

Housing Matters

Adapted from Department of Environment, Community and Local Government; Private Residential Tenancies Board and the Central Statistics Office.

Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) Rent index

Latest data from the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) quarterly rent index on December 9th, 2015 shows that “monthly rents for private sector accommodation across the country were 8.6% higher at the end of September this year compared with the same period last year. Nationally, rents for houses were 7.7% higher, while apartment rents were 9% higher than in Q3 of 2014.” The figures also highlight that “annual growth in the Dublin market was up by 8.7% in the year to September 2015. Dublin house rents were up by 9.3% in the year and Dublin apartment rents were up 8.3%. Annual growth in rents for the market outside Dublin was 8.5% when compared to the third quarter of 2014. Again the performance differed by property type. Monthly rent for houses outside Dublin increased by 7.2%, while apartments outside Dublin experienced an increase of 9.8%.”

This data derives from the latest Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) Quarterly Rent Index which is compiled by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) for the PRTB. “It is the most accurate and authoritative rent report of its kind on the private accommodation sector in Ireland as it is based on 28,240 new tenancies which commenced in July/August/September 2015 and on the actual rents being paid, according to the PRTB’s records, as distinct from the asking or advertised rent. In monetary terms, the rent for private sector accommodation across the whole country in Q3, 2015,

was €901 – up from €830 in Q3, 2014. The rent for apartments nationally was €945 (compared to €866 a year earlier), and for a house it was €873 (€810 a year earlier). In Dublin, the rent in Q3, 2015, was €1,408 for a house and €1,265 for an apartment. A year earlier, Q3, 2014, the rent for a house was €1,288, and for an apartment it was €1,169. This represents a monthly increase in Dublin rent of €120 for a house and €96 for an apartment over the course of the 12 month period. Outside Dublin, the rent in Q3, 2015, was €707, with houses averaging €712 and apartments €698. A year earlier, these figures stood at €652, €664 and €635 respectively. This represents a monthly increase in rent outside of Dublin of €48 for a house and €63 for an apartment in the 12 month period.” The Index highlights that:

- “Looking at the private rental market on a quarter by quarter basis, and comparing the third quarter of 2015 with the second quarter of this year, the rate of rental increase rose in most sectors, but the rate of growth was actually stronger outside Dublin. At a national level, monthly rent levels rose 4.1% in Q3, 2015, compared to Q2.
- Looking at trends in more detail, monthly rents for houses were up by 4.3% quarter on quarter, while rents for apartments were 3.7% higher than in Q2, 2015. Rents in Dublin grew by 2.6% when compared with Q2, 2015; rents for houses in Dublin increased by 3.8%, while apartment rents rose by 2.1% quarter on quarter. For properties outside Dublin, rents

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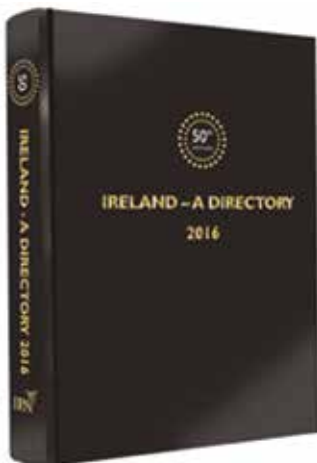
Top Tourism towns named



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To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the IPA's Administration Yearbook & Diary it has been rebranded as Ireland - A Directory 2016.

For the past 50 years this has been Ireland's most widely used reference book, and the new look edition, along with a free beautifully produced book highlighting major events in public life over the past 50 years, will be available from the IPA at the beginning of December 2015.



Ireland - A Directory 2016 is an inclusive and extensive directory. It is widely regarded as Ireland's most comprehensive database with details in the 2016 edition on approximately 9,000 organisations, covering both the private sector and the public sector. Its information ranges over a wide number of areas including local authorities, government departments, voluntary agencies, professional organisations, merchant banks, advertising agencies, third level institutions, independent radio stations, religious denominations and EU institutions.

Ireland - A Directory is a superb point of reference for anyone involved in

business, public sector or the media, who need to know and keep abreast of what is happening in our economic and political system and who to contact. In a time of availability of high tech databases Ireland - A Directory 2016 is a must-have in many business circles, because it brings everything you need together in one place.

Ireland - A Directory also includes statistics on various topics including Ireland's population, labour, trade, public finances, social welfare, justice, health and education. And there are wide ranging sections giving general information on Ireland and an international information section.

The Directory contains the name, contact details (telephone and fax numbers, email and website addresses), organisation description and names of key personnel (from board to middle management level) of each listed organisation.

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- Conference Venues
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- Recruitment Consultants
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- Media
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- Trade and Professional Organisations
- Social, Cultural and Political Organisations
- Northern Ireland
- European Union
- International Organisations

The Yearbook contains a wealth of valuable statistical information and research material designed for the casual and professional user.

| | |
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Ireland - A Directory 2016

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NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL OF IPA TOOK UP POST IN OCTOBER

Dr Marian O’Sullivan took up the post of Director General of the Institute of Public Administration on October 1st. She replaces Dr Brian Cawley who led the organisation over the last 6 years.

Dr O’Sullivan, who grew up in the South Tipperary Village of Ardfinnan, has extensive knowledge of higher education, management and leadership in Ireland and abroad. She was educated in the Convent of Mercy Cahir and went onto complete a BSc (Hons) and PhD in microbiology in UCC. She has carried out research for both the sugarbeet and dairy industry in Ireland and abroad. She held lecturing and research posts in UCD, TCD and Teagasc. In 1997 she joined the NCEA the predecessor to QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland). In 2001 she joined the Institute of Technology Sector. She has held two senior management posts, Registrar and also Head of Development and Research, in the Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT) in Dun Laoghaire. In 2008 Dr O’Sullivan completed a MSc in Executive Leadership at the University of Ulster.

Dr O’Sullivan is delighted to take up the post of Director General of the IPA, which is a recognised college of UCD and is the leader in the provision of education and training for the wider public sector. She is looking forward to working with the staff and Board of the IPA which is chaired by Niamh O’Donoghue Sectary General of the Department of Social Protection. Dr O’Sullivan and her team are committed to continuing and indeed developing the support the IPA provides to local authorities in their ongoing reform efforts.



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were up by 5.2% in Q3 compared to Q2 of this year. Rents for houses outside Dublin recorded a quarterly increase of 4.3%, and apartment rents outside Dublin increased by 5.8% in Q3.

- The Rent Index shows that, nationally, rents peaked in Q4, 2007, before declining by 25.7% to their trough in Q1, 2012. By Q3, 2015 rents nationally were 11 per cent lower than their peak. While the peak-to-trough in the Dublin market was similar to that experienced nationally, the strength of the recovery in Dublin means that now rents are just 2.3% lower than their highest point. In contrast, the market outside Dublin has experienced more subdued growth and so rental levels remain 15.5% off their peak levels.”

Commenting on the rental increases the Director of the PRTB, Anne Marie Caulfield, noted that “it is very important that both Landlords and Tenants are aware of the new Tenancy legislation which has just been passed. It provides that Rent may only be increased once in a 24 month period (previously 12 months). It also provides that 90 days advance notice must be given prior to any increase (previously 28 days). As previously, rents may not be more than the market rate. “The PRTB Rent Index provides information on average rents for 5 property types in 446 locations country-wide. The PRTB website www.prtb.ie (click on “rent index”) also contains an Average Rent Dataset which enables people to check the average rent being paid for five different categories of dwelling types throughout the country, in both urban and rural areas.”

The Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) was established in 2004 to operate a national tenancy registration system and to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants. It also provides policy advice to the Government on the private rented sector, and its dispute resolution service replaces the courts in relation to the majority of landlord

and tenant disputes. According to the 2011 Census, nearly 1 in 5 households in the country were renting their accommodation in the private sector.

All landlords are legally obliged to register tenancies with the PRTB and the number of new registrations with the PRTB in Q3, 2015, was 28,240.

The PRTB Index is of assistance for a range of Government purposes, including housing policy generally, and informing the Department of Social Protection’s Rent Supplement scheme. It is also an important reference document in landlord/tenant disputes on rent. It was developed in consultation and co-operation with landlord representative groups such as the Irish Property Owners Association, irishlandlord.com, the Institute of Professional Auctioneers and Valuers, the Society of Chartered Surveyors of Ireland, and tenant representative groups such as Threshold and USI (Union of Students in Ireland).

Homeless Forum

On November 16th, 2015, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Alan Kelly TD, and Minister of State, Paudie Coffey TD, with Special Responsibility for Housing, Planning and Coordination of the Construction 2020 Strategy held a homeless forum to discuss winter preparations for the homeless. The meeting was attended by various representatives from the non-governmental organisations (NGO) sector, Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE), & The Reverend Asa Bjork from the Church of Ireland and a representative on behalf of the Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin. The main purpose of the meeting was to examine the winter preparations for homeless persons/families and to look back at the position, since the Homeless Forum was convened by both Ministers in December of last year.

Minister Kelly stated that “in December last year, I and Minister Coffey convened the Homeless Forum. Many actions have been implemented and much has been achieved but the ongoing situation in

the housing market means we have much more to do. The challenges of homelessness are complex and require multiple solutions and this Government continues to apply all the resources of the State to meet the various challenges. Today we are looking at where we are at the moment as the winter approaches.” Minister Coffey noted that “the challenges presented by homelessness never stop and it is timely that we examine where we are and on an ongoing basis. The work of the NGO sector continues 24/7 and I would like to commend them for their work in very difficult circumstances.” At the meeting officials from the Department, the DRHE’s Cathal Morgan, Kieran Butler, Midlands Region & Threshold’s, Bob Jordan made presentations to the assembled audience.

Both Ministers highlighted some of the positives that have already occurred in recent months:

- 500 modular housing units to be delivered in the Dublin region in 2016 to provide temporary accommodation for families who are currently in commercial hotels
- 739 households exited from homeless accommodation into verified tenancy arrangements (Data: January to September 2015)
- Nationwide in excess of 4,700 rent supplement households have benefitted from the tenancy sustainment protocol. In Dublin alone 1,346 tenancies have been prevented from becoming homelessness as a result of the Tenancy Protection Service provided by Threshold on behalf of the four Dublin local authorities (Data: June 2014 (initiation of service) to September 2015)
- 69 tenancies (Data: 13/11/2015) through the implementation of the Homeless Housing Assistance Payment Pilot (85 Adults and 95 Children)
- 65 family units in place in Tallaght Cross with onsite support provided

via Focus Ireland and housing management services provided by Tuath AHB.

- Consistent efforts through the local authority leasing initiative to source private rented accommodation and efforts through the dedicated local authority Place Finders Service.
- The Children and Families Homeless Action Team (state funded via Focus Ireland) has been given approval to raise its staff capacity to 25 project workers, in order to respond to the increasing support needs of families.
- Arrangements are being put in place whereby Tusla and the HSE (Public Health Nurses, etc) will ensure the co-ordination of their existing services on an inreach basis into the family provision.
- 50% increase in the HAP limits for homeless families in Dublin.
- The Ministerial direction on allocations for homeless families continues to provide homes for homeless/vulnerable families

Additional funding to tackle housing need

In excess of €1.7 billion being invested in Social Housing 2015-2016; €135 million to be invested Community Programmes Prior to the homeless forum convening, on October, 13th, 2015, the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr. Alan Kelly and Ministers, Paudie Coffey & Ann Phelan welcomed the significant additional funding that will be available to tackle housing needs in 2016. Speaking after Budget 2016 was announced, Minister Kelly stated “I welcome the fact that investment in housing infrastructure has again been given priority in this Budget and that over 17,000 housing units will be delivered in 2016. Over 50% (€811m) of my Department’s 2016 budget will go directly to support a range of housing programmes, and the continued delivery of the Social Housing Strategy 2020. In addition some €112m funding will be provided directly by Local Authorities to meet housing needs.”

Allocation of Local Authority Tenancies

The Ministerial Direction, which requires key local authorities to prioritise homeless, and other vulnerable, households in the allocation of tenancies under their control, was extended in August and will apply until 31 January 2016. The initial Direction came into force in January 2015. Under this Direction the Dublin Region authorities must allocate at least 50% of tenancies to homeless, and other vulnerable, households while the authorities in counties Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford have been directed to allocate 30%, where such households are qualified for social housing support on or before 1 June 2015.

Details available to end-June show that in Dublin 53.5% of allocations (534 out of a total of 997 allocations) were to homeless and other vulnerable households, while in the non-Dublin authorities 35.7% of allocations were to homeless and other vulnerable households (239 out of a total of 670 allocations). Allocation details relating to the operation of the current Direction are being collated and will be reported to the next meeting of the Cabinet Committee.

Homelessness Budget

The Homelessness Budget for 2016 will be €70 million, an increase of 32% on the 2015 allocation of €53 million. The on-going increases in the scale of the homelessness issue are being driven by a shortage of housing supply and pressures in the private rented market. The long-term solution to homelessness is to increase the supply of homes that can be utilised for social housing purposes.

The Government’s Social Housing Strategy envisages the construction of 35,000 new social housing units, at a cost of €3.8 billion, and the utilisation of up to 75,000 private sector units to meet housing needs through local authority housing supports schemes. However, it is likely to be a number of years before the social housing new-builds are delivered at a significant scale, furthermore, at this time, it is proving difficult for the various social housing supports schemes (and rent supplement) to compete for private rented units. Consequently housing authorities will continue to have an increasing reliance on emergency accommodation solutions (including commercial hotels) for the increasing number of households that will continue to present as homeless. The enhanced 2016 budget will help meet these costs as well as funding more suitable alternatives to inappropriate and precarious commercial hotel accommodation; until overall supply increases, current spending on homeless services must increase to meet demand.

Additional funding will also be required to meet the increased levels of expenditure incurred by housing authorities in relation to emergency accommodation in 2015. Minister Kelly has publically confirmed that he will positively review additional funding requirements arisen. The Department has formally requested details from housing authorities in this regard.

The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government’s Vote for 2016 is some €1.495 billion - €539m Capital and €956m Current.

This compares to a total of €1.328 billion in 2015 - an increase of €167m or nearly 12% on 2015 and an increase of 83% on 2014.

The housing capital spend will come to €432m in 2016, up from €376m million this year; providing €56m extra capital spending. This will see the continued acceleration of local authority direct build and acquisition of properties.

The number of housing units to be delivered through this mechanism will be over 1,000 which compares to 285 units as recently as 2014. Approved Housing Bodies also continue to play a vital role in meeting housing need and combined with local authorities' activities the total number of units to be provided in 2016 will be over 1,500 – almost 2.5 times the 2014 output.

The housing capital programme will also allow for some 1,500 additional vacant housing units to be brought back into productive use. Mr. Paudie Coffey, Minister of State at the Department of the Environment with Special Responsibility for Housing, Planning and Coordination of the Construction 2020 Strategy, stated that “this year and next year more than €800 million will be spent on building, buying & refurbishing homes for people on the housing waiting lists.

This is real investment that will make a difference to people's lives. Current spending on housing will grow by €69m to €379m which will be used to finance increased local authority housing services, including through the Rental Accommodation Scheme, the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme and the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). In total, over 7,100 additional housing units will be delivered from a range of measures which, combined with a target of 10,000 for transfers to the Housing Assistance Payment, will deliver a total of over 17,100 housing units in 2016.

The Minister also stressed his determination to tackle homelessness. “I am allocating a further €17 million for the specific purpose of addressing homelessness. The total amount available for this purpose in 2016 will

be €70m – a 55% increase since 2014. The availability and supply of secure, affordable and adequate housing is essential in ensuring sustainable tenancies and ending long-term homelessness. I am also increasing the rent limits for the Homeless HAP Pilot in order to allow significant numbers of homeless families in Dublin to move out of hotel and emergency accommodation and find homes.”

The Minister confirmed that additional funding is also being provided under the Pyrite Remediation scheme with a total of €19m being made available under the scheme in 2016. Additional funding is also being made available to support increased activity under the Mortgage to Rent Scheme, giving a provision of €17 million in 2016 to address the mortgage arrears challenge.

Significant resources are also being made available through the Department's Vote to support the development of strong and vibrant local communities. €135m will be invested in Community programmes in 2016, which includes funding under the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and LEADER programme. In 2016, some 40,000 people will receive direct one-to-one labour market training and supports through the SICAP. Ms. Ann Phelan, Minister for Rural Economic Development stated that “SICAP is well placed to create opportunities and provide supports to ease the transition into meaningful employment for the harder to reach in the most disadvantaged areas in society. €46 million will be invested in 2016 to increase access to formal and informal educational activities and resources and to increase people's work readiness and employment prospects.”

Funding will continue to be made available to support a range of initiatives in the community and voluntary sector, including support to strengthen and foster volunteerism and philanthropy as well as increased funding for Seniors Alert of 10%, which supports the provision of monitored alarms to enable older persons, of limited means, to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence.

Speaking about the new LEADER programme 2014-2020, which will assist projects that improve quality of life and promote growth and diversification of the rural economy, Minister Kelly outlined that “LEADER is addressing many of the challenges facing rural communities, including through increasing economic activity and generating employment. It is a key multi-annual programme which will continue to be supported in 2016 with the provision of €40m.”

The Minister also welcomed the provision of funding for two new schemes in his Department - €30m in funding over 6 years under the new Village Renewal Scheme, with €5m to be provided in 2016. He also outlined provision of €5m for a new scheme that will assist homeowners in addressing the issue of lead in their drinking water. Funding for libraries has also been increased by 83% for 2016.

Given the importance of the haulage industry to our export led growth and to ensure that Ireland remains competitive, the rates of commercial motor tax on larger goods vehicles are being reduced.

Other areas of Department spend in 2016 include Water Services (€151m); Environment and Waste Management (€44m) and Fire Services capital investment (€8.2m).

Key Numbers:

- DECLG vote is now €1.495 billion, up from €1.328m – increase of €167m – 12.5% Housing Spend increases by 18% from €686m to €811m.
- Additional €56 million for capital programmes and €69 million increase in current spending. Total increase of €125m. In addition €112m will be provided directly by local authorities.
- 7,100 housing units to be delivered in 2016 through current and capital spending including the refurbishment of 1,600 vacant units.

- 3,100 Local Authority direct build, acquisition and refurbishments in 2016.
- Homelessness services spend increases by 32% to €70m.
- €17m (increase of €7m) for the Mortgage to Rent scheme to allow people stay in their homes.
- Approximately 3,000 additional new housing units will be leased in 2015.
- Community & Rural Development Provision will be €135 million for 2016.
- Some 40,000 people who are distanced from the labour market will receive direct one-to-one labour market training and supports through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). € 40 million funding for the Leader programme.

New Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme

On November, 17th, 2015, Mr. Alan Kelly, T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government announced that he has signed the statutory instruments required to introduce a new tenant purchase scheme from 1 January 2016 for existing local authority houses. This scheme will replace the 1995 tenant purchase scheme, which closed for new applications in December 2012.

The Minister stressed the importance of tenant purchase in providing opportunities for local authority tenants to become homeowners, as a means of promoting sustainable communities, while generating additional funding from sale proceeds for local authorities to invest in a range of social housing supports.

He also highlighted the reduction in housing maintenance costs which local authorities will have to pay in upkeep of properties, and the resources which can be freed up for delivering new housing schemes as a result.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

CURRENT

Leasing: Increased funding of €20m will allow local authorities to bring approximately 3,000 new leased units into operation in 2016.

Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS): Funding of €135 million under the RAS will allow for 1,000 new RAS transfers in 2015.

Housing Assistance Payment: Funding is being increased by €24.5 million to €47.7million in 2016 in line with the expansion of the scheme which will assist an additional 10,000 families to secure suitable accommodation.

Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme: The 2016 allocation will be used to make loan repayments in respect of projects already delivered or underway.

Traveller Accommodation and Support: €4.3m million funding will provide for Traveller Accommodation and Support Services.

Homeless: The increase in funding of €17 million will ensure that the increased demand for homeless services are effectively addressed.

Affordable Rental (Pilot): Provision of €10m for a new Affordable Rental (Pilot) scheme

Community and Rural Development: €135m is being provided under this programme. Some 40,000 people will receive direct one-to-one labour market training and supports through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

Seniors Alert Scheme: additional funding is being provided under the Seniors Alert Scheme which supports the provision of monitored alarms to enable older persons, of limited means, to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence. Funding will enable 10,000 monitored alarms to be provided.

- The scheme will operate along the incremental purchase model already in place for certain newly-built local authority houses and for local authority apartments. The discounts are based on tenant, etc., income and will enable tenants to purchase their houses earlier than under previous tenant purchase schemes.
- The new scheme will also promote sustainable communities by encouraging tenant purchasers to stay in their homes for a reasonable period after purchase.
- The new scheme involves a discount for a purchaser of 60%, 50% or 40% off the purchase price of the house and an incremental charge on the house equivalent to the discount. This charge reduces to nil over a period of years in annual increments of 2% of the total value of the house, unless the tenant purchaser resells the house or fails to comply with sale conditions during the charged period.
- In the event of a resale within the charged period, the tenant purchaser will be required to pay to the local authority the outstanding incremental charge on the house from any resale profits.

CAPITAL

Local Authority Housing: Total funding of over €180 million for the capital provision for local authority housing will deliver more than 1,000 new units through a programme of construction and acquisitions.

Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS): The provision of €76 million for CAS will ensure continued focus on meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups with some 450 units to be provided for people with specific needs in 2016.

Mortgage to Rent: Allocation of €17 million will allow for the expansion of the scheme and assist in meeting the Government's commitments and responses to the mortgage arrears position.

Traveller Accommodation: A provision of €5.5 million in 2016 will support the progression of a range of Traveller specific accommodation schemes.

Regeneration/Remedial Works: The 2016 provision of €85 million demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to target the country's most disadvantaged communities.

Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting: The 2016 provision of €70 million will allow for the continued upgrading of social housing stock providing warmer and more energy efficient homes for thousands of families.

Voids: Building on progress made in 2014 and 2015, a further 1,500 vacant units will be refurbished and brought back to productive use.

Private Housing Grants: Funding of €45 million will provide for some 8,500 grants in 2016 which will assist with adaptation works to enable older people and people with disabilities to remain living independently in their own homes for longer.

Pyrite Remediation Scheme: Funding of €19 million will be provided in 2016 to support activity under the Pyrite Remediation Scheme.

Lead Remediation Grant Scheme: €5m will be provided in 2016 towards a new scheme that will assist homeowners in addressing the issue of lead in their drinking water.

International Climate Change Commitments: €2m is being provided in 2016 towards the International Green Climate Fund.

Libraries: Funding for libraries is being increased with €2.75m available in 2016.

Leader: €40m is being provided in 2016 under the Leader programme. This programme will assist projects that improve quality of life and promote growth and diversification of the rural economy.

Minister Kelly underlined that “this is about giving local authority tenants a better opportunity to own their own home, and building stronger and more stable communities. This really is a win-win for both the tenant and the local authority, as the tenant has the opportunity to own their own home, and the local authorities will have resources freed up which can be directed towards the delivery of new social housing units.” Minister of State, Paudie Coffey also noted that “the new tenant purchase scheme underlines the Government's commitment to implementing the reforms set in the Social Housing Strategy 2020 and is a very positive development for all tenants of local authority houses. I would encourage tenants to consider whether they wish, and can afford, to avail of this opportunity to buy their homes from their local council”

Delivery of 500 Modular Housing Units for Homeless Families

On October, 21st, 2015, Mr Alan Kelly TD, Minister for the Environment Community & Local Government, announced that the Government has approved the delivery of 500 units of modular housing for homeless families across Dublin. The aim is to have an initial 22 units in place by December with a further 128 units to follow through a fast-tracked procurement. 350 units will then be provided through a national procurement framework overseen by the Office for Government Procurement.

The Ministers will be using their powers under the Planning & Development Acts to support the use of the fastest planning process in order for the modular units to be in place as quickly as possible and ease pressure for families currently residing in hotels and other emergency accommodation. Minister Kelly stated that “the housing market in Dublin was ruined during the recession and this sector is not recovering quickly enough to keep up with demand. Therefore, as a temporary measure while supply

is coming on stream, I will be funding the delivery of 500 modular units for families in Dublin experiencing homelessness. Modular units can offer a much better quality of life than a hotel while families are waiting to be housed in more permanent settings. The families that avail of these will continue to have the full set of supports available from homelessness services. They will not be considered to be housed by the local authority, they will remain 'homeless' for statistical purposes but they will be in a better environment where their family life will be minimally disrupted. The homes will be built to all necessary building standards with the sites being selected on the basis of access to community infrastructure and services." Similarly, Paudie Coffey TD, Minister with Special Responsibility for Housing, Planning and Coordination of the Construction 2020 Strategy noted that "these modular units will assist those with the most acute housing need in the Dublin Area. I now expect these units be delivered as soon as possible."

This programme of modular housing provision is being implemented to mitigate the issues associated with an increasing volume of homeless families accommodated in inappropriate commercial hotel arrangements. Data from September indicated that there were 738 homeless families nationally, the majority of which, 637 families, were in the Dublin Region; on a single night 401 families were accommodated on an emergency basis in commercial hotels in the Dublin Region. Modular housing accommodation will offer a greater level of stability for families while move-on options to long-term independent living are identified and secured. Furthermore, such arrangements will facilitate more coordinated needs assessment and support planning for access to all required services, including welfare, health and housing services.

Further Investment of €180m in Social Housing Delivery

Earlier in the year, on July 23rd, 2015, Minister for the Environment,

Community & Local Government, Alan Kelly, and Minister for State for Housing, Planning & Construction, Paudie Coffey, announced further progress on social housing delivery with the funding of almost 1200 new units across the country. The Ministers allocated funding to Approved Housing Bodies for the construction of 521 new homes, at a cost of €84million and for the purchase of a further 536 housing units costing €67 million. This amounts to over 200 construction projects started for social housing.

- The investment, which comes to over €151 million, will be given to Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), to assist those with specific needs such as elderly people, persons with intellectual or physical disability and homeless persons. The newly acquired units will come on stream for people with housing need this year while the newly constructed units will be completed by 2017. The projects all form part of the Department of Environment's Capital Assistance Scheme. The scheme seeks local authorities to prioritise proposals for people with special housing needs in co-operation with an approved housing body.
- The overall value of this investment in social housing via the Approved Housing Bodies is €151m, with €84m of this being for new build construction projects. In line with the approach under the Capital Assistance Scheme of promoting access to community-based housing in the vicinity of necessary supports, the proposals to be funded range for single unit developments to construction proposals for over 20 units together. The majority of acquisition proposals are scheduled to be delivered in the short term, with work required in some cases to customise special needs housing. Larger scale construction proposals are to be completed by 2017.

- As well as being a further advancement on the Government's

€4billion social housing strategy to deliver 35,000 housing units out to 2020, this investment is also a strong commitment to meeting special housing needs for those who may require particular supports, including the elderly, persons with an intellectual or physical disability and homeless persons. This comes on the back of the announcement by the Ministers in May of increased funding for local authorities to undertake adaptations to houses to support people with a disability and the elderly.

As well as the announcement of special needs housing by Approved Housing Bodies, the Ministers also announced a further set of local authority construction proposals, of over €30m value to deliver 118 new housing units. Minister Kelly outlined that "this demonstrates further and sustained progress on social housing. It will have a short-term impact with over 500 homes being purchased with another 521 being built. In May I announced the first major investment in local authority housing for many years, with 100 new construction projects approved that will deliver over 1,700 new housing units over a three year period. I said at that time that this represented a good start but more would be needed. It's significant, therefore, that we are now announcing a major delivery programme for the Approved Housing Body sector, with over 1,000 new social housing units to cater in particular for the elderly, persons with a disability and homeless persons."

He underlined that "approved Housing Bodies have an important role to play in delivery under the Government's Social Housing Strategy and this announcement means they now have important targets to deliver to meet important special housing needs. It is an area where they have great skills and capacity, so I look forward to seeing the fruits of their work. Given the Government's particular focus on addressing the challenging issue of homelessness, I'm particularly pleased that there will be new, dedicated, social

announcement by Approved Housing Bodies who provide very important supports for those who find themselves in need of support and shelter.”

Minister Coffey also noted that “the projects announced today for the Approved Housing Bodies will see the construction of over 500 new accommodation units with a value of €84m, while the Local Authority construction proposals we are also announcing will deliver over €30m of construction activity across 7 separate new projects. Building on the announcement in May of 100 new social housing build projects, these approvals will provide further support for jobs in the construction and trades sector. Given that the two recent announcements on social housing construction encompass all local authority areas, I’m delighted that these jobs are being spread throughout communities all over the country.”

New legislation passed to tackle vacant and idle land and improve housing supply

In mid-July, 2015, the Urban Regeneration and Housing Bill 2015 was passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas. Minister of State Coffey outlined that “the Bill is another step in the implementation of the Government’s Construction 2020, a Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector, to help deliver a competitive and sustainable construction sector that can make its proper contribution to the economy, job creation and is capable of delivering the economic and social infrastructure needed for the future.”

There are two main strands to the legislation:

- Firstly, a new vacant site levy on housing or regeneration lands suitable for housing but not coming forward for development and,
- secondly, measures to streamline housing delivery including revisions to social housing and development contributions requirements.

Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) summary by LA area:

| Local Authority | Units | Estimated Cost |
|--------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Carlow County Council | 22 | €3,872,000 |
| Cavan County Council | 14 | €924,100 |
| Clare County Council | 31 | €2,416,000 |
| Cork City Council | 78 | €13,266,500 |
| Cork County Council | 28 | €3,288,600 |
| DLR County Council | 42 | €7,432,700 |
| Donegal County Council | 15 | €794,500 |
| Dublin City Council | 141 | €24,884,900 |
| Fingal County Council | 69 | €12,940,900 |
| Galway City Council | 46 | €7,503,600 |
| Galway County Council | 41 | €5,980,400 |
| Kerry County Council | 26 | €3,930,400 |
| Kildare County Council | 50 | €4,295,500 |
| Kilkenny County Council | 62 | €7,119,200 |
| Laois County Council | 40 | €5,428,200 |
| Limerick City & County Council | 110 | €13,036,900 |
| Louth County Council | 3 | €472,900 |
| Mayo County Council | 8 | €895,300 |
| Meath County Council | 2 | €402,100 |
| Offaly County Council | 25 | €3,580,700 |
| Sligo County Council | 7 | €900,800 |
| South Dublin County Council | 47 | €5,629,700 |
| Tipperary County Council | 27 | €3,637,000 |
| Waterford City & County | 42 | €5,349,016 |
| Westmeath County Council | 14 | €1,640,000 |
| Wexford County Council | 35 | €4,676,500 |
| Wicklow County Council | 32 | €7,305,500 |
| TOTAL | 1057 | €151,603,916 |

On the passage of the Bill, the Minister stated that “the passage of this Bill is visible demonstration of the Government’s commitment to tackle reasons why so many key sites that are suitable for development are not coming forward at a time of such a major need for housing”. He noted that “other countries around Europe and globally are also

examining the potential for a vacant site levy to stimulate the release of badly needed land for development in the right locations and Ireland again leads the way in advancing innovative public policy measures like the vacant site levy”. The Minister pointed out that “It will now be up to local authorities to examine their development plans from now into 2016

Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) summary by LA area:

| Local Authority | Location | Units | Estimated Cost |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------|--------------------|
| DLR County Council | Rosemount Court | 44 | €10,500,000 |
| DLR County Council | Moreen Avenue | 1 | €400,000 |
| Donegal County Council | Carndonagh Housing Scheme | 4 | €680,000 |
| Donegal County Council | Dunfanaghy Housing Scheme | 6 | €905,000 |
| Longford County Council | Lanesborough | 13 | €2,000,000 |
| Mayo County Council | Single Rural Dwellings | 8 | €1,280,000 |
| Wicklow County Council | Kilbride Lane, Bray | 42 | €14,700,000 |
| TOTAL | | 118 | €30,465,000 |

and identify sites that are ready to go are not and, where there are critical housing shortages, to prepare vacant sites registers and contact owners". He also underlined that "landowners will have ample opportunity to engage with local authorities and there is an appeal mechanism in place but I and the Government hope that the signalling effect of the levy will start people thinking about getting strategically located but idle sites into more beneficial use".

Informed by an extensive public consultation process and an independent in-depth review of the operation of the social and affordable housing provisions in Part V of the Planning and Development Acts, the new legislation provides for a series of amendments with the aim of enhancing the economic viability of developments, maximising the opportunity for the delivery of social housing units and securing the principle of integrated mixed tenure developments. The new provisions are a key component of the range of delivery mechanisms required to achieve the targets set out in the Government's Social Housing Strategy 2020 - Support, Supply and Reform. The new Part V arrangements can be retrospectively applied to existing planning permissions where works have not commenced. The Minister underlined that "the aim and priority is to kick-start construction activity and secure social housing units on-site.

To that end, the practice of developers making cash payments in lieu of social housing is discontinued under the new legislation." The new legislation will also enable local authorities to retrospectively implement reductions of development charges in respect of existing but un-commenced planning permissions - improving the economics of new housing development and easing the housing shortage.

National Statement of Housing Supply and Demand 2014 and Outlook for 2015-17

Also at the end of July, 2015, Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government, Alan Kelly T.D. and his colleague, Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Paudie Coffey T.D., welcomed the publication by the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency of the National Statement of Housing Supply and Demand 2014 and Outlook for 2015-17, a key deliverable under Construction 2020. Minister Coffey, who has special responsibility for Housing, Planning and Coordination of the Construction 2020 Strategy, thanked the Housing Agency for their work on the Statement, noting that "it will contribute greatly to an overall understanding of housing needs in Ireland, and that the availability of comprehensive data relating to current housing supply and emerging needs,

will help ensure policy responses are evidence-based and needs-led." Minister Coffey also stressed that "this document will support a more strategic approach to the provision of housing, and a greater balance to match supply with demand. The Statement is the first of its kind in this country, and presents the most up-to-date information available in relation to housing supply and demand."

The report, which will be published annually, provides key data on overall housing trends between 2007 and 2014, examining the financial and tenure trends over that period. It details affordability issues and explores recent policy developments in this area. It also provides an outlook to 2017, examining future housing requirements and supply indicators resulting in a minimum requirement for residential units. Key findings and analysis from the first National Statement of Housing Supply and Demand show that:

- The economy is recovering. The unemployment rate is at its lowest level for over five years and GDP grew by almost 5% in 2014 and is predicted to grow by 4% this year.
- Population is growing. An increasing population and a declining household size will increase demand for housing units.
- Housing costs are increasing. The

median price paid for a residential property in the state in 2014 was €152,500, up from €140,000 in 2013. The first half of 2015 has seen asking prices for residential properties in some parts of Dublin levelling off, while increasing by 9% outside the Capital.

- Rents in the private rented sector have increased over the year, particularly for apartments in Dublin. The Private Residential Tenancies Board Rent Index found that at a national level, average monthly rents were 6.9% higher in Q1 2015 when compared with Q1 2014 (9.6% in Dublin).
- Affordability had eased during the economic downturn, but increases in house prices and rent levels, in the absence of corresponding income rises, has reduced housing affordability, particularly for those on low incomes, single earners and those in high demand areas, such as Dublin.
- There are signals of increased activity in the residential market with the number of mortgage approval rates and mortgage draw-downs both going up. There has been an on-going decline in the number of mortgages in arrears, including those in arrears for 90 days or more.
- Supply is steadily increasing, but needs to increase more to meet demand. There was a 33% increase in completions in 2014 compared to 2013. Completion figures for the first three months of 2015 show a 25% increase on output comparing the first three months of 2014.
- The Residential Land Availability Survey shows the total area of available zoned land nationally is capable of supporting over 414,000 housing units.

Outlining key Government initiatives to stimulate housing supply, such as €3.8 billion investment in social housing, and forthcoming legislative changes under planning law which will see the retrospective application of reduced development contribution charges, the introduction of a vacant site levy, and new and clear Part V

arrangements for the delivery of social and affordable housing, Minister Coffey acknowledged that there are challenges ahead, but, he called on all stakeholders to “redouble efforts to boost supply and focus on delivery of quality, sustainable homes for the future.”

The full Report can be accessed on the Housing Agency website at

www.housing.ie

For further information, contact: Ciara O’Connor at the Housing Agency Communications Office:

communications@housing.ie

Sources:

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COMHAIRLE CATHRACH CHORCAÍ CORK CITY COUNCIL

To achieve, in a sustainable manner and in co-operation with other key stakeholders, an enduring and better quality of life and a robust local economy in Cork by

balancing the relationship between communities, economic development and environmental quality

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Connecting the Wild Atlantic Way Tourism Conference 2015

Wild Atlantic Way to have major benefits for Donegal

Donegal County Council's Chief Executive and Chairman of Donegal Tourism, Ltd, Seamus Neely outlined in his address at the second annual 'Connecting the Wild Atlantic Way' tourism conference, which was held in the Clanree Hotel, Letterkenny on October 12th, 2015, that the collective marketing of Donegal and a positive attitude in presenting this to the world wide tourism market is crucial, if we are to continue to benefit from the growth of the Wild Atlantic Way.

The theme of the second annual 'Connecting the Wild Atlantic Way' tourism conference this year was entitled 'Your Business, Developing Networks, Reaching Customers' and attracted a huge attendance from all over the county and beyond.

Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council, Cllr Ciaran Brogan told delegates that over the past number of years the Council had made tourism one of their main priorities and they were currently spending over €½ million marketing the county while a lot of work had gone into the development of projects such as Sliabh Liag, Fanad Lighthouse and Malin Head. Cllr Ciaran Brogan emphasised that "it's fair to say that in Donegal we have the best product development than anywhere else in the whole country. Today is about networking, sharing information and getting to know one another and maybe learning from one another how best to deal with the challenges we all have going forward." He added the Council was delighted it had a very good working relationship with

the tourism industry in Donegal as it was a huge employer and crucial to economic development. Mayor of Letterkenny Municipal District, Cllr Gerry McMonagle welcomed the delegates to the town, reinforced the theme of cooperation throughout the industry and spoke of the major attractions and the ones yet to be developed that if developed to their full potential, would continue to attract tourists to the county.

Maximize Potential

Chief Executive Seamus Neely congratulated the tourism industry for embracing the Wild Atlantic Way in such a short period of time and making the considerable effort to develop new networks that would help reach more customers, maximize



Speakers at the Connecting the Wild Atlantic Way Tourism Conference in the Clanree Hotel on Friday last left to right: Seamus Neely, Chief Executive Donegal County Council, Helen Haworth, Portsalon Luxury Camping, Stephen Cotter, CIE Tours International, Kathrin Chambers, Failte Ireland, Cllr. Ciaran Brogan, Cathaoirleach Donegal County Council, Joan Crawford, Failte Ireland, Brian Harte, Tourism Ireland, Deirdre McGlone, Harveys Point Hotel, Cllr. Gerry McMonagle, Mayor of Letterkenny Municipal District.



Mary Daly, Donegal County Council and Iga Lawne, Donegal Tourism in the frame at the Connecting the Wild Atlantic Way Tourism Conference in the Clanree Hotel on Friday last.

the potential on their online digital platforms and showcase what their businesses has to offer. Mr. Neely noted that “visitors numbers are rising because of a collective strategic approach which has been adopted by the entire industry across the county. The opportunity to network can act as an opportunity to explore how we as a county can send an even stronger message to markets at home and right across the world – the message that Donegal and the Wild Atlantic Way is open for business and looking forward to the years ahead.” He also underlined that a key part

of the conference was to update and improve marketing techniques and he knew from feedback from last year’s event that web-marketing and web-booking potential had improved because its potential had been highlighted. He also highlighted the success of developments like the Donegal Gathering and Donegal Tourism, their successful websites and apps and the continued growth of their world wide reach in promoting the Donegal ‘brand’. Mr Neely encouraged all tourism providers to get their business, event or festival listed for free online

publicity via Donegal Tourism online channels by sending details to: info@govisitdonegal.com He added that today tourism in Donegal is vibrant, modern, customer driven, and professional but most importantly of all, it remains authentic and this is our real strength. He believes the Wild Atlantic Way holds great opportunities for Donegal and that we are really only beginning to see the first benefits of it and that there are multiples more by way of traffic, visitors and revenue spent. “How we collectively tap into that will determine how much of that potential we will actually realize. My own view is Donegal is the ‘wild’ part of the Wild Atlantic Way – it’s rugged, it’s beautiful, it’s vast, it has lovely communities, it has fabulous landscapes, it has the lot.”

Conference Speakers

Speakers at the conference included Joan Crawford, Wild Atlantic Way Client Services Manager with Fáilte Ireland. She delivered an overview of the project and its future potential. The conference also heard from a number of other speakers including Brian Harte, Tourism Ireland’s Head of Customer Engagement and E-Marketing; Darragh Doyle, Online Audience Strategist; Kathrin Chambers, Digital Manager at Fáilte Ireland; Stephen Cotter, General Manager at CIE Tours International and Fionn Davenport, Travel Writer. Case study speakers at the event included Deirdre McGlone from Harvey’s Point Hotel, Donegal Town; Helen Haworth, Portsalon Luxury Camping and Ireland By Bike founder, Seamus Gallagher from Carrick. They presented case studies in their particular areas of expertise.

The event also saw the distribution of promotional materials and speed networking opportunities.

Source:

Donegal County Council Communications Office.

Donegal Local Enterprise Office joins Enterprise Europe Network to provide free access to global business opportunities to Donegal businesses

On Friday 13th November, 2015, the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), the world's largest support network for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) announced a new partnership with 31 Local Enterprise Offices in Ireland.

This will mean free access for Irish companies to Europe's largest database with up to 10,000 new business and technology opportunities in the EU and many other major global markets. The Enterprise Europe Network in Ireland is a joint partnership between Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, Dublin Chamber of Commerce

and Cork Chamber of Commerce. Launched in January, the Network is co-financed under 'COSME', the EU funding programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs. The services are tailored for SMEs but are also available to all other businesses, universities and research centres.

Speaking at the announcement, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton, T.D., commented that "this new partnership between the Enterprise Europe Network and the Local Enterprise Offices will provide Irish companies with an important

gateway into the EU and a bigger footprint globally.

I am confident that this new partnership will help our companies forge new international partnerships which will contribute to a boost in Irish exports".

Also speaking at the announcement Tom Hayes, Divisional Manager, Regions & Entrepreneurship, Enterprise Ireland outlined that "today's announcement will open doors for Irish companies to foster new partnerships and access up to 60 international markets, get advice on EU funding and support on bringing their innovative products and technologies to a global audience.

It is an important step in bringing Irish companies closer to our European counterparts, and will enhance the services that Local Enterprise Offices can offer Irish companies".

Michael Tunney, Head of Local Enterprise in Donegal commented that "as the first-stop shop for enterprise, the network of Local Enterprise Offices' role is to encourage a culture of entrepreneurship in Ireland.

In partnership with the Enterprise Europe Network, Local Enterprise Offices across the country can now support SMEs in becoming more knowledgeable and competitive in global markets, leading to greater international business opportunities".



Tom Hayes, Enterprise Ireland; Conor Healy, Cork Chamber of Commerce; Eileen Kelly, LEO Donegal; Gina Quin, Dublin Chamber of Commerce; Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton TD; Jan Gerritsen, Enterprise Ireland; Oisín Geoghegan, LEO Fingal

- The Enterprise Europe Network helps Irish companies to make the most of business and technology opportunities in the EU and major other global markets, with close to 600 business support organisations in up to 60 countries including China, USA, Japan, India, Russia, Brazil, Canada etc
- The Enterprise Europe Network offers fast track international growth by providing practical advice, targeted market intelligence and personalised support to companies across the EU. The EEN provides access to sourcing international Business and Technology Partners, access to finance and EU funding, support to take innovations to market, advice on intellectual property rights and EU Law conformity and Standards
- There are over 4000 EEN experts on call throughout the whole Network. The EEN partner websites are:

www.enterprise-ireland.com
www.localenterprise.ie
www.dublinchamber.ie
www.corkchamber.ie
www.corkchamber.ie

For further information contact: Brigid Burke, Press Office, Enterprise Ireland on 01 7272434 or brigid.burke@enterprise-ireland.com

Information on the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) can be found on the dedicated Irish website: www.een-ireland.ie as well as the EU website: <http://een.ec.europa.eu/>.

To access your local EEN advisor please contact your Local Enterprise Office, or Enterprise Ireland.

Source:
 Donegal County Council Communications Office
 and Enterprise Ireland Press Office

SEPTIC TANK OPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES Your Guide to Conventional, Natural and Eco-friendly Methods and Technologies *by Féidhlim Harty*

*Published by Permanent Publications. Print edition ISBN: 9781856232081;
 PDF edition ISBN: 9781856232098
 Reviewed by Peter Cowman, director of the Living Architecture Centre*



Based on over 20 years hands-on experience the author of this book presents the reader with a range of sewage treatment systems and management options with a clear bias towards systems that are natural, zero energy,

recycle biomass or nutrients, and/or produce a firewood crop at the end of the year. Adopting a clear and lively tone from the outset Féidhlim Harty reveals a clear love and deep knowledge of his subject while charting a clear route forward for the reader, particularly those with a preference for sustainable solutions.

Yeah!

At the outset the author acknowledges the dawning realisation that many septic tanks currently in use actually cause water pollution and he emphasises how vital it is that we take better care of our drinking water supplies, of our fishing streams and our rivers and lakes. As he points out, now that the septic tank inspection process is being rolled out nationally this, happily, is leading to a situation whereby many people are keen to know how best to deal with their own sh**. Not only is this the ideal book for them but it also serves as an essential guide to those planning on buying an existing property or those intending to construct a new dwelling.

All of the treatment system methodologies that the author is aware of at the time of writing are included, whether or not

they fall within the current EPA Code of Practice - Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses, the default guide used by building designers and County Council planning departments. While the author himself has contributed to this official guide he clearly points out that its scope is limited to soils of good percolation and sufficient depth and to relatively conventional treatment options and that it specifically acknowledges that there may be other solutions available that meet the terms of the code.

So, if one wants want to explore a greater selection of sustainable solutions or if one has soils that are unsuitable for percolation then his 'unofficial' guide will provide a most useful map to what's on offer in respect of the most ecofriendly solution available.

The book offers a three-step process to get from where one is to where one wants to be in respect of sewage treatment systems:

Step A outlines how to make an assessment of your current system.

Step B allows one to take stock of one's particular site characteristics and personal preferences.

Step C examines the options available and looks at how one can to move forward towards implementation of one's chosen option.

Each of these Steps is supported with clear diagrams, illustrations, and, most usefully, worksheets! So really, this is a workbook, an invaluable and 'always on' companion to successfully managing the vital issue of viable and healthy sewage treatment systems and management options. As such it belongs in every household and in every building designer's library.

New Index of Social Progress shows Ireland’s social services and infrastructure have progressed more slowly than GDP every year since 1995

“It is not acceptable that Ireland’s social progress has lagged behind its economic growth through good times and bad over the past 20 years” according to Dr Seán Healy, Director of Social Justice Ireland. “A new Index of Social Progress, published by Social Justice Ireland at its annual Social Policy Conference on Tuesday, November 24th, 2015 shows Ireland’s services and infrastructure are consistently the poor relation no matter what is happening in the economy.”

In a presentation, entitled ‘Beyond GDP: Measuring Ireland’s Progress in the 21st Century’ Professor Charles Clark and Dr Catherine Kavanagh, two eminent economists, presented their Index for Social Progress (ISP) and stated that “Irish citizens and policy makers need to go beyond the narrow ‘economic growth will solve all problems’ approach that fueled the Celtic Tiger economy while distracting policy makers from the real purpose of economic policy: improving societal well-being.”

Clark and Kavanagh argued that society in general and policy makers in particular need to go beyond GDP and apply a broader set of indicators when they are planning for the future. Clark (Professor of Economics in St John’s University, New York) stated: “GDP excludes many of the factors that promote human flourishing and it excludes

| Stage of Life Indicator | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Children | Infant mortality |
| | Child poverty |
| | Children in foster care |
| Youth | Teenage suicide |
| | Teenage pregnancy |
| | School retention rate |
| Adult | Unemployment rate |
| | Average wages |
| | Alcohol consumption |
| | Drug offences |
| Old Aged | Poverty among the elderly |
| | Life expectancy of the over 65s |
| All Ages | Homicides |
| | Traffic fatalities |
| | Medical card coverage |
| | Household debt |
| | Social housing expenditure |
| | Net migration |
| | Inequality |

the costs that threaten our common home. This approach is clearly not sustainable.” They also highlighted that “sometimes economic growth is an effective means to improving people’s lives, yet sometimes it becomes decoupled from improving well-

being. Economic growth can mean more incomes, more jobs, and more housing, but it can also mean more income for the very rich, more jobs that do not pay a living wage, and more debt.

Rising inequality and hidden and ignored environmental and social costs can mask the reality behind the headline statistics of economic growth. Furthermore, much of the economic growth can be just a transfer from the middle to the top, and in terms of environmental impacts, from the future to the present.” - Professor Charles Clark and Dr Catherine Kavanagh.

In the Index of Social Progress (ISP) Professor Clark and Dr Kavanagh (lecturer in economics at UCC) have included indicators focusing on different stages of life: children, youth, adult, older aged and combined them with indicators that impact on everyone. They also showed that when environmental indicators are added it becomes clear that the environment has received even less attention than many societal issues.

In a paper entitled ‘What Should Ireland Do Now?’ presented at the same conference, Social Justice Ireland staff members Seán Healy, Brigid Reynolds and Michelle Murphy argued that previous recoveries in Ireland have focused principally on economic issues.

A more balanced approach is required. Substantial additional investment in social services, such as education and health, and in infrastructure such as social housing and childcare is essential if Ireland is ever to bring these up to EU-average levels.

Michelle Murphy argued that: “Sustainable employment growth can be underpinned by an investment programme that invests in both economic and social infrastructure. Domestic economic investment is sorely needed to provide employment and provide much-needed infrastructure; this would reduce short-term unemployment and increase the long-run productivity of the Irish economy.”

“All of the issues addressed above should be focused on the over-arching purpose of improving the well-being of all, both at home and abroad. This over-arching purpose is often ignored or not given sufficient prominence. It needs to be placed at the centre of policy making if we are to see balanced, integrated development and the emergence of a just and sustainable world. “ - Sean Healy, Brigid Reynolds, Michelle Murphy

The Social Justice Ireland team argued

that public policy should now focus on delivering five key outcomes i.e. a vibrant economy, decent public services, just taxation, good governance and sustainability.

Details of what this might entail were presented. Sean Healy stated that: “A society where well-being is valued and the common good is at the core of decision making is possible. Its delivery is a question of political will. Leadership, ambition and commitment are required.”

Indicators used in the ISP

“For the period 1995-2012, the index is constructed using 14 indicators for which data is available. Net migration is important in the Irish context and is included as a measure of progress in Ireland. Over the full periodthe ISP is lower than GDP in every year.... This is interesting in itself, given that the period covers the Celtic Tiger era....” - Professor Charles Clark and Dr Catherine Kavanagh.

“The ISP is lower than GDP in every year. This is interesting in itself, given that the period covers the Celtic Tiger era and the property boom period.

The performance of the indicators since 1995 shows the following pattern.

Indicators that have improved from 1995-2012:

- Life expectancy of the elderly, road traffic deaths, teenage pregnancy, infant mortality, school retention rates.

Indicators that have worsened since 1995-2012:

- Children in foster care, medical card coverage, household debt. “

Background information:

Social Justice Ireland is an independent think tank and justice advocacy organisation that advances the lives of people and communities through providing independent social analysis and effective policy development to create a sustainable future for every member of society and for societies as a whole.

Source:
Social Justice Ireland, 2015

Five policy areas to deliver a just and sustainable society

| Vibrant Economy | Decent services and infrastructure | Just taxation | Good Governance | Sustainability |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| Fiscal and financial stability and sustainable economic growth | Secure services and social infrastructure | Bring Taxes towards EU average | Deliberative democracy & PPNs | Promote climate justice and protect the environment |
| Adequate Investment programme | Combat unemployment & underemployment | Increase taxes equitably and reduce income inequality | Reform Policy Evaluation | Balanced regional development |
| Reduce Ireland’s debt burden | Ensure seven Social, Economic and Cultural rights are achieved | Secure fair share of corporate profits for the State | Social dialogue – all sectors in deliberative process | New indicators of progress and new Satellite National Accounts |

COP21 in Paris - An historic agreement

On Saturday the 12th December, 2015 a deal to attempt to limit the rise in global temperatures to less than 2C was agreed at the COP21 climate change summit in Paris after two weeks of intense negotiations.

The deal unites all the world's nations in a single agreement on tackling climate change for the first time in history.

The fact that a consensus was reached among nearly 200 countries on the need to cut greenhouse gas emissions is regarded by many observers as "historic". Particularly when compared with the disastrous Copenhagen talks in 2009 and before that the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 which set emission cutting targets for only a handful of developed countries, however the US pulled out and others failed to comply.

The goal of preventing what scientists regard as dangerous and irreversible levels of climate change - judged to be reached at around 2C of warming above pre-industrial times - is central to the agreement.

The world is already nearly halfway there at almost 1C and during the negotiations many countries argued for a tougher target of 1.5C - including leaders of low-lying countries that face unsustainable sea levels rises in a warming world.

The Paris agreement identifies the following targets as part of the deal: To keep global temperatures "well below" 2.0C (3.6F) and "endeavour to limit" them even more, to 1.5C.

To limit the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by human activity to the same levels that trees, soil and oceans can absorb naturally, beginning at some point between 2050 and 2100 To peak greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible and achieve a

balance between sources and sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century.

To review each country's contribution to cutting emissions every five years so they scale up to the challenge.

For rich countries to help poorer nations by providing "climate finance" (\$100billion a year by 2020) to adapt to climate change and switch to renewable energy.

Speaking in the aftermath of the talks, John Danilovich, Secretary General of our partners the International Chamber of Commerce and one of the major voices of business at the climate talks, stated that "this is a truly historic moment in our shared efforts to meet the climate challenge.

Business has consistently called for a robust and ambitious deal at COP21 and governments have delivered just that."

From the Irish perspective, Ireland was one of the few EU countries which went into the negotiations with its own climate change legislation.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill will become law in the New Year where it provides for a carbon neutral situation by mid-century and also commits to match Ireland's targets with those of the EU.

An expert advisory council, similar to the Fiscal Advisory Council, has also been established under the legislation and will advise Government Departments and agencies on the actions required to significantly

decarbonise the Irish economy by 2050.

It is noted that the Paris agreement will have a significant impact on the policy decisions Ireland will make in the years and decades to come as we move to a more decarbonised economy.

Many issues will need to be addressed, from how we generate our electricity and how we store it, to how we build our infrastructure and operate our transport system.

Business will also need to play its part by working with Government to support innovation and investment as we transition into a low-carbon economy.

To read a copy of the full agreement, visit the UNFCCC website:

United Nations Conference of the Parties, Twenty-first session Paris, 30 November to 11 December 2015,

<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/109r01.pdf> <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/109r01.pdf>

For more information on the work of the International Chamber of Commerce on energy and the climate negotiations,

<http://cop21.iccwbo.org/> <http://cop21.iccwbo.org/>

Source:
<http://www.chambers.ie/media/news/2015/12/14/cop21-in-paris-an-historic-agreement/>

EUROCHAMBRES Economic Survey 2016: slow European recovery continues despite fragile business confidence

On December 1st, 2015 Chambers Ireland outlined that 'EUROCHAMBRES, the European Chamber of Commerce, 23rd annual Economic Survey (EES2016) has shown that 2016 growth perspectives are improving, however stagnating domestic demand, uncertain external economic conditions and rising labour costs are cited as the main challenges for the year ahead.

Irish Chambers of Commerce were among 56,000 businesses and Chambers of Commerce from 26 European countries to feed into this economic survey.'

External factors and reforms
The results of EES2016 show that external factors (a weaker Chinese economy, the Russian economic crisis) are affecting some of Europe's leading export countries.

Structural reforms seem to be having a positive effect in several member states, but results show that considerable progress is still needed in Cyprus and Greece.

The survey shows that despite geopolitical tensions and crises in Emerging Market Economies, the domestic demand, employment and export sales indicators forecasts suggest a strong positive reaction to lower oil prices and Euro depreciation.

EUROCHAMBRES Secretary General Arnaldo Abruzzini highlighted that "the overall results are encouraging and improvements in sales and employment indicate that the post-crisis reform agenda is having a positive effect. But EES2016 also highlights businesses' ongoing caution, as well as exporters'

understandable sensitivity to currency fluctuations and geopolitical tensions."

Ian Talbot, Chief Executive, Chambers Ireland commented: "The Irish and wider European recovery process will only gather real momentum when business confidence and in turn investment levels pick up.

This underlines the importance of EU level initiatives to facilitate the movement of capital, to create an internal market that's fit for the digital era and to secure ambitious international trade agreements".

Source:

<http://www.chambers.ie/media/news/2015/12/01/eurochambres-economic-survey-2016/>

In detail

- Domestic sales expectations for 2016 are positive, with Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian businesses the most optimistic. Part of this success is due to the reduction of oil prices that will boost the private consumption for the next year.
- Export sales are expected to increase in 2016 after a small drop in 2015. These fluctuations can in part be attributed to the effects of the euro depreciation and geopolitical concerns. The greatest improvement is recorded in Portugal and Latvia.
- Employment in 2016 registers a modest improvement, continuing the positive trend of 2015. Eastern European countries generally anticipate a positive year for job creation, while Italian expectations remain negative.
- Investment and business confidence do not follow the positive trend of other indicators. Feedback from the Chamber network links the drop in confidence with concerns among businesses about recent economic and political tensions outside the EU. Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia and Hungary register a particularly significant fall in business confidence for 2016.

News items

‘SPACEial’ North West project wins prestigious Chambers Ireland Award

SPACEial North West picked up a prestigious Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Award at the Chambers Ireland Annual Excellence in Local Government Awards ceremony held in Dublin on Thursday 12th November, 2015. This is the 12th annual awards ceremony which recognises and celebrates the best of Local Government. Chambers Ireland’s Excellence in Local Government Awards showcase best practice in local government, highlighting some of the great projects that local authorities are undertaking. The Awards are judged by a panel of expert judges working in the field of Local Government and have been taking place since 2004.

The SPACEial North West project has won first place in the Joint Local Authority Initiatives category.

SPACEial NorthWest is a crossborder project with Donegal County Council being the lead implementing council, working closely with the Derry City and Strabane District Council, Limavady Borough Council and Magherafelt District Council in responding to the need for crossborder data to inform and shape policies and decisions within the entire region. The project is a response to the need for cross border spatial data to inform and shape policies and decision making within the region. It has worked with key stakeholders providing them with the combination of spatial datasets which are most relevant to their needs and provides them with the technical skills to enable them to use this data to



The Donegal project team with Mr. Ian Talbot, Chief Executive, Chambers Ireland and the Minister Alan Kelly T.D.

develop policies, plans and strategies for the enhancement of the entire region. The project produced a dedicated website, www.spaceialnw.eu which is essentially a one stop shop for Maps, Stats and Apps in the North West Region Cross Border.

In presenting the awards, Alan Kelly, T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government commented: “These awards are an opportunity for each local authority to showcase to the public the hard work being undertaken in the community year on year and the real benefits being delivered. I congratulate all who delivered the nominated projects for work excellently well done and encourage the local government sector to come forward next year with even more examples of the good that is being done at local level.” Congratulating the project team Seamus Neely, Chief Executive of Donegal County Council outlined that the SPACEial project was all about placing data at the heart of decision making. “It provides both public sector and non-public sector agencies with 159 cross-border spatial datasets to

help inform their plans and policies and equips them with the necessary skills to use different GIS technologies to make best use of the data available.” He also noted that “this project has provided a much needed platform in the North West Region in using geographical information to develop plans and policies and has the potential to impact on the lives of 317,518 people who live in this cross-border region”. Ian Talbot, Chief Executive, Chambers Ireland commented that “in spite of the many challenges they have faced in recent years, Local Authorities continue to deliver innovative and necessary projects that benefit and support local communities. It is an honour to host these awards and recognise the hard work that takes place at the core of local government across the country. I want to congratulate Carlow County Council, the sixteen winners, the many shortlisted organisations but also just as importantly, the people who made all these projects and activities happen.”

Source:

Donegal County Council Communications Office and Enterprise Ireland Press Office

Water Safety Award for Primary Schools in County Cork

by Caroline Casey, Water & Road Safety Development Officer, Cork County Council

The launch of the Cork County Council Water Safety Awareness Award took place in early November, 2015. This award is a Flag which can be flown inside or outside the school. The good news is that on completion of the Programme each school will be eligible to apply to the Council for the Award. This is a great badge of honour for the school as well as and most importantly it gives the children the opportunity to participate in personal safety education. The children learn valuable safety information & techniques around water. Irish Water Safety has been very supportive of this initiative and their Land PAWS program is part of the criteria for the flag status.

The items covered are very practical and useful in every day events. Safety in the home, farm, pool, rivers, lakes and beaches are all covered. On completion, certificates will be issued from Irish Water Safety and the Flag & Pack will be awarded on behalf of Cork County Council. Packs awarded with the flag include Card & Board Games and a story book based on

water safety all developed by Caroline Casey, Water Safety Development Officer, Cork County Council. Each session facilitated is a mix of storytelling, board games, action activities & interactive learning. There is no cost involved for the school. Our goal is that all children get the opportunity to have water safety education in primary school and that each school who participates will be recognised officially for supporting this initiative. 45 schools are flying the flag already. 90 School visits will have been facilitated before the end of 2015. This means our "Wise up around Water" message will have reached approx 5,000 Cork children between the ages of 5 and 12 by the end of 2015. Feedback from the schools has been excellent.

We encourage every school in the County to take this opportunity of getting involved in our "Wise Up Around Water" Campaign in Cork County. Cork is the largest County in the Country with the largest % of coast line & inland waterways so it is fitting that we are the first Local Authority to implement such an education drive around water safety. Our waterways are beautiful but can be dangerous too so we all need to spread the water safety message.

Source:
Communications Office, Cork County Council.



First Irish Organisations Achieve Certification to New International Business Standards

- Clare County Council became the first local authority in Ireland to achieve certification to the new Excellence Through People standard.
- Repak and Imperial Tobacco have become the first Irish companies to achieve certification to the new revised standards in Quality Management (ISO:9001) and Environmental Management (ISO:14001) respectively at a ceremony in NSAI offices in Dublin.
- The firms are among 38 organisations who achieved certificates to world class standards today in areas such as Food Management Systems, Excellence Through People and Health and Safety Management Systems
- NSAI has issued over 5,550 certificates to organisations worldwide

Thirty-eight organisations from the private, public and SME sectors gathered at NSAI (National Standards Authority of Ireland) offices in Dublin on Tuesday, 17th November 2015 for a special ceremony marking their achievement in becoming certified to world class standards.

Clare County Council became the first local authority in Ireland to achieve certification to the new Excellence Through People standard. This standard provides a business improvement model for organisations to enhance performance and realise strategies through the management and development of their people. Commenting on its certification to this important standard, Mr. Ger Dollard, Director of Service, Clare County Council emphasised that "achieving

this certification speaks volumes and demonstrates Clare County Council's innovative and progressive culture. It shows by working together we can all achieve success and this collaborative effort has now resulted in this prestigious and sought-after Excellence Through People certificate."

Two organisations, Repak and Imperial Tobacco, became the first companies in Ireland to achieve certification in the two new international business standards, Quality Management (ISO 9001) and Environmental Management Systems (ISO 14001). These standards were revised and launched in September this year to reflect the increasingly globalised business environment organizations now operate within and changing customer expectations due to advances in technology. International standards, Quality Management Systems (ISO9001) and Environmental Management Systems (ISO14001) and are used by almost 1.5 million companies worldwide.

Mr. Seamus Clancy, CEO of Repak stated that "we are delighted that Repak has been the first company in Ireland to receive the new ISO 9001:2015 Certification. This is a major milestone for the organisation and builds upon our success in helping Ireland become one of the top packaging recycling countries in Europe over the past 18 years. We have strived to constantly improve our quality management systems and streamline a complex ecosystem within the recycling industry. This achievement is in no small part due to the consistent commitment of our 2,120 members. This is a crucial endorsement of Repak and underscores how we work to the highest possible standards in promoting and driving better recycling in Ireland."

Speaking at the presentation ceremony in Dublin this morning, NSAI Chairperson Julie O'Neill highlighted the real business value of investing in standards: "The challenges faced by Irish businesses today are very different from a few decades ago. Technology is driving increased expectations from customers and businesses. More and more tender



Clare County Council has become the first local authority in Ireland to achieve certification to the HR standard Excellence Through People Pictured is Director of Services Clare County Council Ger Dollard receiving the certificate in Excellence Through People from NSAI Chairperson Julie O'Neill.

requirements seek certification to internationally recognised standards, such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001. Certification to these standards can also be a deal breaker when it comes to securing export opportunities."

All 38 organisations who achieved certification today were independently audited by NSAI inspectors in order to ensure they complied with the standards. They join an elite group of over 3,000 organisations who are currently NSAI certified in a variety of areas such as Food Management Systems, Excellence Through People Development and Health and Safety Management Systems. A study carried out by Behaviour and Attitudes revealed that more than 82 per cent of Managing Directors in Ireland believe that multinationals are more likely to do business with an Irish company that adheres to internationally recognised standards. 73 per cent said they believed that companies with standards have better reputations, while 62 per cent said compliance with standards is now a prerequisite in tender competitions.

About NSAI:

NSAI (National Standards Authority of Ireland) is the national standards and measurement body. Where a standard already exists, NSAI works with

businesses to help them apply it. Where a standard may be needed, NSAI will work with relevant parties at national or international level to create the appropriate standard. NSAI improves the performance of Irish business and protects consumers through the setting of standards and issuing of certification in the quality and safety of goods and services.

NSAI has 3,000 Irish companies certified worldwide. 10,000 certificates have been issued by the NSAI to date, to companies – including 500 global medical device companies.

NSAI invites members of the business community and the general public to get involved in the development of standards by visiting Your Standards, Your Say on www.nsaie.com. All standards are also available from www.standards.ie

The full list of companies certified at today's NSAI certification ceremony are:

1. ABP Food Group, Cahir, Co. Tipperary
2. Ailesbury Services, East Wall, Dublin
3. Allianz Ireland, Dublin
4. Balfour Beatty Ireland, Dublin
5. Berendsen, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin
6. Carlow Concrete Tanks, Bunclody, Wexford

7. Clare County Council
8. Clear Channel Ireland Ltd, Clonskeagh, Dublin
9. Delmec Engineering Ltd, Graiguecullen, Carlow
10. Finnegan Steel Fabrications Ltd, Clondalkin, Dublin
11. Fallon Consulting Engineers, Tuam Road, Galway
12. Gas Networks Ireland, Dublin and Cork
13. Arc Engineering and Manufacturing Services, Wexford
14. Geodis Ireland Ltd, Mulhuddart, Dublin
15. Hentech Fabrication Ltd, Enniscorthy, Wexford
16. Iarnród Éireann, Laois
17. Imperial Tobacco, Mullingar, Westmeath
18. Irish Air Corps, Dublin
19. Irish Rollforming Ltd, Cork
20. LMH Engineering Ltd, Arklow, Wicklow
21. M B McNamara Construction Ltd, Dublin
22. McGrattan & Kenny Ltd, Dublin
23. MFL Ltd, Kilcullen, Kildare
24. Molloy Precast Products Ltd, Tullamore, Offaly
25. Nanodiamond Products Ltd, Shannon, Clare
26. Newenham Mulligan & Associates, Dublin
27. Northside Homecare Services, Dublin
28. OMF Engineering Solutions Ltd, Carlow
29. Repak Ltd, Dublin
30. Sanbra Fyffe, Dublin
31. Sgr Scientific Ltd, Dublin
32. Shanderry Elevator & Escalator Consultants, Offaly
33. Sorensen Civil Engineering Ltd, Kinsale Road, Cork
34. Superior Pipeline Products Ltd, Osberstown, Naas, Kildare
35. Systherm Controlled Environment Technologies Ltd, Dublin
36. Thermal Insulation Distributors Ltd, Dublin
37. Woodloe Steel Fabrication Ltd, Dublin
38. OMC Technologies Ltd, Limerick

The standards awarded to companies include:

- ISO 14001 - Environmental Management Systems
- OHSAS 18001 - Occupational Health & Safety Management Systems
- ETP - Excellence Through People
- ISO 9001 - Quality Management Systems
- ISO 22000 - Food Management Systems
- ISO 50001 - Energy Management Systems

Excellence Through People:

Excellence Through People is a Human Resource National Specification. It became a full part of NSAI certification in 2012. This followed the proactive co-operation between FAS (ETP's previous managing body), CIPD (the professional body for HR) and Engineers Ireland. The objective was to realign the standard as far as possible with international best practice. Amongst other improvements this involved moving to an annual audit as part of a three year registration cycle. The result was ETP 1000:2012 which is now more closely aligned with NSAI's existing suite of certifications. Organisations have responded enthusiastically to ETP. They have recognised that this voluntary certification plays a key role in promoting change management in all sectors of industry and the State and Semi-State sectors, as well as driving Ireland's competitiveness.

For further information, see video of Repak's Quality Manager Colm Munnely explaining the difference certification to the new Quality Management Systems standard will make to his company:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eptn8lj-C2w>

For further information, visit NSAI.ie or follow on Twitter @NSAI_Standards

Source:

Sinead O'Donnell, Public Relations Officer, NSAI.

Tourism Ireland 2016 marketing plans launched

- **Tourism Ireland sets its sights on another record year for Irish tourism in 2016**
- **8.2 million visitors to generate €4.4 billion spend**

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mr. Paschal Donohoe TD, on Monday, 30th November, 2015 along with Tourism Ireland and tourism industry leaders from around the country launched details of the marketing plans to promote Ireland overseas in 2016 and beyond.

Tourism Ireland aims "to surpass this year's record performance in overseas tourism and to welcome 8.2 million visitors to Ireland in 2016. This figure will represent growth of +4% over 2015 and deliver €4.4 billion to the Irish economy (almost +5%) next year. To illustrate how much Irish tourism has bounced back since the downturn, a comparison of CSO figures for January to October 2015 versus the same period in 2010 shows superb growth in visitors from Britain (+20% in that five-year period), North America (+51%), Mainland Europe (+38%) and Australia and developing markets (+66%)." Consolidating this year's success and sustaining growth into the future is at the core of Tourism Ireland's strategy for 2016. Beneficial factors include: new flights to Ireland, stronger economies in our key source markets, the Ireland 'brand' (or image abroad) remains strong, as well as favourable exchange rates for sterling and the dollar. Other positives factors working in the organisation's favour, include Tourism Ireland's strength in digital and social media (the organisation is the third most popular tourism board in the world on Facebook). The release of Star Wars Episode VII - which will feature Skellig Michael - also presents Tourism Ireland with a truly unique opportunity to highlight the South West and Ireland in 2016.



Following the success of the Wild Atlantic Way, a new ad highlighting Tourism Ireland's latest tourism experience, Ireland's Ancient East, was also unveiled also at the end of November. The ad will launch in January 2016 in 23 markets around the world. Tourism Ireland will also promote Dublin – "A Breath of Fresh Air" – in major markets throughout 2016.

Tourism Ireland's focus in 2016, includes:

Tourism Ireland has identified a number of key themes to underpin its promotional activity in 2016 and continue to grow visitor numbers from overseas.

These include:

Digital and social media: In 2016, Tourism Ireland will continue to leverage its strength in digital and social media – especially important in developing new ways of reaching, and connecting more frequently, with our target audiences. Tourism Ireland is now the third most popular tourism board in the world on Facebook (about 3.33 million fans), number two on Twitter (317,000 followers) and number two on YouTube. Tourism Ireland's international website, <http://www.ireland.com/> attracted a record 16.5 million visitors in 2015. Next year, a new forum will be developed on Ireland.com, a community approach to making it easier for a potential visitor to plan their holiday to Ireland.

International publicity:

Tourism Ireland will also ramp up its publicity programme around the world – placing increased focus on digital channels and working more closely with online media, including bloggers. This year, Tourism Ireland's publicity activities generated thousands of articles and broadcasts, worth an estimated €320 million.

Collaboration: Tourism Ireland will provide thousands of promotional engagements for Irish tourism enterprises and trade partners overseas – to help them do business overseas and facilitate them to 'close the sale', particularly in the digital space. The organisation will continue to work closely with airlines and airports – building on its successful co-operative marketing programme, with a dedicated €1 million fund for promoting flights to regional airports.

Wild Atlantic Way: Promoting the Wild Atlantic Way will remain a key focus for Tourism Ireland in 2016, with Tourism Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way TV ad reaching 28 million prospective holidaymakers in France and Germany alone.

Leveraging Star Wars: Star Wars Episode VII is possibly the most anticipated film of all time, with pre-opening ticket sales beating all previous

records. Skellig Michael is one of the very few 'real world' locations to feature in the movie – providing Tourism Ireland with a truly unique opportunity to promote the Skelligs and the broader Wild Atlantic Way. Tourism Ireland has worked with Lucasfilm (the producer) to capture the film on location on Skellig Michael and will launch a dedicated Star Wars campaign in early January.

Dublin: Tourism Ireland will also highlight Dublin – "between the mountains and the sea" – particularly in the shoulder and off-seasons and will capitalise on the recent inclusion of Dublin at number three in the world in the prestigious 'Lonely Planet Best in Travel 2016'.

Ireland's Ancient East: Our newest tourism experience, Ireland's Ancient East, will be unveiled around the world in 2016. Tourism Ireland's brand new Ireland's Ancient East advert will launch in January, in 23 markets around the world.

Tourism Ireland's Global

Greening 2016: 2016 will mark the seventh year of Tourism Ireland's Global Greening initiative – when hundreds of iconic landmarks and sites around the world will be illuminated in green to celebrate our national day.

Ireland 2016: Ireland 2016, when the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising will be commemorated, will also be highlighted to people everywhere – with Tourism Ireland showcasing major new attractions and the year's signature events.

Target audiences: In addition to our key 'culturally curious' and 'social energisers' audiences, Tourism Ireland will also target niche segments – including golfers, business and incentive visitors, as well as the Diaspora in Britain, North America and Australia.

Speaking at the launch, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Paschal Donohoe TD, said: "I welcome the ambitious targets that are set out by Tourism Ireland in its marketing plans

for 2016. I want to again acknowledge the excellent work that Tourism Ireland carries out overseas with such professionalism, as well as the vital role that our tourism industry plays in generating economic growth and employment opportunities.

That is why we continue to invest in tourism marketing, and in supporting our tourism businesses to enhance their competitiveness. Our policies on the air travel tax and VAT have helped to improve the value on offer for our visitors.

The overall tourism goal of Government – as expressed in our Tourism Policy Statement – is that by 2025, revenue from overseas visitors, excluding carrier receipts, will increase to €5 billion net of inflation. We aim to have 10 million visits to Ireland annually by 2025 and 250,000 people employed in the tourism sector, compared to 205,000 at present.

In August I appointed a new Tourism Leadership Group, which will identify the specific actions required over the period 2016-2018 in order to achieve the longer-term goals in the Tourism Policy Statement. These actions will be contained in a Tourism Action Plan to be published early next year.”
2015 performance

Latest estimates indicate that, by year end, 7.9 million people will have visited Ireland in 2015, representing an +11% increase over 2014, with growth recorded from all markets. Revenue generated by international visitors is expected to be almost €4.2 billion, +16% increase over last year. Niall Gibbons, CEO of Tourism Ireland, stated that: “2015 is set to be the best year ever for Irish tourism. And I am delighted to report that growth has been recorded from all our markets around the world – with record numbers arriving here from North America, Mainland Europe and Australia and developing markets. Throughout the year, Tourism Ireland undertook a packed programme of promotions, to bring Ireland to the attention of travellers everywhere.

Thousands of opportunities were created

for potential visitors around the world to read, hear or watch positive messages about Ireland; Tourism Ireland estimates that this media exposure is worth an estimated €320 million in equivalent advertising value.”
2016 and beyond

Tourism Ireland’s targets for 2016 will see Ireland welcome 8.2 million visitors, representing growth of +4% over 2015. Commenting on the year ahead, Niall Gibbons underlined that “following a successful 2015, ambitious targets have been set again for 2016 and beyond.

We will unveil Ireland’s Ancient East around the world, while continuing to place a major focus on the Wild Atlantic Way. We will also highlight Dublin, in particular capitalising on the recent inclusion of Dublin at number three in the world in the prestigious ‘Lonely Planet Best in Travel 2016’.

Early next year, we will leverage the huge global popularity of Star Wars, following the upcoming launch of Star Wars Episode VII. And we will work with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to highlight Ireland 2016 to people everywhere – showcasing major new attractions and the year’s signature events.”

Access developments for 2015 include three new Aer Lingus transatlantic flights to Dublin from Los Angeles, Hartford (Connecticut) and Newark (New Jersey). Aer Lingus will also launch services from Pisa and Montpellier to Dublin and from Düsseldorf to Cork.

Other new routes in the pipeline include Flybe flights from Edinburgh and Birmingham to Ireland West Airport Knock; CityJet’s flights from Nantes and La Rochelle to Cork; an Iberia Express flight between Madrid and Cork; Air Canada rouge from Vancouver to Dublin; as well as a recently launched Ryanair flight from Amsterdam to Dublin.

Source:
<http://www.dttas.ie/press-releases/2015/minister-donohoe-launches-tourism-ireland-2016-marketing-plans>

Increase of 12.8% in overseas visits

On Wednesday 25 November 2015, CSO figures on Overseas Travel show an increase of 12.8% in overseas visits to Ireland for the first ten months of 2015 compared to the same period of 2014.

At over 7.4 million visits, overall trips to Ireland were up 12.8% in the first ten months of 2015 compared to the same period in 2014. For the three-month period from August to October 2015, overseas trips to Ireland increased by 14.0%.

Visits from Mainland Europe grew by 14.1% for January to October 2015, to 2,633,100 visits and by 16.9% for the August to October period.

North America registered an increase of 13.3% for January to October 2015 (1,343,400 visits) and of 10.6% in the August to October 2015 period.

Visits from Great Britain were up by 11.3% for January to October 2015 (2,981,600 visits) and by 11.8% for the three months from August to October 2015 compared to the corresponding period of 2014.

Visits from the rest of the world (mostly long-haul and developing markets) totalled 461,300 for the first ten months of 2015 (representing an increase of 13.5%) and increased by 23.3% for the three months from August to October alone.

Commenting on the figures, Minister Donohoe stated: ‘The figures published by the CSO today confirm that the strong tourism performance from overseas markets has continued into the Autumn months. All of our main markets are showing good growth levels and we remain on target for our best ever year in terms of overseas visits.’ Ge also underlined that he will be ‘launching the 2016 Marketing Plans for Tourism Ireland. Looking to the longer term, I will publish a detailed Tourism Action Plan early in 2016 so that the necessary

structures are in place to ensure that the sector can continue to grow in a sustainable manner into the future.’ Commenting on the figures, Minister of State Michael Ring T.D. stated: ‘The continued growth in visitor numbers is a tribute to the work of the tourism sector. Tourism has played a very significant part in our economic recovery with every region of the country benefitting. Commenting on the CSO Overseas Travel figures, Niall Gibbons, CEO of Tourism Ireland, said:

“Today’s figures indicate that 2015 is set to be a record year for Irish tourism, with more than 7.4 million people arriving during the January to October period – an increase of +12.8%, or an additional 842,300 overseas visitors, when compared to 2014. I am delighted to report that growth has been recorded from all of our markets around the world, with record numbers arriving

here from North America (+13% on the first ten months of 2014). Ireland now welcomes 10% of all American visitors to Europe – particularly noteworthy given the intense competition from other destinations. Mainland Europe has also turned in another superb performance (+14%), with important markets like Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the Nordic region and Benelux all recording really good growth.

I also welcome the continued strong performance from Britain (+11%), our largest market for overseas tourism, and from our long-haul markets like Australia, China and India (+13.5).” Also welcoming the positive figures, Fáilte Ireland CEO Shaun Quinn highlighted that “having recently met with tourism industry leaders in a series of meetings around the country, I can confirm that these figures are mirrored by strong local performances and a buoyant sense

of optimism on the ground. While the general expectation is that growth will continue into next year, we can’t be too complacent and tourism can still be influenced by external factors – whether currency exchange fluctuations or unexpected global events.

For next year, we need to maintain our focus on those factors we can control, namely the quality of our offering and a competitive level of value for money. Furthermore, Fáilte Ireland will be working with the industry to sustain growth in 2016 through greater emphasis on a longer season and better regional distribution to ensure we maximise the full potential of tourism for all regions.”

Source:

<http://www.dttas.ie/press-releases/2015/increase-128-overseas-visits-shows-govt-policies-and-hard-work-sector-are-paying>

North East/North West Action Plan for Jobs launched as part of €250million regional jobs strategy

Employment in companies in the North East / North West region supported by Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland has increased by over 3,400 in the period 2011-2014 (a 13% increase). This is compared to nearly 5,000 job losses in EI / IDA supported companies in the North East/North West in the period 2008 - 2010 (a 16% decline). The North East / North West Action Plan for Jobs will seek to build on the progress that has been made. (See: [HYPERLINK “https://www.djei.ie/en/Publications/APJ-NE-NW-2015-2017.html”](https://www.djei.ie/en/Publications/APJ-NE-NW-2015-2017.html) <https://www.djei.ie/en/Publications/APJ-NE-NW-2015-2017.html>) Following the successful national Action Plan for Jobs model which has supported the creation of 100,000 additional jobs 21 months ahead of deadline, and in order to ensure that the Plan is delivered, a comprehensive implementation structure is being put in place. Deadlines and lead organisations are assigned in the case of each action, a “North East/North

West Strategy Regional Implementation Committee” is being put in place, chaired by an industry figure, to drive implementation of this plan and identify new actions to be added over the lifetime of the plan. Progress Reports on implementation levels will be published every six months.

Successful implementation of Plan for Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth would see creation of 28,000 extra jobs in the region.

On Monday, 30th November 2015, the Government launched the North East/North West Action Plan for Jobs, aimed at delivering 10-15% employment growth in the region over the coming years.

The Plan is the sixth of 8 regional jobs plans to be published over the coming months, as part of a new €250million regional jobs strategy led by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton TD.

Since the national Action Plan for Jobs was launched in early 2012 more than 20,000 extra people are at work in the North East/North West (12% growth).

During the years 2008-2011, 31,600 jobs were lost in the region. The plan launched today targets employment growth of 10-15% over and above today’s employment levels.

The North East/North West Plan includes counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth. Key sectors targeted as part of the plan include traditionally strong sectors for the region like agri-food, manufacturing/engineering and tourism, as well as areas targeted for future growth like digital payments, cleantech and creative services.

Among the 152 actions in the plan to be delivered over the period 2015-2017 include:

Achieve an increase of at least 25% in the number of start-ups in the region, and a 25% improvement in the survival rate of new businesses.

Increase the number of IDA investments in the region by 30-40% up to 2019. This will result in a minimum of 61 additional projects for the North East/North West region by 2019.

As part of this, IDA is delivering a range of property solutions including advance facilities in Letterkenny, Sligo and Dundalk.

IDA will develop a value proposition for the North East/ North West aimed at securing potential “second site” investments from companies with large scale existing operations in Dublin.

The Local Enterprise Offices will disburse over €2.2million in grant funding, and provide training and mentoring support to over 1500 business-people per year.

Create 300-500 extra jobs in Gaeltacht regions, supported by Udarás

Establish two Regional Skills Forums to ensure the flow of critical skills to enterprises in the region.

A Regional Innovation Forum for the North East/North West region to help support more companies to innovate and engage in R&D.

Manufacturing sector – new training programmes in precision engineering toolmaking; new Enterprise Ireland initiatives to support manufacturing companies to scale and export; pursue the establishment a Centre of Excellence for Toolmaking and Design

Food sector – new regional food innovation programmes, increase in number of participants on Food Academy Programme, extra food hubs in the region building on the successful projects already in place

Tourism sector – a new Shannon-Erne Blueway, further development of initiatives around the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East.

Cleantech – explore the potential for a Renewable Energy Innovation Centre at Killybegs.

Digital Payments – IDA and Enterprise Ireland to work with industry to progress a Digital Payments Cluster along the M1 corridor.

Cross-border initiatives – develop new cross-border initiatives, including initiatives to increase drawdown of research and innovation funding (targeted €16million to benefit 1400 businesses), greater use of the border as an opportunity for companies to gain their first foothold in export markets.

Implementation – a comprehensive implementation structure is being established to ensure delivery of the plan.

The levels of employment growth actually achieved within that range will depend on factors including the level of support and collaboration within the local community for the Plan, and the level of collaboration between organisations in the region and the main Government bodies involved in the plan. Minister Bruton believes that based on all the evidence and the strong buy-in for the process up to this point it is realistic to target 28,000 additional jobs in the region by 2020.

Minister Bruton said: “Jobs are growing right across the country, but they are growing faster in some regions than in others. That is why we have put in place the €250million regional jobs strategy, to support regions to play to their strengths and accelerate jobs growth in every area. The North East/North West is a region which had historic problems with unemployment, but over recent years thanks to the ingenuity of its workers and businesses it has performed extremely strongly. Since we launched the national Action Plan for Jobs in early 2012 over 20,000 extra people are at work in the region, making it the third fastest growing region in the country in employment terms.

Jobs are growing particularly rapidly in exporting companies supported by my Department. However we can do more, and that is why we are putting in place this highly ambitious plan to dramatically accelerate job-creation in the region. I am convinced that with the right support from Government through the North East/North West Plan, and by continuing the collaborative approach right across the region, we can deliver

28,000 extra jobs over the coming years. This would be 28,000 extra pay packets coming into communities and 25,000 lives back on track – a goal well worth fighting for.”

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Cavan/Monaghan TD Heather Humphreys stated that “since the Action Plan for Jobs was launched in 2012, unemployment levels in Cavan and Monaghan have dropped by about 30%. This new, targeted regional Action Plan will help to further drive job creation across the border region with a focus on boosting start-ups, increasing the level of IDA investment and providing better supports for local businesses.

This plan will help to ensure that the economic recovery is felt right across this region as more and more people get back to work.” Equally, Minister of State for Business and Employment and Louth/East Meath TD Ged Nash emphasised “there is no doubt that this region suffered badly in the economic crash, with unemployment rising to 16.6%.

However, due to the strength of this region’s enterprise base and the hard work of its people, it has delivered one of the strongest performances in the country in terms of jobs growth, with employment rising by 12% since the Government’s Action Plan for Jobs initiative was launched in 2012.

Now we need to build on the recovery and this turnaround in economic fortunes to ensure there is further jobs growth and opportunities. I am particularly pleased to see the Digital Payments Cluster along the M1 Corridor included in this Action Plan, building on the success of companies such as PayPal, eBay, State Street, Vesta and Yapstone already established to act as a magnet to other indigenous and FDI companies in this sector.”

Source:
<https://www.djei.ie/en/News-And-Events/Department-News/2015/November/30112015.html>
<https://www.djei.ie/en/News-And-Events/Department-News/2015/November/30112015.html#sthash.zxC64dRD.dpuf>



Food Wise 2025

Food Wise 2025, the Report of the 2025 Agri Food Strategy Committee, sets out a cohesive, strategic plan for the development of agri-food sector over the next decade. The Committee has identified that opportunities will arise as a result of significant population growth and greater access to international markets. In addition, the Committee recognises that the increased pressure on global agricultural resources and the environment will offer potential further growth opportunity for the Irish agri-food and fisheries sector.

Food Wise 2025 has harnessed the collective wisdom, foresight and knowledge of leading industry stakeholders and sets a course for the industry of smarter greener growth over the next decade. It foresees a sector that acts more strategically and achieves a competitive critical mass in the international marketplace while targeting more quality conscious

consumers who will recognise and reward Ireland's food producers for their sustainable production and high quality produce.

The long-term vision as set out in the Report is of 'Local Roots Global Reach' based on the continued development of the sector where efficient and environmentally-friendly production delivers sustainable export growth on global markets.

The Committee believes that achieving this vision will benefit primary producers, processors and the food manufacturing sector, as well as the wider economy.

On the basis of available data and by taking the actions identified in the Report, the Committee has set the following growth projections, which it believes are achievable by 2025:

Increasing the value of agri-food exports by 85% to €19 billion.

Increasing value added in the agri-food, fisheries and wood products sector by 70% to in excess of €13 billion.

Increasing the value of Primary Production by 65% to almost €10 billion

The creation of an additional 23,000 direct jobs in the agri-food sector all along the supply chain from primary production to high valued added product development.

To achieve the projections set out above, Food Wise 2025 identifies over 350 recommendations to achieve sustainable growth and these will require a concerted and coordinated approach by primary producers, industry, Departments and State agencies. The Final Report of the Environmental Analysis was presented to the Minister in September.

Source:

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/foodwise2025/>

Launch of the Designated Urban Centres Grants Scheme 2014 - 2020

On Monday, 27th July, 2015 the Designated Urban Centres Grants Scheme 2014 - 2020 was launched in conjunction with the Southern Regional Assembly and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly.

The launch, which took place at the House of Waterford Crystal, set out how the Scheme will enable investments in Irish urban centres to the order of €80 million for the period 2014-2020. It will involve European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding of approximately €40 million and matching funding from the local authorities.

Mr. Paudie Coffey TD, Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government who holds Special Responsibility for Housing, Planning and Coordination of

the Construction 2020 Strategy, stated at the launch that “there is a strong correlation between healthy and vibrant urban centres and the creation of an attractive environment and enterprise development within the wider region. Strong urban centres enable their regions to realise their potential in attractiveness for business investment for Foreign Direct Investment for talent and for tourism and to create conducive and attractive locations for investment and for people to live and work in.”

The Minister added “this investment in sustainable urban development recognises our cities and towns as the engines of the regional economy. This scheme will provide grant assistance to designated local authorities for urban capital projects. I call on local authorities, in the designated Gateways and Hubs, to avail of this opportunity for ERDF assistance that is being made available for sustainable urban development in their areas”.

A pilot Gateways and Hubs Grants scheme

to administer urban renewal projects was introduced under the 2007-2013 Regional Programme. This model is being retained to operate the new Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme. This ERDF co-funded grants scheme seeks specifically to increase the number of integrated regeneration initiatives to improve the urban environment and revitalise Irish urban areas. It makes available a new round of capital grant assistance for designated urban centres to submit capital projects which fit with their integrated strategies to tackle the social, economic, environmental, climate and demographic challenges affecting them. The objective of this Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme is to contribute to improvement in the development potential of Irish urban centres by investing in, and enhancing their economic, social and environmental conditions.

Source:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/PlanningDevelopment/Planning/News/MainBody;42285,en.htm>

2015 Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund

On Friday, October 9th, 2015, Mr Alan Kelly T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, announced the successful recipients of grant funding under the 2015 Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund. This grant scheme promotes sustainable development by assisting small scale, non-profit environmental projects at a local level.

The projects are being co-funded by the Department and local authorities; with close to €400,000 being provided by the Department and a similar amount by the local authorities. In total €780,184 is being provided under this year's scheme, to 770 projects throughout the country. In addition to the funding provided by the Department and the local authorities, the successful applicants will also contribute funds raised locally, bringing the total shared partnership investment to almost €1.5 million. Announcing the recipients of this year's funding the Minister stated: “I am very pleased

that my Department, in conjunction with local authorities, can assist the efforts of local communities to make a real difference to their environment. The Local Agenda 21 scheme is focussed on assisting local small scale environmental projects and 770 such projects will receive support from this year's funding. I would like to thank these local groups and organisations for their dedication to improving their communities and increasing environmental awareness and I wish them every success with their projects.” Projects are recommended for funding by local authorities, following an open call for applications. Funding goes to a wide range of local initiatives; including community gardens, environmental awareness programmes, waste reduction and biodiversity projects.

A complete list of this year's successful projects is now available at: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/LocalAgenda21/EnvironmentalPartnershipFund>

Source:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/LocalAgenda21/EnvironmentalPartnershipFund/News/MainBody;43001,en.htm>

€180 million from EU Programme for Research and Innovation ‘Horizon 2020’

Horizon 2020 is the current EU framework programme for research and innovation. With a budget of nearly €80 billion, Horizon 2020 runs over seven years from 2014 to 2020.

Horizon 2020 is the successor to Framework Programme 7 (FP7) and is the largest ever research and innovation programme in the European Union.

Horizon 2020 has a simpler structure than previous programmes with less red tape making it easier to apply. For general information and further details about each of these pillars, visit <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/>.

Enterprise Ireland leads the National Support Network for Horizon 2020 consisting of National Contact Points and National Delegates from various

research and industrial development agencies and Departments.

Further information and key contacts are available at <http://www.horizon2020.ie/> www.horizon2020.ie.

Recent highlights include Ireland's success in Leadership in Enabling and Industrial Technologies (€60 million of total) with a portfolio of ICT, Nanotechnologies, Advanced materials, Biotechnology, Advanced manufacturing and processing projects as well as substantial success in the European Research Council grants and in the Health, Energy and Agri-Food Societal Challenges.

Ireland's success comes at a time when the EU Institutions have just announced agreement on the 2016 budget, boosting investment in competitiveness, jobs and growth. A budget of €10 billion has been allocated to Horizon 2020 (up 11.6% from 2015).

This will contribute to increasing competitiveness in the EU through research and innovation.

On Thursday, November 26th, 2015, Mr. Damien English TD, Minister for Skills, Research & Innovation, announced Ireland's latest successes in Horizon 2020, the EU Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) with a budget of approximately €80 billion.

In welcoming the success the Minister stated: 'I would like to congratulate researchers from academia and industry in Ireland who have secured this prestigious funding.

Irish Researchers are punching above their weight & continue to excel at winning competitive funding against the Europe's best researchers.

'Since the beginning of the programme over 440 applicants from Ireland have secured almost €180 million of funding for research and innovation projects. In particular I welcome the strong performance by Irish companies in winning €53 million (of the total funding secured). This level of funding

will allow some of our leading SMEs to become world players in areas such as medical devices, road safety and energy.'

Minister English underlined: 'I would call on Irish researchers and companies to actively respond to this growing opportunity from Horizon 2020.'

Source:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Water/WaterQuality/News/MainBody,43061,en.htm>

Over 3.7million euro for Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ) pilot projects

On Tuesday, September 29th, 2015, Ann Phelan, TD Minister of State for Rural Affairs announced €3,758,479 in funding for the REDZ pilot scheme. A Rural Economic Development Zone is described as a functional rather than administrative geographic area that reflect the spatial patterns of local economic activities and development processes, i.e. they are the sub-county zones within which most people live and work. Research surrounding this element of the CEDRA report identified potential REDZ in all areas of Ireland and recommended the implementation of a pilot initiative that supports the formulation of a localised strategic approach to the development of REDZ.

This pilot is a result of the work of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) which was published in April 2014. The report identified the need to take a more tailored approach to planning at both a regional and local level and recognised that this approach should not be restricted by current administrative boundaries.

This report demonstrates a clear beneficial relationship between towns and the surrounding rural areas which reflect Ireland's actual economic geography, as well as identifying potential REDZ in all areas of Ireland. The aims and objectives of the REDZ pilot compliment the objectives of the Rural Development Programme

2014-2020 (RDP) as well as addressing the priorities identified for LEADER of poverty reduction, social inclusion and economic development of rural areas. It is envisaged that pending the success of the pilot initiative that a call for proposals for a more extensive REDZ initiative under the LEADER elements of the RDP will take place during 2016.

Minister Phelan stated that "this funding is about community participation, boosting employment, tackling rural isolation and helping communities to identify the issues and also the solutions. The concept of a REDZ which involves supporting communities to avail of opportunities to help themselves and their local areas is the essence of what a community led approach to rural development is all about.

Rural communities know best what they require and I hope that this pilot will provide much needed resources to some of the REDZ community's throughout Ireland to further the economic development of their areas and I hope that the learning from this pilot will inform thinking as the economy continues to recover.

The quality of the applications and level of interest in the pilot scheme was such that I have made additional funding available so that each qualifying project will be offered at least 50% of the funding they applied for. I am happy to announce that 26 pilot projects, rather than the original 18, on a regional basis and at different levels of scale will receive 100% of the funding applied for and the 25 remaining projects that qualified will be offered 50% of the funding applied for. I have no doubt, that these projects will make a real difference in the lives of many rural communities.

I am confident that these resources coupled with the €30million for the rural towns and villages renewal scheme announced yesterday are just the beginning of a process of rural renewal regeneration and I look forward to hearing about and visiting many of the projects as they come to fruition."

Source:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/RuralDevelopment/News/MainBody,42830,en.htm>

Publication of the EPA Drinking Water Report 2014

Mr. Alan Kelly T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, today (15 October 2015) welcomed the timely publication of the Environmental Protection Agency's 'Drinking Water Report 2014'. The report provides an overview of the quality of drinking water in Ireland during 2014 and covers both public and private drinking water supplies. 2014 was the first full year in which Irish Water was responsible for the management and operation of public drinking water supplies. The report sets out the details of over 236,000 drinking water monitoring results carried out by Irish Water and the local authorities during the year. The report also includes details of the Agency's enforcement activities during 2014. The report highlights the general good standard of drinking water that is in place for the vast majority of public water supplies in Ireland. In 2014, over 99.4% of drinking water samples from public supplies complied with the microbiological and chemical parameters set out in the Drinking Water Regulations.

The EPA's report acknowledges the very significant advances made in reducing the number of consumers on boil water notices. While there were more than 27,000 people affected by boil notices at the end of 2014, it is heartening to note that the number affected by boil notices as of today has been reduced to 6,000. The report however also draws attention to shortcomings in a number of areas in the quality of Ireland's drinking water due to historic under-investment over many years and points to the scale of investment and actions that will be needed to ensure that households, businesses, agriculture and industry have clean and wholesome drinking water into the future.

The report notes that as these challenges are tackled, Irish Water's capability for enhanced asset management and increased capital investment is to be regarded as a significant opportunity to improve service delivery and resolve historic water quality issues. "The provision of safe and reliable water supplies is essential for a modern country", said the Minister, "and this report provides a timely and objective assessment of the achievements to date and the challenges ahead".

See www.epa.ie for full report.

€30m investment package for rural Ireland

On Wednesday, September 23rd, 2015, Minister Alan Kelly and Minister Ann Phelan reaffirmed the Government's commitment to rural Ireland with the announcement of a new €30m investment in rural towns and villages. The new scheme will support the revitalisation of rural towns and villages with the aim of improving the living and working environment in rural communities and enhancing their potential to support increased economic activity into the future.

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Alan Kelly T.D. stated "we recognise all too well the contribution that rural communities have made to overall national economic development, as well as to the development of their own local areas.

Rural areas make a significant contribution to the production of the natural resources and activities which drive significant elements of national economic life such as through agriculture, food, tourism, construction materials and energy, to mention but a few. Developing and maintaining a vibrant rural economy is therefore, of major national importance as well as of particular interest to the significant communities involved. Rural Ireland will not be abandoned by this Government. The Government is committed to implementing a strategy for rural regeneration on the basis of an inclusive approach to sustainable development, the integration of policies, a regional dimension and partnership with the rural community." Minister of State for Rural Economic Development Ann Phelan T.D. outlined the Government's vision of rural Ireland.

Minister Phelan outlined broadly the focus of the scheme: "the central aim of the scheme is to support the revitalisation of our towns and villages in order to improve the living and working environment of their communities and increase their potential to support increased economic activity into the future. To this end the scheme will, among other things, seek to increase the attractiveness and sustainability of our towns and villages as places to live and work. It will build upon other programmes the Government will be supporting in the years to come, such as my Department's LEADER Programme, which will also see some €250m invested in rural Ireland."

Village/Town Renewal Scheme

- The Government is keenly aware of the impact the economic downturn has had on towns and villages throughout Ireland and is committed to addressing this in a proactive way.
- Research conducted by the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) has shown that rural towns have felt the impact of the economic downturn more acutely than cities and larger urban centres.
- It is critical for the future sustainable development of the country as a whole that all areas of the country are in a position to avail of the opportunities that will present themselves as Ireland continues to recover.
- The new scheme to support Town and Village renewal is proposed as part of a concerted effort to support the development of rural towns and villages not only as a component of a broader approach to rural development but also to improve the environment of rural dwellers in a way that will increase their quality of life and simultaneously support potential economic activity in their area.
- The initiative will be channelled through the Local Authorities with oversight by the Local Community Development Committees.
- In line with a more sustainable approach to development and in order to ensure ownership by local communities participation by communities and relevant local stakeholders will be required.

Aims and Objectives of the Scheme

The central aim of the scheme is to support the revitalisation of towns/villages in order to improve the living and working environment of their communities and increase their potential to support increased economic activity into the future.

The scheme will work through a call for proposals that would be subject to appropriate criteria and evaluation to maximise impact and real and lasting benefits for rural communities and DECLG will work with the relevant stakeholders in drawing up the terms of the scheme. The types of projects to be funded under this initiative would primarily be a matter for the LA taking on

board the national scheme and criteria and working up proposals in partnership with their communities, however the overall intention of the funding would be to:

- increase the attractiveness of rural towns and villages as places to live and work,
- promote their position as local commercial and social centres and thereby increase their sustainability as places in which to live and work; and stem the loss of shopping and other facilities to the larger urban centres;
- promote the towns and villages as centres for culture and local heritage, including the further development of our designated heritage towns, and thus enhance the sense of identity not only physically but also socially,
- enhance the local environment and amenities in the interests of residents, businesses, visitors and the promotion of tourism;
- promote more sustainable development patterns; and
- enable local authorities to work with local communities in tackling minor

infrastructural deficits and land assembly issues that may be currently inhibiting planned development projects and investment within towns and villages.

Eligible Activities

The focus for improvements eligible under this scheme will extend to the enhancement of smaller towns and villages. Actions will be aimed at enhancing the environment and amenities of smaller towns and villages and to tackle structural aspects of these communities and together with complementary measures supported under initiatives such as LEADER to deliver real improvements for rural communities in relation to:

- Greenways, cycleways, blueways and other environmental improvement initiatives that support economic activity in the area;
- Environmental upgrading, e.g. upgrading parks, civic areas, river walks etc.
- Access facilities to amenities;
- Public utilities such as street lighting etc.
- Renovation of relevant derelict buildings;

- Regeneration/repurposing of vacant/disused sites; and
- Other small-scale actions.

Development Enabling Projects

Our local authorities are best placed to tackle the particular local issues that are hampering new housing and commercial development in our towns. They can utilise their statutory functions, local knowledge and technical know-how in a structured way to pro-actively renew small towns and villages and attract residents and businesses back into this vital part of our economy and society.

The kinds of initiatives that would qualify for funding support would include:

- Small scale site acquisition for assembly-re-organisation and subsequent redevelopment;
- Remedial works; and
- Enhancement of access and site infrastructure.

Source:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/RuralDevelopment/News/MainBody,42790,en.htm>

BOOKS FROM THE IPA

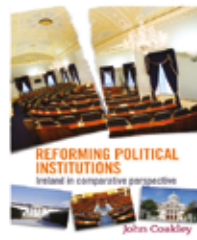


An Introduction to Irish Planning Law (2nd Edition)

As a result of the many amendments made recently to the four Planning Acts by Regulations introduced to ensure compliance with European environmental legislation, the need for an introductory work to assist in understanding the Irish planning system has again become apparent. This completely revised second edition

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provides up-to-date coverage of the subject. It addresses in turn the hierarchy of spatial plans and policy instruments, applications, appeals, strategic infrastructure, exempted development, enforcement (incorporating changes to control of quarries and substitute consent), compensation and amenities. A complete chapter explains the basic principles relating to the conservation of the natural and the built environment, distinguishing the requirements of environmental impact assessment, strategic environmental assessment and appropriate assessment. There are further chapters on unfinished housing developments and related areas of the law, including archaeological protection and the water services legislation.



Reforming Political Institutions: Ireland in Comparative Perspective

In this book, John Coakley considers the case for reform of Irish political institutions in the light of economic collapse, political turmoil and external intervention in the management of the state. The author examines five specific institutions of great importance to Irish political life, setting them in comparative and historical context and reviewing their current role. These include two important and well-known institutions, the Presidency and the Seanad, as well as the much-debated issue of the Dáil electoral system, and two largely ignored matters – the system of determining Dáil constituency boundaries, and the route to ministerial office whereby, almost uniquely, Ireland's ministers are drawn entirely from parliament.

978-1-904541-33-2
€30.00

Warning of the dangers of 'the reflex calls for revision that have become so prominent since the crisis of 2010', John Coakley offers a timely, balanced and detailed assessment of the effects that might follow from changes to Ireland's political institutions and constitution, and of the extent to which reform is likely to serve as an effective antidote to the country's current ills.

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Government Agrees Local Property Tax Allocations for 2016

In early September the Government agreed the Local Property Tax (LPT) Allocations for 2016; 80% of LPT will be retained locally to fund vital public services in 2016. The remaining 20% will be re-distributed to provide top-up funding to certain local authority areas that have lower property tax bases due to the variance in property values across the State.

Given that local authorities vary significantly from one another in terms of size, population, public service demands, infrastructure and income sources, the

Government has decided that no local authority will be worse off in 2016 compared to 2015.

Similarly, the Government is also very aware of the fact that people living in certain local authority areas, particularly our large cities, will pay proportionately more LPT due to the amount of property tax paid in these areas.

The Government has therefore decided that, in the same manner as was agreed in 2015, local authorities who stand to receive more income in 2016 from LPT than they received previously from the Local Government Fund in 2014, will be entitled to use a certain

portion of that additional funding for their own discretionary purposes as part of their normal budgetary process.

That portion will be an amount equal to 20% of the total expected LPT income for each local authority (before any decision to vary rates) or alternatively the full amount of the additional funding where that is less than the value of 20% of LPT income. Local authority elected members have been given the power to decide whether or not to increase or decrease LPT rates by up to 15% for 2016 and must inform the Revenue Commissioners of their intentions by the 30th of September.

Table A: Authorities requiring Equalisation Funding

| Provisional 2016 LPT Allocation for Local Authorities | Retained Locally (80%) | Contribution from Equalisation Fund | Total LPT Funding to be Provided in 2016 (before any local variation of base rate) | Value of Full LPT Increase/Reduction 15% |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| | €'m | €'m | €'m | €'m |
| Carlow | 3.08 | 2.27 | 5.35 | 0.58 |
| Cavan | 3.44 | 5.02 | 8.46 | 0.65 |
| Donegal | 8.47 | 14.25 | 22.7 | 21.59 |
| Galway | 11.44 | 1.06 | 12.51 | 2.15 |
| Kilkenny | 5.84 | 3.51 | 9.36 | 1.10 |
| Laois | 3.83 | 3.80 | 7.63 | 0.72 |
| Leitrim | 1.67 | 6.62 | 8.28 | 0.31 |
| Limerick (Unified) | 12.28 | 2.35 | 14.63 | 2.30 |
| Longford | 1.65 | 6.47 | 8.12 | 0.31 |
| Louth | 7.34 | 0.90 | 8.24 | 1.38 |
| Mayo | 8.17 | 9.32 | 17.49 | 1.53 |
| Monaghan | 2.97 | 7.28 | 10.25 | 0.56 |
| Offaly | 3.83 | 2.83 | 6.66 | 0.72 |
| Roscommon | 3.12 | 5.99 | 9.11 | 0.58 |
| Sligo | 4.13 | 5.86 | 9.99 | 0.77 |
| Tipperary (Unified) | 9.27 | 14.05 | 23.32 | 1.74 |
| Waterford (Unified) | 7.28 | 9.24 | 16.52 | 1.37 |
| Westmeath | 5.00 | 5.11 | 10.12 | 0.94 |
| Wexford | 9.48 | 2.41 | 11.89 | 1.78 |
| Sub Total - Authorities requiring Equalisation Funding | 112.31 | 108.34 | 220.65 | 21.06 |

Table B: Local Authorities in Surplus

| | Total LPT Funding to be Provided in 2016 (before any local variation of base rate) | Amount to be Retained by Local Authorities in Surplus Position (20% of LPT Yield) | Value of Full LPT increase/Reduction 15% | 2015 Local Adjustment Factor Variation Percentage | Maximum additional payment for loss of discretionary element for Surplus LA's for 2016 compared to 2015 |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| Cork City | 8.56 | 0.02 | 1.61 | -10.0% | 0.52 |
| Kerry | 11.11 | 0.06 | 2.08 | 0.0% | 0.55 |
| Clare | 7.89 | 1.97 | 1.48 | -15.0% | 0.03 |
| Cork County | 31.87 | 7.97 | 5.98 | -10.0% | 0.20 |
| DL Rathdown | 40.59 | 10.15 | 7.61 | -15.0% | 0.14 |
| Dublin City | 62.04 | 15.51 | 11.63 | -15.0% | 0.26 |
| Fingal | 29.81 | 7.45 | 5.59 | -15.0% | 0.09 |
| Galway City | 6.38 | 1.59 | 1.20 | 0.0% | 0.08 |
| Kildare | 16.86 | 4.22 | 3.16 | -7.5% | 0.14 |
| Meath | 13.64 | 3.41 | 2.56 | 0.0% | 0.18 |
| South Dublin | 24.51 | 6.13 | 4.60 | -15.0% | 0.10 |
| Wicklow | 13.30 | 3.32 | 2.49 | -15.0% | 0.05 |
| Sub Total Authorities in Surplus Position | 266.56 | 61.80 | 49.98 | 2.34 | |

Minister Alan Kelly, T.D, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, stated that “these measures will provide certainty and balance to the finances of local Government and give councillors a greater say in how their authorities are funded, ensuring 80% of LPT is spent locally.

All local authorities will be funded to their 2015 levels. While local authority members have full discretion over whether to reduce or increase the local LPT rate, I would ask them to be mindful of certain vital local services that could benefit from that funding such as homelessness services.”

He further added that “the Government has provided certainty in relation to top-ups for those local authorities with lower property tax bases. Nineteen local authorities will benefit from top-ups from the equalisation fund.

These measures are necessary to create a balanced system of funding across local authorities. Similarly, we have also recognised the contribution made by other local authorities with property bases with greater values by providing additional discretionary income for them. This will allow local authorities where property tax levels are highest to implement a full 15% reduction of the LPT should the elected

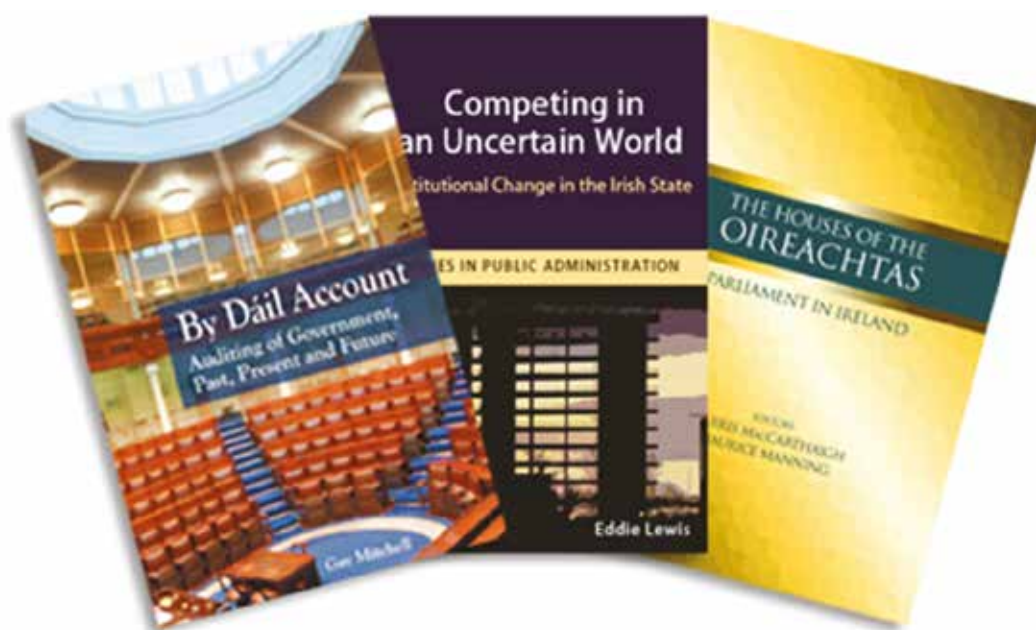
members vote for it or alternatively to increase the level of public services that they are providing.

The Local Property Tax is designed to become a stable and sustainable source of funding and will enable local authorities to become more self-sufficient in terms of their funding. This will provide Government with more options in terms of other taxation and expenditure policies in our future budgets.”

Source:
<http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/LocalGovernmentAdministration/News/MainBody,42633,en.htm>

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Tralee and Lismore named 'Ireland's Top Tourism Towns'

Tralee picked up the top prize as Ireland's best National Large Tourism Town while Lismore came out on top in the National Small Tourism Town category. Tralee and Lismore were chosen from a shortlist of ten top tourism towns, with the remaining towns all receiving certificates of merit to acknowledge their own impressive performances in reaching out to visitors and creating the best possible tourism experiences. Fáilte Ireland, the national tourism development authority, was established in 2003 to guide and promote tourism as a leading indigenous component of the Irish economy. The tourism and hospitality industry employs an estimated 185,000 people and generates almost €5.7 billion in revenue a year.

Tourism Town Awards – what are the judges looking for?

The Tourism Town Award focuses on how participating towns have developed their local area in the following key tourism areas:

Sense of Place - How the town tells its own unique story to visitors, what's special about it, and what distinguishes it from other towns.

Local Involvement - How the local community works together to provide an authentic visitor experience.

Tourism Products Available - What the town has to offer visitors.

Development and promotion of the town - How the town takes a unified approach to marketing and developing the town into a "tourism town".

Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Michael Ring TD and Fáilte Ireland on Wednesday, 25th November 2015, announced that Tralee, County Kerry and Lismore, County Waterford, have been crowned winners at the fourth annual Tourism Towns Awards which took place in The Morrison Hotel, in Dublin. Minister Ring congratulated Tralee and Lismore "on what is a wonderful achievement and worthy recognition for all that they have done to welcome visitors to their towns. These awards are all about honoring the towns that put tourism at the centre of what they do and both winners really impressed, with their local communities pulling together for the greater good of their town. The people of Tralee and Lismore truly understand tourism and value their visitors. Ultimately, this shows in the quality of what they have to offer and in the warmth of their welcome." The Tourism Towns Award was designed by

Fáilte Ireland to promote those Irish towns and villages which are working hardest to enhance their appeal to tourists visiting their local area. As the overall winners, Tralee and Lismore received its winning certificate along with a €5,000 grant each towards further developing itself as a tourism destination. Aside from today's two top winners, eight other high performing towns were commended for their work:

Fourth annual Tourism Towns Awards

Best Large Towns – Highly Commended

Cobh, Co. Cork

Killarney, Co Kerry

Kilkenny, Co Kilkenny

Best Small Town – Highly Commended

Ardmore, Co Waterford

Adare, Co Limerick

Clonakilty, Co Cork

Kenmare, Co Kerry

Sneem, Co Kerry

In the run-up to today's awards, a team of mystery shoppers visited each town to measure their tourism performance and the level of welcome to visitors.

Speaking today Fáilte Ireland's Director of Strategic Development, Orla Carroll, welcomed the announcement of the 2015 winners: "This awards scheme, now in its fourth year, is not all about recognising those towns that do the best from tourism but rather those that do their best for tourism. Today we celebrate Irish towns and villages that have really embraced tourism and where all sectors – and not just the local tourism interests – have supported the strengthening of their local welcome. All the towns involved in this year's competition have demonstrated what you can achieve when you demonstrate 'pride of place'. Their commitment to their local area not only contributes to the sustained growth of Irish tourism, it is also a central part in the 'tourism towns' spirit which ultimately turns a good holiday into an unforgettable experience."

With regard to the overall winners, the judges' first impression of Tralee was that it had something unique to offer visitors. The judges particularly noted that: "The impression you get when you arrive in Tralee is more than just a country town but rather it has a very special offering with a whole world of things to do for visitors." They also highlighted the many beautiful buildings and shops, taking particular note of how the town centre offered colour, flowers, well maintained shop and business fronts,

both old and new. Accepting the award on behalf of Tralee, Kieran Rutledge, Tralee Chamber Alliance and Tralee Tidy Towns, said: "Tralee is delighted with this vote of confidence in our collaborative efforts towards the development of a top class, sustainable tourism destination following on from gold medal success and improved performance in the National Tidy Towns 2015 and a double gold medal award in the Entente Florale in 2014. The Tourism Towns Competition has been the catalyst for further community involvement in tourism initiatives like the tourist information kiosk staffed by volunteers, the Blennerville Windmill and Tralee-Dingle Model Railway projects. In Kerry, tourism is everybody's business and in Tralee almost 1,000 people are now directly employed in tourism related enterprises. Collaboration between the local community, business sector and local authority is the key to success and Tralee is a shining example of this approach".

For Lismore, the judges noted: "They say Lismore is where the past is present and that's true. Beautifully maintained, compact, the visitor can step back in time with all the necessary modern facilities and services within easy reach." They also highlighted the lush and historic surroundings - all within walking distance - which are a particular selling point for visitors who can enjoy the local culture, crafts and history or just enjoy the tranquillity of the nearby parks and walks, all wrapped in the river and historical walls, monuments and churches.

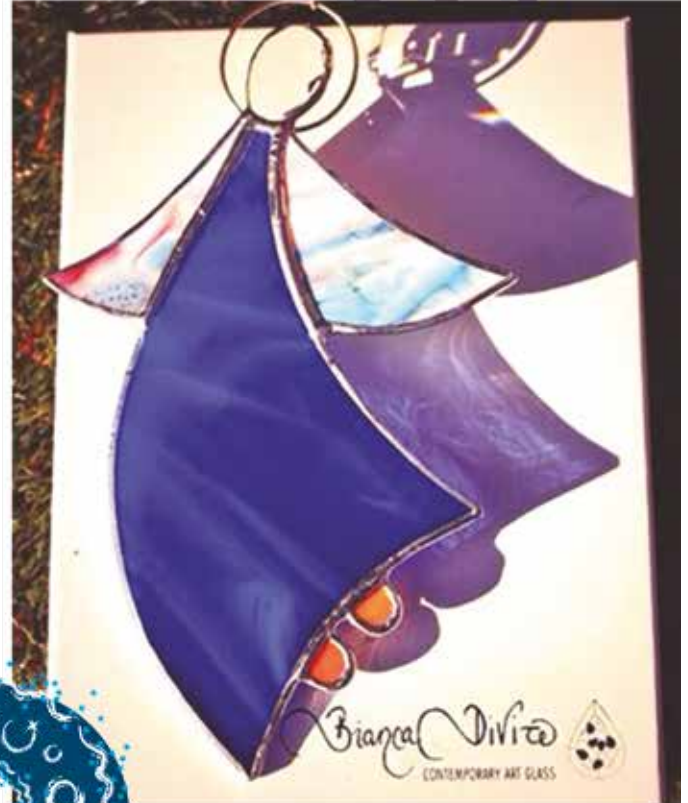
Delighted to accept the Best Small Tourism Town, Mary O'Brien, Secretary - Lismore Tidy Towns, commented: "The people of Lismore are thrilled to have been chosen as a Top Tourism Town. It means a lot to the town of Lismore and will impact on tourism and business in the year ahead. Lismore has a great sense of community and pride of place amongst the businesses, residents and the many voluntary groups. The people of the town are constantly looking for ways to make the tourism experience as inclusive as possible and to encourage exploration of Lismore town and the general West Waterford area. Bundling and joint marketing of the town's product offering has been a major part of the focus here which highlights the diversity of the offering from heritage and festivals to food producers, craft workers, walks, outdoor activities and gardens."

Source:

<http://www.dttas.ie/press-releases/2015/minister-ring-congratulates-tralee-and-lismore-being-named-%E2%80%99Ireland%E2%80%99s-top>



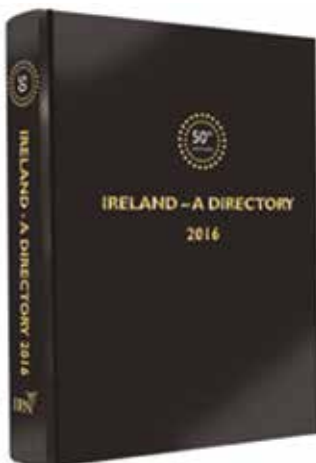
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Prosperous 2016
for you and your
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