuss issues impacting on the rollout of telecoms infrastructure across the country.**Lead:** DRCD, DCCAE**Timeline** 2017**Status:** Completed**Progress Update:**

A national stakeholder forum to discuss issues impacting on the rollout of telecoms infrastructure was held on 6 October 2017 in Athlone (in line with Action 1 of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce report). Minister Denis Naughten, Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development, Seán Kyne, co-hosted the Forum.

The structure of the event encompassed a facilitated high-level interactive panel discussion, and four thematic breakout sessions. A full report on the outcomes of the Forum has been published. The discussions at the event, along with highlighting awareness of the current status of many of the actions underway, have given rise to a number of new actions to accelerate the provision of improved services to consumers for consideration in the future work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce implementation process in 2018.

No: 248**Action:** Progress the major roads projects detailed in the 7 year transport element of the Capital Investment Plan which will help deliver economic and business benefits across rural areas and regions.**Lead:** DTTAS**Timeline** Ongoing**Status:** In Progress**Progress Update:**

The M17/M18 Gort to Tuam PPP road scheme was opened to traffic ahead of schedule in September 2017.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) is progressing planning and preparatory advance works for the major national road improvement projects included in the Building on Recovery Capital Plan. Construction started in 2017 on the first of these major schemes – the Naas Bypass Widening Scheme. The rolling programme of improvements on the N56 was also continued in 2017. Work also commenced on the construction of the Sallins Bypass in 2017.

Significant additional funding was secured for the roads sector under the Capital Plan Review concluded in 2017. Overall the capital envelope available for roads has increased to €4.2 billion for the period 2018-2021. TII is also re-activating work on the appraisal of a pipeline of potential future projects. In this context the Cork to Limerick strategic road link is one of the projects being progressed through project planning.

No:	249
Action:	Improve transport services for the off-shore islands to support the sustainable and inclusive development of island communities and to encourage tourism and other economic benefits, including improved co-ordination with relevant Local Authorities and DTTAS as appropriate.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2019)
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht continues to subsidise transport services to the islands. Contracts are being renewed as required.

No:	250
Action:	Continue capital investment in island piers and harbours.
Lead:	DCHG
Timeline	Ongoing (2017-2019)
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	Programmes of works were agreed with 5 local authorities during 2017 (Cork, Galway, Mayo, Sligo and Donegal) with islands under their remit. A programme of island infrastructure works will be agreed between the Department and relevant local authorities for 2018. Project Ireland 2040 specifically refers to capital investment for marine infrastructure at Inis Oírr and Inis Meáin, County Galway and for Toraigh, County Donegal. This will greatly benefit those islands.

No:	251
Action:	Conduct a full review of public transport policy, including the rural transport dimension, to ensure that it meets the needs of rural communities.
Lead:	DTTAS
Timeline	2017
Status:	Delayed
Progress Update:	
<p>In recognition of the value and benefit of rural transport to many communities, the Programme for a Partnership Government undertakes to examine how best to improve the integration of services in the rural bus network within regions, and proposed that a report on this issue should be provided to the relevant Oireachtas Committee.</p> <p>This is being examined and developed by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in the context of wider work that is underway on reviewing public transport policy to develop a Public Transport Policy Statement, which is another commitment in the Programme for Government. The Department's work is drawing on input that has been provided by the National Transport Authority (NTA) – the agency which has responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the Rural Transport Programme (that now operates under the “Local Link” brand) – in relation to the role and operation of the Local Link services in connecting rural dwellers to facilities and services in their area, and the potential for the future.</p>	

No:	252
Action:	Work with rural communities to assess and implement improvements to existing rural transport routes and develop new rural transport routes as necessary.
Lead:	NTA
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>New proposals in relation to alcohol limits for drivers under the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2017 have raised queries about the impact these proposals may have on social life in rural Ireland. Specifically it has been acknowledged in the public debate that there are issues associated with rural isolation which need to be examined further.</p> <p>As such, the Authority sought the views of the 17 Local Link groups in Q1 2018 in terms of the various ways the Rural Transport Programme is currently addressing unmet transport needs in rural areas during evening and night-time hours. Additionally, proposals were sought for addressing these needs in rural areas going forward.</p> <p>Based on the feedback above and with an initial budget of €200,000, the Authority subsequently issued a funding call for applications from all Local Link groups to deliver a range of pilot evening and night time services.</p>	

Applications were appraised having regard to such criteria as:

- Evidence of need;
- Previous experience in delivering evening and night time services
- Value for money
- Geographical spread on a national basis
- Range and mix of proposed modes of transport
- Connectivity / Integration with existing transport options whilst not representing a displacement risk to existing services
- Potential for mainstreaming of pilot projects

12 of the 17 Local Link groups submitted funding applications and it is hoped to advise of funding decisions shortly.

No: 253

Action: Rollout a programme of awareness of the Rural Transport Programme amongst rural communities.

Lead: NTA

Timeline Ongoing

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The Authority produced its first Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018-2022, in March 2018, which sets out key objectives for both the delivery and development of the Rural Transport Programme for the five year period to the end of 2022.

The key priorities of the Programme continue to include addressing rural social exclusion and the integration of rural transport services with other public transport services. 9 key priority areas have been identified including Route Development & Expansion, Integration with other Statutory Services, Accessibility, Customer focus and encouraging Innovation.

This strategy was developed with the input of a range of stakeholders including all Local Link Chairs and Managers.

Media Training for Local Link Managers - The Authority held 2 media training sessions in January 2018 for the 17 Local Link Managers. The one day training event was held in two locations- Athlone and its main aim was to ensure that a consistent message is delivered about what Local Link is and what it can provide to local communities. The training involved simulated radio and television interview sessions designed to equip the Local Link managers to effectively communicate the Local Link message.

Feedback from this training was very positive and a follow up event is planned for June 2018 to review the impact of the training in terms of an increase or otherwise in media content nationally re Local Link.

No:	254
Action:	Ensure that Rural Transport Programme vehicles are accessible, having regard to all passenger needs.
Lead:	NTA
Timeline	Ongoing from 2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
In the recently published Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022, the key objective of Priority Area 5 –Access for All-is to ensure the provision of fully accessible transport services on all services with a target to achieve at least 95% fully accessible trips by 2020 within the Rural Transport Programme.	
A number of actions are detailed in the strategy to improve accessibility for passengers availing of Rural Transport services.	

No:	255
Action:	Examine the potential for, and where possible, integrate Health Service Executive non-emergency transport services with rural transport services.
Lead:	NTA
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Work continues at a local level to integrate HSE non-emergency transport services with the Rural Transport Programme. A comprehensive range of HSE non-emergency transport services continue to be provided by the Local Link companies in counties Donegal, Mayo and Sligo/Leitrim/Roscommon. Discussions commenced in 2017 in relation to the potential for similar initiatives to be undertaken in this regard in Cavan/Monaghan and Kerry.	

No:	256
Action:	Support rural communities by bringing eligible children to their local school through the provision of safe, efficient and cost effective school transport services.
Lead:	DES
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	

This action has been fully achieved as approximately 116,000 children were transported on a daily basis, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, using in excess of 4,500 vehicles and 6,000 routes.

No: 257

Action: Conduct a review of the small public service vehicle driver licensing framework to ensure, amongst other things, the availability of taxi/ hackney services including in rural areas.

Lead: NTA

Timeline: 2017

Status: Delayed

Progress Update:

The NTA will be reviewing the regulatory framework for small public service vehicles (SPSVs) in conjunction with the Advisory Committee on Small Public Services Vehicles (TAC) in 2018.

The NTA continues to encourage growth in the number of SPSV drivers entering the industry through a number of measures, including a full review and revision of the SPSV Driver Entry Test, which led to a number of changes being made to the Test in October 2017. These changes, which include a 5% reduction in the relevant pass mark and the ability to carry over a pass in one of the two modules of the test for 12 months, have already seen an increase of over 30% in the number of candidates completing the SPSV Driver Entry Test.

To address transport deficits in certain rural areas, the Local Area Hackney licence continues to be offered by NTA. Experience thus far reveals that this is not a popular licence, particularly as the economy improves, with drivers preferring to become fully licensed drivers permitted to operate outside of the 5-7km pick up zone of the Local Area licence. The number of active licences remains low overall, with 9 licences active nationwide as of end of March 2018. Efforts to encourage greater numbers of SPSV drivers, including the effectiveness of the Local Area Hackney licence, will be considered as part of the NTA's overall review of the SPSV sector in 2018 with the Advisory Committee on SPSVs.

No: 258

Action: Examine the scope for increased investment in regional roads in the context of the review of the Capital Investment Plan 2016- 2021.

Lead: DTTAS

Timeline: 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

The Capital Plan Review has resulted in significant additional funding for roads in the period to 2021. As well as facilitating repair and safety related works programmes and traffic route lighting energy reduction measures, this funding will allow the Listowel and Ardee Bypasses to be added to TII's construction programme and the following additional regional road projects, subject to necessary consents, to be commenced:

- Sligo Western Distributor Road
- Tralee Northern Relief Road
- Realignment of the R498 road at Latteragh
- Coonagh to Knockalisheen Phase 2
- Killaloe Bypass/R494 upgrade

No: 259
Action: Promote increased funding for Local Improvement Schemes (for non-public roads and laneways) and Community Involvement schemes (for regional and local roads), on an annual basis, as resources permit.
Lead: DRCD and DTTAS
Timeline: Ongoing
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

In September 2017 €10m in funding was provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development for a Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) to support improvement works on private and non-public roads. An additional €7.4m for LIS roads was announced at the end of November and was allocated to Local Authorities. In February 2018, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring T.D., announced an allocation of €10 million for LIS roads in 2018.

€417m is being invested in 2018 in regional and local public roads, a 29% increase on 2017. Funding this year will largely continue to support the maintenance of the regional and local public road network. Ring-fenced funding has been set aside in 2018 for the Community Involvement Scheme and for a Drainage Scheme. €10 million has been set aside for each of these programmes.

No: 260
Action: Implement the capital and operational support schemes, as appropriate, under the Regional Airports Programme 2015-2019 at the regional airports in Donegal, Kerry, Waterford and Ireland West Airport Knock, utilising the additional €10m of support provided for under the Programme for a Partnership Government.
Lead: DTTAS
Timeline: Ongoing
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

By year end, a total of €5.5m was allocated in 2017 in capital (€1.9m) and operational (€3.6m) grants to the regional airports in Donegal, Kerry and Ireland West Airport Knock towards safety and security related projects and activities.

As part of last year's Review of the Capital Plan, an additional €17m was secured in capital funding for the Regional Airports Programme and these additional resources will be deployed in the period 2019 to 2021.

The processes surrounding the 2018 round of capital grants for the regional airports is currently underway and an announcement in this regard will be made in due course.

In addition, a new four-year contract, beginning on 1 February 2018, was awarded to Stobart Air to operate the PSO regional air services on the Donegal/Dublin and Kerry/Dublin air routes.

No: 261
Action: Arrest and reverse the decline in passenger numbers at Cork Airport and increase connectivity by air into and out of Cork.
Lead: daa
Timeline 2017-2019
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

Cork Airport passenger numbers for 2017 were up 3.5% to 2.3 million versus 2016, following on from growth of 8% in 2016. Recent airline announcements place Cork Airport in a strong position to facilitate continued growth in 2018 notwithstanding Norwegian suspending direct transatlantic services for Winter 2018. Cork airport has secured two new services, Aer France to Paris from Summer 2018 and Aer Lingus year round to Lisbon from October. In addition, Iberia Express will expand its Madrid route by 5% and Volotea plans to double its Cork to Verona route. Likewise, Aer Lingus Regional intends to increase frequency across key UK routes and expand the capacity of its Newquay route for Summer 2018.

No: 262
Action: Grow existing routes and services at Shannon Airport which will benefit the region.
Lead: Shannon Group
Timeline Ongoing
Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

- Air Canada will launch a new four times weekly service from Toronto to Shannon returning after an absence of 10 years.
- Norwegian Airlines will suspend services to Providence Rhode Island for winter 18/19 season and increase services to New York Stewart and return on Providence Rhode Island in summer season 2019.
- American Airlines commencing Philadelphia a month earlier in April.
- Lufthansa will reinstate its weekly Frankfurt service from Shannon with a new twice weekly route to Barcelona-Reus also launched by Ryanair.
- Ryanair will also launch new services in May from Bristol twice weekly and Liverpool three times weekly and increase services on Manchester from 4 per week to 6 weekly flights.

No: 263
Action: Agree and implement a Code of Practice with relevant infrastructural providers to ensure timely and efficient transport links and other key infrastructure are maintained across rural Ireland whilst safeguarding Ireland’s archaeological heritage.

Lead: DCHG
Timeline Ongoing (2017-2020)

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

TII and DCHG are continuing to work well together under the new Code of Practice which was launched on 27th June 2017. This joint working includes development of effective reporting systems to manage the current stream of projects across the State, ensuring that archaeological and architectural heritage impacts are managed throughout project design, planning and construction phases and that key transport projects are delivered on time and effectively.

No: 264
Action: Increase Capital funding for flood risk management schemes up to €80m per annum by 2019 and increasing to €100m per annum by 2021, as provided for under the Capital Plan 2016- 2021, to accelerate delivery of flood defence schemes around the country that will provide protection for properties at risk of flooding.

Lead: OPW
Timeline 2017-2021

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The Government's National Development Plan (NDP) 2018 – 2027 includes a total funding allocation of €940m over the lifetime of the Plan to underpin the delivery of the existing flood relief capital works programme and the additional prioritised flood relief schemes recommended in the Flood Risk Management Plans. The NDP allocation taken with the funding allocations already made in 2016 and 2017 under the capital investment plan *Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016 - 2021* represents total investment of over €1 billion in flood defence schemes. The annual allocation for flood defence measures will increase to €100m by 2021 demonstrating the priority placed by the Government on addressing Ireland's flood risk and reflecting also the flooding policy priorities set out by Government in *A Programme for a Partnership Government*.

No:	265
Action:	Approve and implement Flood Risk Management Plans setting out flood risk management measures identified for areas of significant risk around the country, including over 100 further proposed measures for rural communities in addition to 28 flood relief schemes for rural communities already in progress.
Lead:	OPW
Timeline	2017-2027
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	<p>Following an extensive response to the public consultation on the draft Flood Risk Management Plans, the OPW submitted the Plans to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for an independent review of the environmental assessments carried out as required for each Plan.</p> <p>A 10-year €1 billion programme of investment in flood relief measures was announced by the Minister of State for the Office of Public Works, Kevin Boxer Moran, on 3rd May 2018.</p>

No:	266
Action:	Introduce a prioritised and targeted voluntary homeowners relocation scheme for those again affected by the flooding of December 2015-January 2016.
Lead:	OPW
Timeline	2017
Status:	Completed
Progress Update:	<p>On April 11th 2017, the Government agreed the administrative arrangements for a Voluntary Homeowners Relocation Scheme for those primary residential properties that flooded between December 4th 2015 and January 13th 2016. This is a once-off national scheme of humanitarian</p>

assistance, targeting aid at those worst affected properties, for which there are no alternative feasible measures.

The scheme was established immediately after approval by the Government and the OPW has identified properties in consultation with the Local Authorities and through Expressions of Interest received directly from homeowners. Meetings with homeowners commenced in December 2017 and administration of this scheme will continue throughout 2018.

As at April 2018, in the region of 30 homeowners are being invited to make an application for Stage 2 of the process which involves a site inspection of their home. In addition, the OPW is awaiting additional information from a small number of homeowners who expressed an interest in the Scheme. The OPW is currently working with each of the Local Authorities to consider approximately 70 homes that have been flooded during the event and which may benefit from a known or possible engineering solution. The OPW has received 9 requests for appeal from homeowners who expressed an interest, but whose homes did not qualify for the Scheme.

No:	267
Action:	Establish a Working Group comprising representatives from Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, OPW and Local Authorities to examine in the first instance the feasibility of a targeted and prioritised voluntary farm building relocation scheme for those farm buildings again affected by floods in Winter 2015/2016 and where alternative flood alleviation remedial works and measures are not feasible.
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is undertaking a study to determine the feasibility of a voluntary farm building relocation scheme, however, a working group has not been set up. DAFM will be meeting with the OPW as part of this study to review how many affected farm buildings may be protected by flood protection schemes either currently planned or under construction.

No:	268
Action:	Implement Stage 1 of a National Flood Forecasting and Warning Service/Flood Forecasting Service to be established within Met Éireann within 5 years.
Lead:	Met Éireann
Timeline	2017-2021
Status:	In Progress

Progress Update:

In 2017 a number of meetings have been held of the Steering Group of the National Flood Forecast and Warnings Service. An Independent Expert Team has also been established and convened, while fact-finding meetings with a number of relevant national and international experts and visits to a number of flood forecasting centres internationally have also been undertaken.

In addition:

1. Interviews were held for the position of Chief Hydrometeorologist during the second week of December 2017. This person will lead the development of the Flood Forecast Centre within Met Eireann.
2. A contract was awarded in December 2017 for the temporary (six months) provision of two hydrologists to Met Eireann to work with forecasters in training and in developing an operational suite of products; this project is very much a learning exercise to help inform the more permanent development of a flood forecast capability in Met Eireann.
3. Tenders have been sought for a study of suitable catchment-based models and an assessment of integrator systems, to be undertaken over an 18-month period stretching across 2018 and 2019. A number of tenders were received by the closing date of Dec 14th with a view to agreeing a contract in 2018.
4. Further meetings of the Steering Group of the National Flood Forecast and Warnings Services have been held, as has one more meeting of the International Expert Team.

No: 269

Action: Assess rural and dispersed flood risk, and where possible develop strategies and actions to manage the assessed risk, under the second cycle of the EU Floods Directive.

Lead: OPW

Timeline 2017 onwards

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The second cycle of the EU Floods Directive requires that Ireland reviews its assessment of flood risk and the flood maps and Plans prepared. A review of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment will be undertaken during 2018, and other areas of risk not addressed in the current Plans can be considered as part of the review to assess the significance of their risk.

No: 270

Action: Strengthen the engagement with the insurance industry to improve the availability of flood insurance cover, given the State's ongoing investment in flood defence schemes.

Lead: OPW

Timeline 2017

Status: In Progress

Progress Update:

The OPW is undertaking quarterly meetings with the insurance industry and additional meetings of a technical working group. The OPW has also provided comprehensive detail on its demountable defences which is being reviewed by the industry. In addition to the quarterly meetings, a subgroup comprising members of the OPW, Department of Finance and Insurance Ireland met three times in 2017 to further discuss the sharing of data to enable flood risk cover to be provided where the OPW have provided flood defences.

No: 271

Action: Review Minor Flood Mitigation Works & Coastal Protection Schemes to support Local Authorities in their work to address localised flooding problems in their areas.

Lead: OPW

Timeline 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

The review of the Scheme has been completed. It examined all the existing criteria with a view to strengthening and improving the operability of the Scheme. As a result, the upper financial threshold has now been increased significantly from €500,000 to €750,000 per project and for the first time, farm yards/buildings will be included as commercial premises in all categories. Other improvements include lowering the benefit to costs ratio for smaller projects, improved benefit allowances for different property types and updated methodology for diverted journeys due to flooding.

No: 272

Action: Introduce a trial to lower the water level on Lough Allen in specific conditions in order to help to mitigate potential flood risk.

Lead: OPW

Timeline 2017

Status: Completed

Progress Update:

A trial was introduced in October 2016 to lower the levels on Lough Allen by 0.7 metres during the Winter season, which is the lowest level achievable without causing significant risk to existing waterway infrastructure and possible environmental issues.

The Year 1 trial concluded in March 2017 at the start of navigation season. A decision was then taken to continue with the trial for a second year to incorporate any lessons from Year 1 implementation. The Year 2 trial was commenced in October 2017 to run until March 2018.

No:	273
Action:	Evaluate the benefits from any short and medium term programme of localised dredging and any future piloting to remove some pinch points along the Shannon.
Lead:	OPW
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
The Shannon Working Group has established a sub-committee through which progress is being made in developing proposals for both short and long term maintenance activities. The OPW and Waterways Ireland are currently examining the potential for lowering the navigational channel upstream of Meelick Weir, which may achieve some potential benefits during summer floods, subject to more detailed analysis.	

No:	274
Action:	Assess the use of cutaway peatlands and pumping and peat stock management regimes to assist in flood risk management.
Lead:	Bord na Móna, OPW
Timeline	2017
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
Bord na Móna is continuing to manage peat stocks on bogs that are prone to flooding in the Shannon catchment. This is to operate sales schedules to minimise peat stocks in these bogs during winter months in order to maximise water retention in extreme river flood conditions. Bord na Móna continues to monitor river water levels and weather forecasts on a daily basis in these areas.	

No:	275
Action:	Identify potential solutions to address the risk of flooding from turloughs.
Lead:	GSI, OPW
Timeline	2017-2019
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
60 sites have now been included in the Monitoring Programme. Collaborative work is underway with Local Authorities in Counties Roscommon, Galway, Longford and Mayo. The inter agency	

Advisory Committee met twice in 2017. Research on modelling of the Gort Turlough system is progressing in association with Trinity College Dublin. The team are working towards 2018 targets of map delivery to next round of OPW flood planning.

No:	276
Action:	Continue implementation of the Forestry Programme (2014- 2020) by increasing annual planting, carbon sequestration and more effective land management.
Lead:	DAFM
Timeline	Ongoing
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>While planting levels for 2015 and 2016 were slightly ahead of target, afforestation in 2017 was significantly less than expected (almost 20% less year on year); while the planting of broadleaves has not reached the level agreed with the EU of 30% of total afforestation.</p> <p>A Mid Term Review of the Forestry Programme has been undertaken, the outcome of which is the proposal of a suite of measures aimed at increasing afforestation and, in particular, encouraging more landowners to plant broadleaves. The Government adopted proposals arising from the mid-term review of the Department's Forestry Programme in February.</p>	

No:	277
Action:	Establish an interagency taskforce to develop and publish a cross-sectoral action plan to address the significant decline in the population of Gaeltacht Uíbh Ráthaigh (Inveragh, Co. Kerry) and to revitalise the area in order to attract enterprise and investment.
Lead:	Údarás na Gaeltachta, D/CHG, D/R&CD
Timeline	Q3 2017 - 2018
Status:	In Progress
Progress Update:	
<p>The Taskforce was established and officially launched in September 2017, with a wide representation from the community, Development Agencies and Departments. Meetings and public consultations have taken place and are ongoing. A survey of those who have left the South Kerry area in the last 10 years has been commissioned by the Taskforce. The Taskforce is preparing an action plan for the area which is due to be completed in Q2 2018. The Taskforce is also preparing an application for funding to resource the implementation of this action plan.</p>	

