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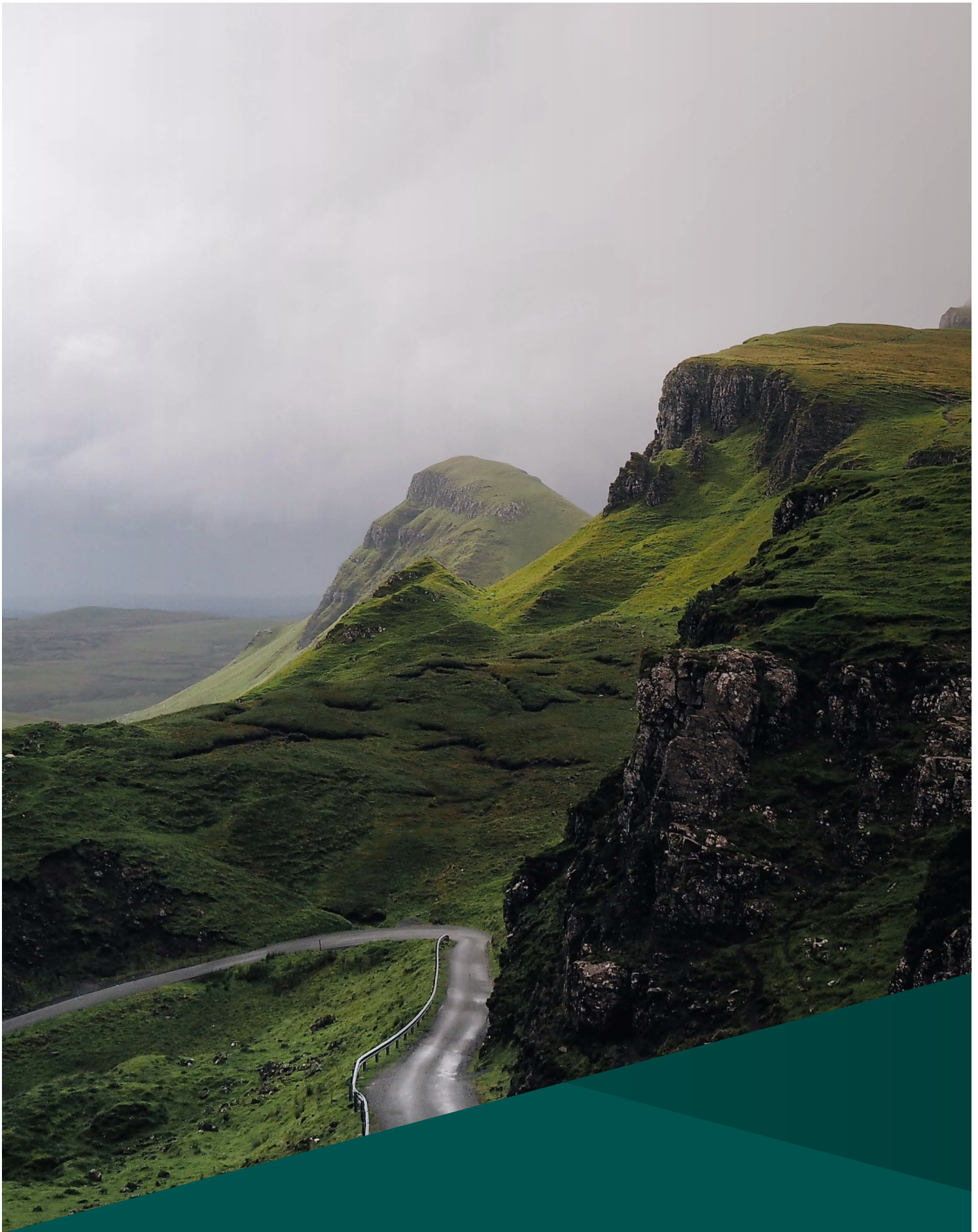
Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Project Ireland 2040 Annual Report 2022



Maynooth
University

Prepared by the Department of Public Expenditure
NDP Delivery and Reform
gov.ie/2040



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Foreword

I am delighted to publish the Project Ireland 2040 Annual Report for 2022. The Report is accompanied by three Regional Reports which provide a detailed overview of the public investments which have been made in the three Regional Assembly Areas: the Eastern and Midland Region, the Northern and Western Region and the Southern Region.

The National Development Plan (NDP) was first launched in 2018 with the revised Plan published in 2021. It is our largest, greenest and most ambitious infrastructure plan to date. The NDP sits alongside the National Planning Framework (NPF), and together they comprise “Project Ireland 2040”. The NDP is ambitious. Over the lifetime of this NDP out to 2030, we are investing €165 billion in new and upgraded infrastructure that will meet the needs of our growing population. The NDP will also deliver the infrastructure required for the digital transition of our economy and address priority solutions in supporting the implementation of Housing for All and the implementation of the Climate Action Plan. Delivering the NDP will have a transformative impact on employment opportunities, economic development and regional growth to support our growing population through the provision of new homes, schools, roads and hospitals.

Over the past three years, delivery of the NDP has been adversely impacted as a result of pandemic related pauses in the construction sector, the inflationary impacts from both COVID-19 public health measures and the war in Ukraine, with knock-on impacts on the supply chain for construction materials. No-one is in any doubt that we need to respond effectively to these pressing challenges of our time, particularly in areas like housing, health and climate. That is why the Government decided to sharpen the focus on delivery even further in 2023.

The establishment of the new Government in December 2022 and renaming and reconstitution of my Department has brought about a greater emphasis and mandate for the delivery of the NDP. Following a review, I was delighted to announce earlier this year, a series of reforms to enhance the NDP delivery mandate for 2023. These reforms underline my Department’s renewed focus on securing the delivery of better outcomes for the people of this country. We are reducing the administrative burden, reforming our own processes, and ensuring that the Departments responsible for the delivery of capital projects are provided with the resources they need. The package of measures

represents a fresh approach to securing delivery as part my Department’s new remit. As part of the measures, I am taking a direct role in overseeing delivery of the NDP by personally chairing the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board and I will be bringing regular reports to Government on performance across all responsible departments. This year will also see an increased focus on addressing the planning challenges, boosting the skills offering in the construction sector and boosting construction sector productivity.

This document outlines the progress made in 2022 under each of the ten National Strategic Outcomes - Compact Growth; Enhanced Regional Accessibility; Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities; Sustainable Mobility; A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills; High Quality International Connectivity; Enhanced Amenities and Heritage; Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society; Sustainable Management of Water Waste and other Environmental Resources; and Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services. The Annual Report also documents progress in the National Planning Framework, as well as progress in reforms to the monitoring and implementation of Project Ireland 2040.

The following pages endeavour to document the progress made in vital project delivery in 2022. I believe that the package of reform measures that I initiated in 2023 will be key to driving delivery still further over the lifetime of the NDP. I look forward to continuing and improving delivery in 2023 which will help us to achieve our social, economic and climate ambitions for the people of this country.



Paschal Donohoe
*Minister for Public Expenditure
National Development Plan
Delivery and Reform*

Key Facts and Projects 2022 Update – Project Ireland 2040



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2040

50

Projects allocated funding totalling
€189 million
from the Rural Regeneration and
Development Fund



7,433

New build social
housing homes
delivered and
new dwelling
completions
totalled **29,822**

New
Greenway
projects completed
including the North
Kerry Greenway -
Listowel to Limerick
Border and Tralee to
Fenit



Construction ongoing in major
road projects:

- **N5 Westport to Turlough**
- **N22 Ballyvourney to Macroom**
- **M8/N25 Dunkettle Interchange**

Over **109,000** homes,
farms and businesses had a
network connection available
by the end of 2022 as the
roll-out of the National
Broadband Plan continued



BusConnects

Dublin – preliminary
business case approved by
Government in March 2022
Cork – proposed network
published in June 2022



180

School Building
Projects delivered

Investment in the School Building
Programme exceeded **€1 billion**



301,475

in IDA supported
employment

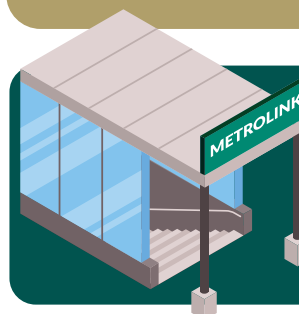
218,178

in EI supported
employment



New

72-bed replacement
medical ward block at St Luke's
General Hospital Kilkenny

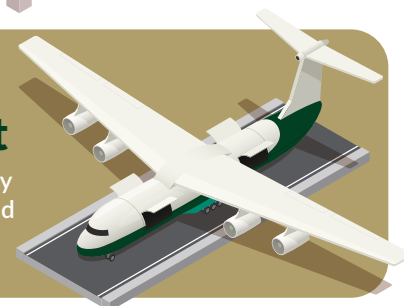


Metrolink

Government
approval July 2022
for Decision Gate 1

Dublin Airport

North Runway
completed and
operational



A new WTP

Water Treatment Plant

was completed - Lee Road, Cork

5

WTP upgrades were completed:
Lough Forbes, Ballymagroarty,
Tuam Regional, Doolough,
Burncourt / Ballylooby

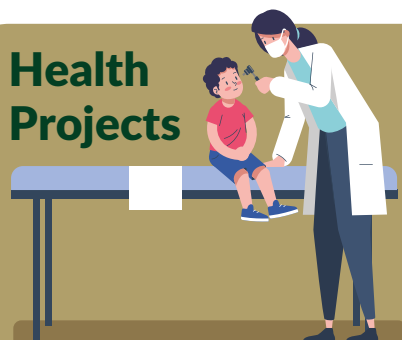
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Major flood relief construction projects
were substantially completed:

- **the Douglas Flood Relief Scheme
(including Togher Culvert)**
- **the Ashbourne Flood Alleviation Scheme**



Health Projects



16 new Primary Care Centres

7 Community Nursing Units

National Forensic Mental Hospital,
Portrane became operational

3 Ambulance Bases - Ardee,
Merlin Park and Mullingar

Section 1

Overview and Economic Context

Project Ireland 2040 is the long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all of its people. Project Ireland 2040 represents a new approach to social and economic development. It is the first time that spatial planning and investment have been explicitly linked in Ireland.

By 2040, there will be an extra one million people living in our country. Project Ireland 2040 aims to accommodate this growth in a balanced and sustainable way and put in place the investment required to enable prosperity.

In 2022, total investment was estimated at €31.8 billion across sectors including housing, commercial building, civil engineering and public infrastructure. Total projected investment for 2023 is approximately €33.7 billion.

The NDP sets out Departmental allocations to 2025 and a total public investment of €165 billion over the period 2021-2030.

1.1 | The Economic Context for 2022

2022 was another exceptional year due to combined challenges posed by the cost of living, inflationary pressures, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The economy, as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was approximately €502 billion in 2022. GDP increased by 12 per cent between 2021 and 2022. Modified Domestic Demand (MDD), increased by 8.2 per cent in 2022. MDD is a proxy for the domestic economy, and is the sum of consumer spending, government spending and investment, excluding investment in imported IP and aircraft for leasing. It also excludes changes in the value of stocks. While outturn data are not yet available, the Department of Finance estimates a modified current account surplus of 9.7 per cent of GNI* in 2022, which is the result of an excess of savings over investment in the domestic sectors. The Balance of Payments Current Account recorded a surplus of €44.2 billion in 2022. Additionally, personal spending on goods and services (the PCE indicator) increased by 6.6 per cent in 2022, while Government spending on goods and services increased by 0.7 per cent in the year. Several sectors of the economy experienced significant growth such as Arts and Entertainment (26.6%), Distribution, Transport, Hotels & Restaurants (11.6%), and ICT (11.4%).

The number of persons aged 15-89 years old in employment increased by 68,600 or 2.7 per cent to 2,574,500 persons in the 12 months to Q4 2022. The economic sectors that saw the largest year-on-year growth to Q4 2022 were: Administrative & Support Service Activities sector which increased by 14,500 or 15.2 per cent in the year to Q4 2022, followed by the Transportation & Storage sector, which increased by 7,500 or 7.1 per cent, and the Accommodation & Food Service Activities sector which increased by 8,700 or 5.4 per cent. The largest decreases in the number of persons in employment in the year to Q4 2022 were in: Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing sector, which decreased by 6,100 or 5.7 per cent, the Education sector – which was down 6,700 or 3.2 per cent, and the Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities, which fell by 2,600 or 1.5 per cent. The majority of economic sectors had more people working in them in Q4 2022 relative to pre-pandemic levels in Q4 2019 with the exception of the Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing sector (-5.6%), the Accommodation & Food Service Activities sector (-4.8%), and the Administrative & Support Service Activities sector (-1.7%). Employment increased in

all NUTS 3 regions in 2022 except for the Midland region, which decreased by 0.7 per cent. The Mid-East region saw the largest percentage increase at 5.7 per cent, followed by the Border region at 5.3 per cent.

Additionally, the employment rate for those aged 15-64 was 73.2 per cent in Q4 2022 compared to 73.0 per cent in Q4 2021 and 67.0 per cent in Q4 2020. There were approximately 163,200 (full-time and part-time) construction sector employees in Q4 2022. This is approximately 6.3 per cent of total employment in the State.

Exports in 2022 amounted to €208 billion; representing an increase of more than €42 billion relative to 2021. Imports amounted to €140 billion; an increase of 35 per cent relative to 2021.

The volume of Output in Building and Construction in 2022 was 9.7 per cent lower than the production level found in 2019, which was pre-pandemic. In terms of Building (excluding civil engineering), the volume of output in 2022 was 9.9 per cent lower relative to 2019. With regards to the residential sector, the volume of residential output decreased by 27.5 per cent between 2019 and 2022.

Average weekly earnings were €923.48 in Q1 2023, an increase of 4.3 per cent from €885.33 in Q1 2022. In the twelve months to December 2022, there was a 16.2 per cent increase in the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) of Building and Construction materials. 2022 saw significant increases in the cost of energy and electricity, with electricity and energy products as measured by the WPI increasing by 10.4 and 10.7 per cent respectively in the twelve months to December 2022.

The Department of Finance's estimate for GNI* growth in 2022 is 9.3 per cent. GNI* is forecast to grow by 1.6 and 2.1 per cent in 2023 and 2024, respectively. The Stability Programme Update for 2023 notes that risks to the near-term baseline outlook are judged to be tilted to the downside.

1.2 | Investment Growth in 2022

Project Ireland 2040 is predicated on a steep increase in public investment over the medium-term. The NDP sets out Departmental allocations to 2025 and a total public investment of €165 billion over the period 2021-2030.

The official measure of total investment in the sector (including both private and public investment) is Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) in Building and Construction. Total investment was estimated at €31.8 billion in 2022 and covers housing, commercial building, civil engineering and public infrastructure. Total projected investment Building and Construction for 2023 is forecasted to be €33.7 billion.

Table 1: Exchequer Investment by Department and year (€m)

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Agriculture, Food and the Marine	280	260	242	463
Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	35	30	57	124
Defence	159	130	144	176
Education	901	989	1,121	860
Enterprise, Trade and Employment	1,431	697	469	586
Environment, Climate and Communications	306	531	620	872
Finance	29	28	20	30
Foreign Affairs	11	8	15	25
Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	174	479	496	595
Health	1,036	1,004	1,160	1,161
Housing, Local Government and Heritage	2,195	2,254	2,612	3,534
Justice	240	271	288	294
Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform	200	205	229	300
Rural and Community Development	154	164	170	231
Social Protection	9	15	13	16
Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	152	141	189	215
Transport	1,787	2,461	2,402	2,622
Shared Island Fund				62
European Regional Development Fund				100
TOTAL VOTE*	9,098	9,666	10,247	12,266**

2020 and 2021 Appropriation Account Outturns, 2022 Provisional Outturn (excluding carryover spent in 2022) and 2023 REV

*Rounding effects totals.

** Not including €687 million carried over from 2022

1.3 | Capital Investment and Activity in 2023

The overall gross capital allocation for 2023 is €12,266 million, out of which €11,513 million is core investment and €753 million is non-core.

The Stability Programme Update (SPU), published by the Department of Finance in April 2023, shows that gross voted capital expenditure will rise to €14,380 million by 2026.

The 2023 SPU contains macroeconomic projections that point to the increased demand for infrastructure to support economic activity. Real GDP is projected to increase by 5.6 per cent in 2023, 4.1 per cent in 2024, 4.9 in 2025, and 4.4 per cent in 2026. Modified Domestic Demand (MDD), the preferred measure of economic activity, is projected to increase by 2.1 per cent in 2023, a figure that incorporates a 0.9 percentage point upward revision from the Department of Finance's previous set of forecasts, published alongside Budget 2023. In 2024, MDD growth of 2.5 per cent is forecasted.

Households and firms are still faced with high energy bills, which continue to affect consumer and investment spending decisions. However, the mobilisation of Government financial support has helped to mitigate the impact of high prices over the winter and into the spring. Headline inflation peaked in the second half of last year and, subject to no further energy price shock, is now on a downward trajectory. An average inflation rate of 4.9 per cent for this year is currently projected, with the annual rate easing to 3.6 per cent by the final quarter of the year.

1.4 | Report Structure

This report sets out progress achieved in the third year of Project Ireland 2040. **Section 2** outlines the main outputs delivered under each of the Project Ireland 2040 National Strategic Outcomes, which are as follows:

- Compact growth
- Enhanced regional accessibility
- Strengthened rural economies and communities
- Sustainable mobility
- A strong economy supported by enterprise, innovation and skills
- High quality international connectivity
- Enhanced amenity and heritage
- Transition to a low carbon, climate resilient society
- Sustainable water waste and other environmental resources
- Quality childcare, education and health services
- Other public investment sectors

Section 2 also highlights the high-level priorities for 2022 under each outcome.

Section 3 updates on progress with the spatial dimension of Project Ireland 2040 and describes legislative change and institutions set up to implement national planning policy.

Section 4 presents a range of institutional and organisational changes implemented in 2022 to support the delivery of Project Ireland 2040. This section also describes a number of changes to be implemented in 2023, which aim to improve project delivery over the lifetime of the National Development Plan (NDP).

Section 2

Delivering our National Strategic Outcomes

Project Ireland 2040 set out ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), built around the over-arching themes of wellbeing, equality and opportunity. The ten priorities embed a link between the new approach to spatial planning and our national public investment strategy. The fifth year of Project Ireland 2040 has seen clear progress across each NSO, as set out in this Section.





2.1

Compact Growth

The benefits of compact growth are that it can bring new life and footfall to the cores of our cities, towns and villages, contribute to the viability of services, shops and public transport, add to housing supply and enable more people to be closer to employment and recreational opportunities, as well as to walk or cycle more and use the car less. Along with minimising transport demand, higher densities and shorter travel distances will also reduce energy demand and use.

Since the finalisation of the three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) in January 2020, all local authorities have now commenced the statutory review of their County or City Development Plan. This cycle of review will be largely completed in 2023, overseen by the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR). This review process will ensure the translation of the compact growth principles as set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) to regional and local levels of plan making. This plan-led approach will ultimately influence the location and form of development which takes place across the country.

The continued enabling and co-alignment between various funding supports in targeting strategic capital investment proposals which supports balanced regional development, compact urban growth and targeted urban regeneration projects remain a priority.

While our towns and villages have shown remarkable resilience through recent crises, they require specific policy supports to ensure that they continue to function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live and work, to raise families, to act as the service, cultural and recreational hub for the surrounding areas, and to facilitate social and community interaction.

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) was established in April 2019. The OPR is responsible for assessment of all local authority and regional assembly forward planning, including zoning decisions. The OPR has the power to advise the Minister on whether a plan made by a local authority conflicts with national planning policy and to recommend that the Minister make directions where any plan is not in consistent with national policy. The OPR also ensures that planning authorities are operating to the highest standards of integrity and best practice, ensuring that planning policy decisions in their development plan-making roles are in line with national and regional policies as set out in the NPF and RSEs.

In 2022, the OPR evaluated and inputted into fifty-five local authority statutory forward planning processes for city/county development plans (CDPs) and local area plans (LAPs), at the stages of issues papers, draft plans, material alterations; and for amendments to LAPs, and variations to CDPs. The

OPR also assessed twenty-four adopted plans; in evaluating adopted statutory plans, a total of 12 recommendations for a draft direction under Section 31 of the Planning and Development Act, were issued to the Minister and 12 recommendations for a final direction were issued to the Minister (2 of which related to plans adopted in 2021). Assessment of two plans adopted in 2022 was ongoing at the end of 2022. The OPR also inputted into the revocations of three local authority plans.

The OPR is responsible for reviewing the systems and procedures used by local authorities and An Bord Pleanála in performing their planning functions. In 2022, the OPR conducted a focussed review process in relation to An Bord Pleanála, publishing two separate reports that contained 34 specific recommendations including recommendations relating to decision-making practices, governance and casefile handling.

The OPR conducts local authority planning reviews as a rolling programme, whereby each authority in turn benefits from a performance review of functions under the Planning Act, with recommendations arising from the process that are designed to enhance the delivery of services. The programme is intended as a developmental resource for the local authority planning sector, with a focus on good practice and achievements, to promote learning between authorities, as well as to identify opportunities to foster continuous improvement in the planning process.

The OPR also has a statutory obligation to drive national research, education and public information programmes to support the application of best practice in planning functions and activities.

In 2022, the OPR, in conjunction with the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG), delivered four planning training events for local authority elected members. The training focussed on topical matters relating to development plan preparation and the wider planning functions of elected members. A hybrid approach was adopted to the delivery of these training events. Three of these events were delivered online and the fourth event was delivered in person, over two separate days in Athlone and Castletown Co Kilkenny.

In 2022, the OPR also delivered three online planning training events specifically tailored for staff of planning authorities and regional assemblies and advanced work, in conjunction with the County and City Management Association (CCMA), on a Learning and Development Strategy for local authority and

regional assembly planning staff. The strategy was finalised in 2022 and issued to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), and the Chair of the Housing, Building and Land Use Committee of the CCMA. The strategy will be published early in 2023.

In 2022, as part of its public awareness brief the OPR, in conjunction with the DHLGH reviewed and updated the online planning leaflet series (originally published in 2021) to take account of changes that had occurred in planning legislation and policy. The updated leaflets were published on the OPR and DHLGH websites. In 2022 three episodes of the popular RTÉ Eco Eye series, produced by Earth Horizon Productions Ltd with sponsorship by the OPR, aired on RTÉ 1 television in January/February. The episodes focussed on sustainable spatial planning and examined issues such as town centre regeneration, dereliction and urban sprawl. Throughout 2022 the OPR developed and published a number of new public awareness initiatives on its website including a dedicated 'Public Awareness' page, an 'Introduction to Planning' page, a 'Becoming a Planner' page, a 'Calendar of Events' page and a new online resource entitled 'The Planning Application Process'. Enhancing the public's understanding of the planning process is a key function and objective of the OPR and all of these new resources make an important contribution to this goal.

In 2022, consistent with the OPR's Planning Research Framework and the associated Strategic Planning Research Programme (2020-2022), the OPR published two case study papers entitled Case Study Paper CSP05 'Climate Action and the Local Authority Development Plan' and Case Study Paper CSP06 'Planning Applications Processing: An Analysis of Planning Authority Validation Processes; a practice note entitled Practice Note PN03 'Planning Conditions' The OPR also updated two previously published practice notes, to take account of amendments to legislation. Throughout 2022, the OPR continued to advance several research projects, and participated in a number of steering group meetings. Following engagement with key stakeholders, the OPR also finalised and published a new Strategic Planning Research Programme for the period 2023-2025.

The Land Development Agency

The Land Development Agency Act, enacted in July 2021, established the LDA on a statutory basis. Following the commencement of relevant provisions of the LDA Act and the dissolution of the interim entity established in 2018, the LDA was established as a commercial Designated Activity Company (DAC) in April 2022.

The LDA's number one priority is the delivery of high quality, affordable homes. The LDA's twin-track approach aims to accelerate near-term construction of affordable homes on both State and private land, whilst also working over the longer term to assemble large State-owned landbanks capable of delivering thousands of new homes. Together, these support delivery of both the Government's housing strategy Housing For All and delivery of the National Strategic Outcomes highlighted within Project Ireland 2040 – notably, in connection with National Strategic Outcomes 1 (Compact Growth) and 8 (Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society).

LDA Direct Delivery

During 2022, the LDA commenced its first direct delivery housing project at Shanganagh, County Dublin. This is the largest direct-build public housing scheme in the State in recent years, comprising 597 homes. These homes will all be made available as social housing, cost rental or affordable for sale. The development has been designed with sustainability and energy efficiency at its core and will be the largest residential scheme certified to achieve the 'passive house' low energy use standard.

The LDA also seeks to maximise housing density where public transport and planning policy supports the sustainability goal of compact growth.

Planning permission was granted in Q4 2022 for a Strategic Housing Development ('SHD') of 219 new homes on the LDA's Devoy Barracks site in Naas, County Kildare. The development will comprise affordable and social homes across a mix of terraced houses, duplexes, and apartments along with a creche. In addition, planning applications were submitted for four key sites in the year: Dundrum Central Mental Hospital County Dublin (977 homes), Castlelands Balbriggan County Dublin (817 homes), Hacketstown Skerries County Dublin (345 homes), and St. Teresa's Gardens County Dublin (543 homes).

Project Tosaigh

Project Tosaigh was announced in 2021 as part of the Government's housing strategy, Housing For All, to unlock land in private ownership with planning permission but where delivery had stalled. Following an initial Expressions of Interest process, the LDA generated a pipeline of projects anticipated to deliver approximately 2,000 affordable for sale and cost rental homes well-spread regionally across Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Wicklow, Meath, and Kildare.

Through the initial phase of Project Tosaigh, the LDA expects to deliver a total of 5,000 homes, over and above those planned for delivery from its existing portfolio of State lands.

Under the Project Tosaigh initiative, the LDA's first cost rental properties became available for tenants during the last quarter of 2022, at Archers Wood, Delgany, County Wicklow.

Strategic Areas

A core role of the LDA is to enable development on larger-scale sites and/or more complex 'Strategic Areas' within Ireland's cities to deliver vibrant, inclusive, compact, sustainable communities, supporting regional rebalancing and the realisation of wider social and economic benefits.

In relation to longer-term strategic land assembly, significant progress was made during 2022 across four of the LDA's 'Strategic Areas':

In Dublin, opportunities for the lands around CIÉ and Iarnród Éireann's Inchicore train works were explored through a Design Review run by the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland.

The LDA launched its first draft masterplan in the Greater Dublin Area in Q4 2022. The masterplan for the regeneration of the Digital Hub campus in Dublin 8 has a working title of the Pear Tree Crossing. The project will focus on affordable housing, incorporating approximately 550 new homes. It will also include a vibrant mix of commercial, cultural, and community facilities. This transformational project for a historic part of Dublin's inner city is an exemplar of the LDA's longer term strategic initiatives that will deliver homes and enhance key city areas in future years.

Work continued on the Sandy Road lands in Galway. The first step towards delivering the transformative potential of the area was preparation of a Design Review, followed by a draft spatial framework setting out comprehensive visions, themes, and the key

principles which will underpin the area's development as a new mixed-use neighbourhood.

The Colbert Quarter in Limerick is an ambitious project to transform a strategically significant area of Limerick City over the next twenty years. A Spatial Framework was published for consultation during the first quarter of 2022 and will be periodically reviewed and progressed.

Public Land

The LDA created and published the Register of Public Lands in early 2022. Following this, a Report on Relevant Public Land was published in early 2023. The report identifies public lands (known as relevant public land under the LDA Act) which the LDA has assessed as providing future housing opportunities, if such lands can be release from current uses.

Concluding Comments

Collectively, these activities enabled the LDA to deliver a focused build-out of its current project portfolio for housing and mixed-use development in 2022, grew its capacity to support future delivery of the State's overall planned housing output, and supported delivery of overarching Government housing aims and objectives.

Four Project Ireland 2040 Enabling Funds

The four Project Ireland 2040 funds worth a total of €4 billion to 2027 will provide Exchequer grant-aid to support urban and rural regeneration and development, disruptive technologies and climate action. All four are competitive bid-based funds and the largest, €2 billion Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) was developed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) to support measures that will contribute to the more sustainable development of cities and large towns. DHLGH also contributed to the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) process, which is overseen by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).

Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)

The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) was launched in 2018 to support more compact and sustainable development. The Fund is providing part-funding for applicant-led projects that will enable a greater proportion of residential and mixed-use development to be delivered within the existing built-up footprints of our cities and large towns, while also ensuring that more parts of our urban areas can become attractive and vibrant places in which people choose to live and work, as well as to invest and to visit.

In keeping with the aims of the National Planning Framework and Project Ireland 2040, the URDF demonstrates a new and more tailored approach to the provision of Government support. Over its planned duration up to 2030, URDF support in excess of €2 billion will be targeted in an integrated, dynamic and responsive way to support the regeneration and rejuvenation of our towns and cities.

Through the URDF, successful applicants receive targeted integrated support for innovative holistic solutions to the issues that have hindered the regeneration and rejuvenation of our large towns and cities.

To date, there have been two Calls for proposals under the URDF with more than €1.6 billion allocated so far in respect of 132 projects, comprising of almost 400 subprojects. The 45 proposals approved under Call 2 in 2021 builds on the existing pipeline of 87 URDF supported projects launched under Call 1. With URDF supported projects now active in every local authority area in the country, this programme of projects will ultimately contribute significantly to the transformative regeneration and development of our large towns and cities, and to the achievement of NPF and Project Ireland 2040 objectives.

In January 2023, a third round of funding support under the URDF was announced. Supporting key objectives of Housing for All and Town Centre First, this round of URDF support specifically addresses long term vacancy and dereliction across URDF eligible cities and town. Following engagement with the local authority sector, the administrative arrangements are currently being finalised and approved programs and allocations will be issued to Local Authorities by the end of Q2 2023

Lead Council	Project
Cork City Council	Cork City Docklands
South Dublin County Council	Clonburris
Dublin City Council	North Inner City Concept Area 1
Waterford City & County Council	Waterford City & Environs North Quay
Limerick City & County Council	World class Waterfront
Dublin City Council	South Inner City Concept Area 2
Cork City Council	Grand Parade Quarter
Limerick City & County Council	Living Limerick City Centre Initiative
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	Cherrywood PA
Galway City Council	Transport Connectivity Project
South Dublin County Council	Tallaght Town Centre
Sligo County Council	Sligo Cultural and Learning Hub
Waterford City & County Council	Waterford City Centre Regeneration
Fingal County Council	Balbriggan Rejuvenation
Sligo County Council	Implementation of Sligo Public Realm

Town Centre First

In 2021 the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage developed Town Centre First policy, which was launched by the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, and the Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning, Peter Burke TD in February 2022. In December 2021, Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, announced €2.6 million in funding to deliver the first phase of Town Centre First (TCF) Plans. Twenty-six 'Pathfinder' towns were selected based on submissions received from the Local Authorities.

TCF is a commitment of the Programme for Government and is built on the firm foundation of NSO 1 Compact Growth of Project Ireland 2040 and the objectives of the National Planning Framework, which seeks to build strong towns that can provide services and opportunities to local residents and businesses alike. Housing for All strongly supports the Town Centre First approach and in particular the greater re-use and refurbishment of existing buildings as a policy objective, with more infill and brownfield sites activated to regenerate the heart of our towns and bring people and activity back. Our Rural Future the Governments framework for the development of rural Ireland also outlines a vision to support the regeneration and development of rural towns and villages.

TCF represents a new approach to the development of our towns where local communities and local businesses can be central to reimagining their own towns and planning their own futures. It will provide a co-ordinated, whole-of-government policy framework to address the decline in the health of towns across Ireland and support measures to regenerate and revitalise them. Under the initiative, each local authority was provided with €100,000 to support the development of its own unique Town Centre First (TCF) Plan, which will be produced by a local Town Team drawn from local community and business representatives. These will identify and analyse the challenges facing the town and propose initiatives/projects to address them. The first phase of TCF plans are due to be completed from June 2023 and further phases will then be announced.

Town Centre First is putting in place a suite of supports and tools to help businesses and local communities deliver on the vision for their area. A new National TCF Office was established in 2022

and is located in the Local Government Management Agency with funding of €500,000 per year sourced from the Housing for All Implementation Fund. This TCF Office will drive Town Centre First actions and coordinate stakeholder engagement at a national level and across the local government sector. The office will also be a forum for best practice with capacity building programmes for Town Teams, a Health Check Programme and other resources, funding information and best practice models for developing Town Centre First plans. The delivery of the TCF policy is overseen by a National Oversight and Advisory Group, with an Annual Implementation Plan and regular Progress Reports.

The delivery at town level will be supported by a network of Town Regeneration Officers (TROs) throughout the Local Government sector. A National Town Centre First Office has now been established within the Local Government Management Agency to drive Town Centre First actions and coordinate stakeholder engagement at a national level and across the local government sector. This office will also be a forum for best practice with capacity building programmes for Town Teams, a Health Check Programme and other resources, funding information and best practice models for developing Town Centre First plans. Funding of €500,000 per year is being provided by both DRCD and DHLGH to fund the office

The local authority (LA) recruitment process for 26 new TROs commenced in the last quarter of 2022 and full resourcing is expected to be in place by mid-2023. These officers will manage and lead the local TCF efforts, and collaborate with existing resources and stakeholders to ensure an integrated approach is taken with other related work streams in the LAs. They will also support local communities in the preparation of their TCF Plans and provide information and assistance in the drawdown of various new and existing funding streams to support the implementation of these Plans on the ground. This includes funds such as the:

- Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)
- Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)
- Housing for All Crói Cónaithe (Towns) fund
- Investment supports from the forthcoming ERDF programme for Towns via the Regional Assemblies
- Active Travel Fund
- Town & Village Renewal Scheme

- Climate adaptation/retrofitting
- Built Heritage supports such as the Historic Towns Initiative (HTI).

A core aim will be to ensure specific TCF funding streams within each programme which targets delivery of the TCF Policy and implementation of TCF plans locally.

Residential Zoned Land Tax

A Residential Zoned Land Tax was introduced in the Finance Act 2021 as a land activation measure. Its purpose is to incentivise the activation of land which is zoned and serviced for residential development but which remains undeveloped. It is primarily intended to influence behaviour and assist the realisation of increased housing output rather than to raise revenue. The tax is intended to replace the Vacant Site Levy.

The RZLT will apply to all lands zoned and serviced for housing. It will be levied annually at a rate of 3 per cent of the market value of the land. For the RZLT to apply most of the site must be: vacant or idle for in excess of 12 months, be zoned for residential or regeneration purposes, and be in an area in need of housing. There will be a two year lead in time for land zoned before January 2022 and a three year lead in time for land zoned after January 2022.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) published guidance in relation to the mapping exercise that each local authority needs to undertake in order to identify lands that come within the scope of the tax in 2022. In November 2022 Local Authorities published Draft RZLT maps showing the lands within their area that come within the scope of the tax. Landowners and interested parties had an opportunity to make submission in relation to the inclusion / exclusions of lands between 1st November 2022 and 1st January 2023. The final RZLT maps will be published by Local Authorities in December 2023, with the first tax falling due in February 2024. The Revenue Commissioners will administer the tax.

Land Value Sharing and Urban Development Zones Bill 2021

The Government approved the publication of the updated general scheme (draft heads) of the Land Value Sharing and Urban Development Zones Bill

2022 in December 2022. The general scheme provides for:

- (a) local authorities to secure a proportion of the increase in land values arising from public decisions and investment related to planning and development on land that is newly zoned for housing, or subject to an Urban Development Zone designation, and
- (b) Designation of Urban Development Zones which have potential for significant development for housing and other purposes.

These proposed land activation measures are included in the Programme for Government and support NSO 1 Compact Growth of Project Ireland 2040 and objectives of Housing for All, the Government's national plan on housing to 2030.

The zoned land tax allows for the State to secure a greater share of community gain from the planning and development process, while the Urban Development Zone Legislation will be key to securing the development of brownfield and regeneration lands in urban areas. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage continue to develop these proposals and to draft legislation in relation to Land Value Sharing and Urban Development Zones.

Housing Supply

New dwelling completions totalled 29,822, an increase in 45.1 per cent on 2021, when 20,553 dwellings were completed.

In 2022, 84.1 per cent of all new dwelling completions were in urban areas and the remainder in rural areas.

34,117 planning permissions were granted.

In 2022, commencement notices for 26,957 new homes were submitted, an annual decrease of 12.2 per cent.

Social Housing

A total of 10,263 new homes were brought into the active social housing stock in 2022 through build, acquisitions and leasing programmes. This included 7,433 new build social homes, which is the highest delivery of new build social homes since 1975. By the end of 2022, over 58,000 new social homes in the period 2016- 2022 were delivered through build, acquisition and leasing programmes. The latest Construction Status Report (as of Q4 2022) shows that 6,525 social homes are currently onsite with an

additional 12,733 homes in the pipeline or at design and procurement (total of 19,258 homes). During 2022, Housing Delivery Action Plans were published by all local authorities, setting out proposed delivery of social and affordable housing for the period 2022-2026.

Social Housing PPP Programme

In 2021 construction was completed on Bundles 1 and 2 of the Social Housing PPP Programme. Bundle 1 delivered 534 houses and apartments across six sites in Dublin, Kildare, Louth and Wicklow in 2020 and 2021. Bundle 2 delivered 465 homes in 2021 across eight sites in Cork, Clare, Galway, Kildare, Roscommon and Waterford. The procurement process for Bundle 3, which will deliver 486 new social houses and apartments across six sites in Dublin, Kildare, Sligo and Wicklow, commenced in Q4 2022.

In accordance with the commitment under Housing for All, the Department will increase the use of PPPs to deliver social housing. In June 2022, Bundles 4 and 5 of the new programme were launched, which will deliver in the region of 1,600 new homes across 18 sites in Dublin, Kildare, Louth and Wicklow.

Significant progress is being made under the programme and the Department is actively working with relevant stakeholders including the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) the Housing Delivery Co-ordination Office, and relevant local authorities to progress further bundles of projects.



2.2

Enhanced Regional Accessibility

At the core of Project Ireland 2040 is the policy objective of supporting balanced regional growth. To underpin this, the Government is committed to enabling better regional accessibility.

2.2 | Enhanced Regional Accessibility

In 2022, there was significant progress in developing new transport links through the appraisal, planning and procurement stages. As set out in Project Ireland 2040, improving access to the north-west is a strategic aim to support balanced national development.

Key Achievements/Highlights in 2022

- **N5 Westport to Turlough, Mayo.** Government approval received to award construction contract on 15 October 2019 and construction is ongoing with completion expected in 2023.
- **N22 Ballyvourney to Macroom, Cork.** Government approval was received to award the construction contract on 15 October 2019. Construction is ongoing and is expected to be completed in early 2024.
- **M8/N25 Dunkettle Interchange.** Government approved the award of the Design and Build contract in October 2020. Construction is ongoing and completion is expected in 2024. A section of cycleway was constructed with the advance works and opened in November 2020. It is expected that the scheme will be complete in 2024.
- **N21/N69 Foynes to Limerick (Adare Bypass).** Government approval received on 30 October 2019 to submit the scheme to An Bord Pleanála for planning approval. The oral hearing took place, and An Bord Pleanála approved the scheme in August 2022. A number of Judicial reviews have been submitted on the project.
- **Permission was granted by An Bord Pleanála for the N6 Galway Ring Road in December 2021.** On 30 January 2023 the High Court quashed the decision to approve and remitted the application back to An Bord Pleanála.

Investment in the Inter-Urban Rail Network

In 2019, Government approved a new and significantly enhanced 5-year funding programme from 2020 to 2024 for the maintenance and renewal of the rail network. This funding programme, known as the Infrastructure Manager Multi-Annual Contract (IMMAC) will benefit passengers across the rail network through increased service reliability and punctuality, improved journey times and continued safety of rail services.

Exchequer funding provided under the current IMMAC will total €1.3 billion over five years, representing an over 40 per cent increase on the level of Exchequer funding provided under the previous programme. This increased level of funding means that the heavy rail network is now being funded at the 'steady state' level of funding required to ensure optimal maintenance and renewal of the network and identified in Project Ireland 2040 as the foremost funding priority for the network.

The NTA and Iarnród Éireann progressed the order for an additional 41 Inter-City Railcars (ICRs), which started to arrive in 2022 and will enter service in 2023. The ICRs will further enhance and expand the rail fleet.

Heavy Rail Network 2022

Construction of the National Train Control Centre (NTCC) continued, the building work was completed in November 2022 with completion and full commissioning now expected by May 2026. The NTCC is a key enabler for expansion of rail services as it will enhance rail traffic management and will underpin both the planned and potential future expansion of rail services across the entire rail network.

Approximately €340 million of Exchequer funding was invested in IMMAC-related works in 2022, which included €64 million for the commencement of rehabilitation works on the Foynes-Limerick freight line and €6.4 million to fully complete track renewal on the Limerick to Ballybrophy line. Across the five-year period of the current IMMAC contract, approximately €1.3 billion in Exchequer funding will go towards the protection and renewal of the national rail network.

Project Ireland 2040 also commits toward an evaluation of the economic benefits and value for money of high-speed rail on the main inter-urban rail network against improvements to existing and planned line speeds along the lines. In 2020, it was decided to expand the scope of this evaluation into an all-island Strategic Rail Review. In consultation with the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland and other relevant stakeholders, terms of reference were agreed and consultants appointed.

The Review commenced in September 2021 and a final report is expected to be published in 2023 following a public consultation for Strategic Environmental Assessment purposes. As well as the potential for high/higher speed rail, the Strategic Rail Review will consider inter-urban and inter-regional connectivity, regional connectivity including to the northwest, and connectivity to our international air and sea ports, including the potential for rail freight.



2.3

Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities

One of the key objectives for the Government's Project Ireland 2040 strategy is to achieve the goal of strengthened rural economies and communities.

2.3 | Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), launched in 2018, is providing the investment needed to support rural renewal, strengthen and build resilience in rural towns, villages and communities and deliver on the objectives of Project Ireland 2040.

The RRDF is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and is complemented by a range of additional programmes and schemes delivered under the Department's Rural Regeneration Programme as part of Project Ireland 2040, which helps maintain and develop the growth and vitality of rural areas and supports communities and organisations to meet their needs.

The four schemes funded through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund are the RRDF Category 1 and 2, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme.

RRDF Category 1 and Category 2

The RRDF Category 1 and Category 2 funding is targeted towards revitalising rural towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas. This is being achieved through addressing dereliction, ensuring the re-use of heritage and other buildings and providing essential facilities and infrastructure, including remote working and digital hubs.

In January 2022, the Third call for Category 2 applications was concluded. Category 2 funding is for projects which require further development to become ready to proceed to construction phase and which point they become eligible for Category 1 funding. Funding of €21.5 million was approved for 27 Category 2 projects with a total value of €26.8 million. Amongst the successful projects were:

- **Fermoy Town Centre Renewal project**, led by Cork County Council, which was approved for funding of €1.5 million. This project will develop plans for the adaptive and sustainable reuse of vacant town centre buildings to accommodate a range of uses that will address the social, economic, cultural and physical needs of the town, the development of an exemplar Craft Makers Hub, the provision of enhanced recreational facilities and place making and public realm enhancements.
- **Edenderry Regeneration project**, led by Offaly County Council, which was approved for funding of €2.1 million. This project builds on an earlier phase which was also supported by the RRDF and involves the acquisition of a town core site and development of plans for a new community library there. The acquisition of a further sites will also allow for a variety of uses including leisure, community, cultural and services provision.
- **Putting the Heart into Monksland project**, led by Roscommon County Council. Which was approved for funding of €1.2 million. The project will complete plans for the creation of a town centre focus for Monksland with a new community hub, linear park and increased pedestrian and cycle linkages between residential and commercial areas. A concept plan for the development of brownfield sites will also be developed.
- **Rialto Digital & Enterprise Hub project**, led by Tipperary County Council, which was approved for funding of €1.2 million. The project will develop plans for a digital and enterprise hub in the centre of Nenagh in a disused cinema which is a protected structure. It also includes plans for the redevelopment of a brownfield site behind the hub, a new streetscape and will assess the potential provision of town centre housing and new public amenity.
- **Dungarvan Digital Transformation Hub project**, led by Waterford City and County Council, which was approved for funding of €1.4 million. The project will develop plans to renovate three town centre buildings to provide a Digital Transformation Hub, delivering office, training and innovation workspace for nearly 200 people. The project aims to support economic development in the area, helping retain and grow local talent, and will provide a regional base for former commuters and also attract new start-ups.

In November 2022, the Fourth call for Category 1 applications was concluded. Category 1 funding is for large scale ambitious capital projects with all necessary planning and other consents in place and which are ready to proceed. Funding of €115 million was approved for 23 Category 1 projects with a total value of €162 million. Amongst the successful projects were:

- **Ballyjamesduff Community and Enterprise Hub project**, led by Cavan County Council, which was approved for funding of €6.9 million. This project will redevelop a derelict town centre building to provide a remote working hub and community facilities. The completed centre will act as a focal point for the economic, tourism and community regeneration of Ballyjamesduff and the surrounding area.
- **Development for Macroom Project**, led by Cork County Council, which was approved for funding of €7.2 million. This project will implement a number of interventions in the centre of Macroom, including the refurbishment of the vacant St.Colman's Church as an arts, community, cultural and heritage facility. The project will conserve and re-establish Macroom town centre as the economic, cultural and community hub of the town.
- **Ramelton Re-Imagined project**, led by Donegal County Council, which was approved for funding of €6.3 million. This project is a heritage led action plan for Ramelton that will deliver town regeneration and development in the centre of Ramelton. It includes the restoration and extension of a heritage building to provide a community facility, a public park and a multi-purpose civic space to deliver a more attractive and animated town centre.
- **Athy Food, Drink and Skills Innovation Hub project**, led by Kildare County Council, which was approved for funding of €4.2 million. This project will repurpose a vacant building to deliver a state-of-the-art Food, Drink and Skills Innovation Hub that will provide a dedicated space for enterprise development, job creation and training in the region. The Hub will contribute to the economic regeneration, strengthening and building of resilience in Athy.
- **Carrick-on-Suir Regeneration Plan project**, led by Tipperary County Council, which was approved for funding of €14.3 million. This ambitious town development project will deliver an enterprise and digital hub in a disused building, public realm upgrades in the town centre and Castle area and an Amenity and

Biodiversity Park. An arrival point will be created at the Suir Blueway which will link through the town to the proposed new greenway. The project seeks to revitalise the town to become a vibrant commercial centre and destination in its own right, whilst building synergies with the Suir Blueway, Waterford Greenway and the historic Ormond Castle Quarter.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme provides funding for medium and small scale projects that aim to make our rural towns and villages more attractive and sustainable. Funding can be provided for a wide range of interventions including public-realm projects, town centre enhancements, encouraging town centre living, and economic development projects. Applications for funding are submitted to DRCD through the local authorities.

A budget of €22 million was allocated under the 2022 Scheme. This includes:

- €17 million for the standard Town and Village Renewal Scheme
- €5 million for a ring-fenced Connected Hubs call for proposals.

The main Town and Village Scheme supported the repurposing of vacant or derelict buildings as new remote working hubs. The Connected Hubs call aimed to add capacity to existing hubs.

Successful projects are selected following a competitive process. The successful projects under the 2022 Town and Village Scheme were announced on 15th December 2022, when 75 projects were awarded funding of just over €17 million.

Projects approved under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme in 2022 by Region

Region	No of projects approved	Value of approvals in 2022 €
Eastern	51	€7,567,357
Northern and Western	65	€10,195,306
Southern	69	€10,441,034
Total	185	€28,203,697

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) provides funding for the development, maintenance, enhancement or promotion of outdoor recreational infrastructure in countryside areas. Projects include walking trails, cycleways, upland path repairs and blueways. Applications for funding are submitted to DRCD through Local Authorities, Local Development Companies and State Bodies. The 2022 scheme focused on prioritising projects which showed evidence of strong community engagement.

Funding of over €19.8 million was approved for 259 projects under the 2022 Scheme.

Projects approved under ORIS in 2022 by region

Region	No of projects approved	Value of approvals in 2022 €
Eastern	62	€4,334,356
Northern and Western	97	€7,043,184
Southern	100	€8,429,500
Total	259	€19,807,040

Tourism

Tourism makes a very important contribution to the policy goals of strengthening rural economies and communities (NSO 3) and enhancing amenity and heritage (NSO 7). Tourism contributes to essential employment in all counties, especially in regional locations outside of the main cities where other employment opportunities are limited.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

RRDF-funded projects of tourism significance

Fáilte Ireland and Coillte continued to partner on progressing the International Mountain Biking Proposition for Rural Ireland, which received €13.6 million in RRDF funding, administered by DRCD in 2019. Fáilte Ireland's contribution to the project

is €954,000. A strategic, large-scale project, it is considered to be of particular importance for developing the activities tourism offering in Ireland and comprises the following projects:

- Coolaney Mountain Bike Centre & Trail Development (Sligo);
- Ticknock (Dublin) & Ballinastoe (Wicklow) Mountain Bike Centres;
- Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Centre; and,
- Ballyhoura Visitor Centre Trail Head Building (Limerick).

In April 2022, the Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trail was officially opened which included over 80km of new trails across the Slieve Blooms in Laois and Offaly. Planning consent for new Trail Head Visitor Facilities at Ballyhoura, County Limerick and Baunreagh, County Limerick were approved in Q4 2022.

In 2022, a total of 25km of new trails were constructed bringing the total amount of new trails developed to 64km and a total trail network of 185km. An additional 32km of new trails will be constructed in 2023 delivering a total of 95km of new trail and a trail network of approximately 300km of mountain bike trails across the 5 sites.

Fáilte Ireland will continue to work with DRCD on the Walks Scheme and the ambition to add 70 walks to the scheme. In long distance walking, a plan will be developed to set a Roadmap for the delivery of a Wild Atlantic Way Coastal Path. Fáilte Ireland will also continue to work with the National Parks and Wildlife Service on enhancing and expanding the visitor experience at our beautiful national parks. The new trail development at Connemara National Park was granted planning permission in February 2023 and will progress to delivery later in the year.

In addition, planning consent was approved for the development of new Trail Head and Visitor Services buildings at Baunreagh, County Laois (Slieve Blooms) and Ballyhoura, County Limerick. These facilities will progress to delivery in 2023.

Fáilte Ireland has contributed to the following five RRDF projects which are designed to have significant tourism benefits:

- Dunbrody Famine Ship / New Ross;
- Irish National Heritage Park & Hook Lighthouse; and,
- Nenagh Historic Quarter Regeneration Project.
- Surf Centre of Excellence, Strandhill, Co. Sligo; (scheduled to open Summer 2023)

- Mount Congreve Gardens, Waterford; (opened in March 2023).

Together with our partners, Fáilte Ireland welcomed visitors to six newly opened attractions in counties Wicklow, Mayo, Kerry, Monaghan, Meath and Roscommon.

- Beyond the Trees Avondale, Co. Wicklow;
- Céide Fields Visitor Centre, Co. Mayo;
- Ionad an Bhlascaoid, Co. Kerry;
- Patrick Kavanagh Centre, Co. Monaghan;
- Knowth Visitor Experience; and,
- The National Famine Museum, Strokestown Park, Co. Roscommon.

Other projects supported by Fáilte Ireland that were progressed in 2022 and which are expected to commence or recommence construction in 2023 include:

- Sligo Cultural Plaza, Co. Sligo;
- Surf Centre of Excellence, Strandhill, Co. Sligo; (scheduled to open Summer 2023)
- Records Tower, Dublin Castle (Delivered through Strategic Partnerships);
- Mount Congreve Gardens, Waterford;
- Medieval Kilkenny Experience;
- Little Museum of Dublin; and,
- Galway Museum.

Fáilte Ireland Capital Investment: Platforms for Growth

Fáilte Ireland's capital investment programme, Platforms for Growth (worth €150 million) ran from 2019 to 2022. The programme, which falls under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 strategy and unlike any other Fáilte Ireland project, explicitly targets 'platforms' or project types that have the greatest potential to grow tourism across Ireland.

To date, funding has been available via Platforms for Growth through three initiatives:

- The Immersive Heritage and Cultural Attractions 2019 Scheme;
- The Shared Facilities for Activity Providers 2020; and,
- The Gala Dinner Venues Investment Scheme 2022.

The first call for applications (Platforms for Growth 1) was launched in May 2019 and focused on developing immersive heritage and cultural attractions. Through this platform, Fáilte Ireland invested in heritage and cultural attractions of scale that motivate visitors/or within Ireland, but without displacing the existing attractions of a destination or disturbing the competitiveness already in mature destinations. The overall objective of this platform was to deliver brilliant experiences that allow visitors to connect with Ireland and bring the national and local culture, heritage and people to life, while also delivering greater regional and seasonal spread of tourism.

In April 2021, €19 million worth of investment was announced for the second platform, (Platforms for Growth 2) to develop world-class water sports facility centres at 22 locations across the country where water-based activities are a key visitor attraction. This investment scheme was developed in partnership between Fáilte Ireland and local authorities to support the local economy.

To stimulate the development of unique gala dinner venues of scale, Fáilte Ireland launched a Gala Dinner Venues Investment Scheme in 2022, which is a small capital investment scheme, offering investment grants of up to 100 per cent of eligible project costs to a maximum of €200,000 per project. The scheme aims to support the development of up to seven 'wow' gala dinner venues of scale in the environs of Ireland's premier business tourism hubs i.e. Dublin, Cork, Kerry, the Shannon Region and Galway.

Targeting this gap in the Business Events segment will ensure recovery and growth of revenue which is central to Fáilte Ireland's sustainable growth agenda.

Table 2: Platforms for Growth 2: Additional Information on the successful projects due to proceed

Facility Centre	Location	Local Authority	Regional Assembly Area	Status
DLRCC Killiney Beach Facilities Project	Killiney Beach, Killiney, Co Dublin	Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	Eastern and Midland Region	Pre-Planning
Claycastle Sports Activity Facility	Claycastle, Youghal, County Cork	Cork County Council	Southern Region	Pre-Planning
Kilkenny Water Sports Hub	County Hall, John St, Kilkenny	Kilkenny County Council	Southern Region	Pre-Planning
Tramore Water-Sports Activity Facility Centre	Promenade, Tramore, Co Waterford	Waterford County Council	Southern Region	Pre-Planning
Ardmore Water-Sports Activity Facility Centre	Public Car Park, Cois Trá, Ardmore, Co Waterford	Waterford County Council	Southern Region	Pre-Planning
Curragloe Water Sports Activity Centre	Whitegap, Curragloe, County Wexford	Wexford County Council	Southern Region	Planning Approved
Ballycuggeran Sports Activity Facility	Ogonnelloe, Killaloe, County Clare.	Clare County Council	Southern Region	In Planning
Acres Lake Activity Facility	Acres Lake, Drumshambo, Co Leitrim	Leitrim County Council	Northern and Western Region	Planning Approved
Dromineer Sports Activity Facility	Dromineer, Nenagh, Co Tipperary	Tipperary County Council	Southern Region	Planning Approved
Kilkee Waterworld Activity Facilities	Waterworld, East End, Kilkee, Co. Clare	Clare County Council	Southern Region	In Planning
Tullan Strand Centre for Water Sports Activities Bundoran	Drumacrin, Tullan Strand, Bundoran, Co Donegal	Donegal County Council	Northern and Western Region	Pre-Planning

Downings Water Sports Activity Facility	Cnoc Na Muirleog, Na Muirleog, Na Dunaibh (Downings), Co Donegal	Donegal County Council	Northern and Western Region	Pre-Planning
Corrib Sports & Adventure	Dyke Road, Terryland, Galway	Galway City Council	Northern and Western Region	Pre-Planning
Ballybunion Beach Shared Facilities Centre	Men's (South) Beach, Ballybunion, Co Kerry	Kerry County Council	Southern Region	Pre-Planning
Fenit Beach Shared Facility Centre	Fenit Beach, Fenit, Co. Kerry	Kerry County Council	Southern Region	Pre-Planning
Magherabeg Shared Facilities Centre	Magherabeg Lower, Castlegregory, Co Kerry	Kerry County Council	Southern Region	Pre-Planning
Keel Facility Centre for Water Sports Activities	Keel Sandybanks, Achill Island, Co. Mayo	Mayo County Council	Northern and Western Region	Pre-Planning
Carrowmore Water Sports Facility Centre	Carrowmore Beach, Louisburgh, Co Mayo	Mayo County Council	Northern and Western Region	In Planning
Enniscrone	TheBeach, Mackduff, Enniscrone, Co Sligo	Sligo County Council	Northern and Western Region	Pre-Planning
Rosses Point PFG	Rosses Point, County Sligo	Sligo County Council	Northern and Western Region	Pre-Planning

In addition to its large grants' schemes and strategic partnerships, Fáilte Ireland also provides capital supports to tourism attractions and experiences in Ireland through a range of regional small grants schemes and makes direct investment into developing infrastructure for the four tourism experience brands (Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Dublin).

Fáilte Ireland also continues to invest in cultural and heritage tourism attractions through strategic

partnerships with the OPW/Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; National Parks & Wildlife Service; Coillte; and Waterways Ireland. These critical partnerships continue to deliver capital projects that realise the tourism potential of the State's natural and built heritage assets. Through these strategic partnerships, and other collaborations with Government Departments and agencies, Fáilte Ireland is able to invest in the enhancement of visitor attractions and activities and advise on further experience development and marketing.



RRDF - gTeic An Spideal, Co Galway

Destination Development and Distribution

In 2022 Fáilte Ireland created four long term regional development strategies and began work on 36 Destination and Experience Development Plans. All tailored to support the sustainable development of tourism in Ireland's Ancient East, the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, and Dublin.

Destination Towns (€5,997,886) was awarded to 12 towns in Ireland's Ancient East: Carlow, Cork City, Monaghan, Portlaoise, Kildare Town, Drogheda, Trim, Cashel, Kilkenny, Waterford, New Ross and Wicklow Town.

Trim in Co Meath was the first Destination Town completed and launched in 2022. The remaining towns are to launch in 2023.

In 2022 funding for the following was also awarded:

- €1.9 million was awarded to deliver visitor experience improvements at Bray Head Signed Discovery Point on the Wild Atlantic Way;
- €200,000 in technical assistance for the preparation of an interpretation and infrastructure plan for the Boyne Valley Drive; and
- €2.2 million for the upgrades and remedial works to WAW wayfinding signage and discovery points.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) in Partnership with DRCD

Since 2018 Fáilte Ireland has a partnership in place with DRCD on the funding of that Department's Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme. Fáilte Ireland contributed €4 million towards projects in partnership with DRCD. Fáilte Ireland continues to collaborate with DRCD on the evaluation of the ORIS Scheme and the roll out of previous years investments. Collaboration is ongoing with regard to the opportunities for tourism recreation infrastructure within the scheme.

Just Transition Fund Project

Fáilte Ireland closed the year with the announcement of €68 million in EU 'Just Transition' funding, allocated to Fáilte Ireland for a 'Regenerative Tourism & Place Making Scheme for the Midlands' to transform tourism in the midlands and to develop new opportunities for tourism employment in the Just Transition territory.

Investment in Cultural Regional Infrastructure

The NDP looks to support place-making through investment in Cultural Regional Infrastructure, with a focus on sustainable and energy efficient infrastructural investment. The Department's cultural schemes continue to successfully deliver regional arts and cultural infrastructure across the country.

During 2022, almost €5.06 million was invested in enhancing local arts and cultural infrastructure to create and maintain opportunities for creativity, participation and creation. This included support for projects under the various schemes such as the Arts and Culture Capital Enhancement Support Scheme (ACCESS II) (€1,367,800), the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme (€465,000), the Regional Museum Exhibition Scheme (€166,000), Cultural Capital Scheme 2019- 2022 (€171,000) and a new capital scheme which was established in 2020, Stream D of the Cultural Capital Scheme 2019-2022 (€177,000). It also included 'Other Cultural Capital' projects (€2,709,200 on 8 various projects) including Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin, Mary Robinson Centre in Ballina, Yeats Society in Sligo and Tyrone Guthrie Centre in Monaghan.

ACCESS II is designed to assist the provision of high standard arts and culture infrastructure and enhanced access to the arts throughout the country. The scheme prioritises the enhancement and maintenance of existing facilities. In 2022, funding was provided to Offaly County Council in relation to Tullamore Arts Centre.

The Arts and Culture Capital Scheme focuses on enhancing the existing stock of arts and culture centres that operate as not-for-profit organisations with a clearly defined arts and culture focus. In 2022, funding awarded included support for Photo Museum of Ireland in Dublin, Cork Opera House DAC in Cork, Town Hall in Cavan, Hawk's Well Theatre in Sligo, and Galway City Council in relation to the Galway City Museum, among others. Two substantial projects were completed and fully drawn down in 2022 - €180,280 was awarded to Galway City Council for the upgrading of Galway City Museum, and €176,288 was awarded to Cork Opera House DAC under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018. The funding for both of these projects was drawn down in full in 2022.

The Regional Museum Exhibition Scheme seeks to promote and enhance the marketing of regional museums, and to support programmes to attract the aged, young, and socially disadvantaged to visit these institutions. Cultural events held in museums attract a local and tourist audience and promote museums as focal centres of the local community. Fifteen museums around the country were supported in 2022, including Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum to revamp its Boeing 314 Flying Boat replica, and Monaghan County Museum for exhibition cases for the museum's new site at the Peace Campus, Monaghan.

Stream D of the Cultural Capital Scheme 2019-2022 was set up in 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to assist the arts and culture sector at this time. In 2022 almost €177,000 was drawn down by 12 arts and culture organisations under Stream D of the Cultural Capital Scheme 2019-2022 for capital adaptations or equipment necessary to assist them re-open safely after COVID-19 and prevent its spread.

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media is developing a sector-specific climate appraisal methodology to be applied to the programmes, schemes and projects it funds. Streams A & B of the most recent capital grant scheme, Cultural Capital Scheme 2019-2022 prioritised projects to reduce an organisation's carbon footprint and make a real and positive impact on the environment. 44 projects were funded under Streams A and B of this scheme (majority awarded funding in 2021) and many of these projects commenced and progressed their projects during 2022. 27 of the 44 projects awarded funding include specific sustainability measures e.g. upgrading windows, insulating buildings, and installing LED lighting. €171,000 was drawn down in 2022 under this Scheme - three projects fully completed (Ballet Ireland in Dublin, Moore Community Council in Roscommon and Yeats Society in Sligo) and five part completed including Backstage Theatre in Longford and Fighting Words in Dublin.

In addition to the funding outlined above, a further €792,000 was invested in arts and culture infrastructure abroad in 2022, assisting the Irish Arts Center New York (€380,000), Centre Culturel Irlandais Paris (€262,000) and Venice Biennale (€150,000).

Develop the Creative Industries and a Vibrant Media Production and Audiovisual Sector

The Audiovisual Action Plan underpins the Government's commitment to develop Ireland as a global centre for excellence in media production and measures to be delivered under the Plan are relevant to NSO 3, as well as NSO 7. Funding for the Plan is delivered through Screen Ireland which is the national development agency for Irish filmmaking and the Irish film, television and animation industry. In 2022, capital funding of €32.15 million was allocated to Screen Ireland/Fis Éireann to support the production of audio-visual content in Ireland.

Screen Ireland's strategy, Building for a Creative Future 2024 is underpinned by 5 pillars that will develop the audio-visual sector and support vibrant media production.

Under its strategy, Screen Ireland will support national cinema and Irish independent film culture through continued investment in development, production and promotion. It will work closely with the post-production and VFX sector, creative talent and emerging technology innovations to generate new business opportunities. Screen Ireland is committed to championing industry development on a national and sustainable basis by supporting Irish companies and its expanding workforce across Ireland. In 2022 Irish film and television projects filmed on location all around the country. A key focus is on promoting and nurturing creative talent and skills across the country. To that end, Screen Ireland provides career-long supports, from first-time writers, directors and producers to cast and crew and in 2022, launched five regional Talent Development Academies. These regional Talent Development Academies will focus on regional talent development and inclusion, ensuring opportunities and support for new and diverse talent. This will ensure an overall national approach to creative talent, crew and workforce development in line with the significant growth ambition for the industry and commitment to social cohesion. The Talent Development Academies, located in Dublin, Wicklow, Limerick and two in Galway have already made an impact in the regions, collectively delivering over 50 courses/initiatives to over 1,800 Participants in 2022.

The skills team in Screen Ireland will also continue to address ongoing skills needs in the regions through

its online courses, funding schemes, and through its work in relation to the skills requirements of the S481 tax credit.

Screen Ireland will launch a new Screen Crew and Services Database for the sector in early 2023 to support ongoing production activity across the country and also support more open and transparent hiring processes within the sector.

Expansion and investment in studio facility infrastructure across the country is also critical to building a sustainable future for the Irish screen industry and this expanded infrastructure will add to the need for a depth of highly-skilled crew to support the large-scale production of high-quality screen output across the country. Continued work to increase Ireland's international profile and develop new US-Ireland industry relationships through Screen Ireland's LA office, in collaboration with Enterprise Ireland, IDA, Tourism Ireland and the Consulate General of Los Angeles should further drive inward investment and ensure opportunities for rural economies and communities.

Throughout 2022, Screen Ireland with the support of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media, Screen Ireland will continue to support the exhibition sector. Irish cinemas make a significant contribute to in supporting Irish films and providing a diverse cultural offering throughout the nation across a wide-ranging demographic of audiences. Furthermore, the cinema sector operates a valuable social and educational service to communities across the country. In Ireland, the sector is composed of predominantly Irish-owned independent and arthouse cinemas that screen Irish and specialist films and support the indigenous filmmaking sector. Ireland has a unique screen density of regional cinema by comparison to its European counterparts and in 2019, Ireland had the highest cinema admissions per capita in Europe. The high level of admissions is in part attributable to the presence of cinemas in so many small and medium sized Irish towns. The contribution of cinemas to local communities is a significant part of social and cultural life in rural Ireland.

The Creative Futures fund was launched as part of Screen Ireland's commitment to grow strong and resilient companies throughout the country. The fund is designed to help support companies strengthen and hone their expert creative capabilities and ambitions and build cultural resilience to enable high quality cultural projects. 35 per cent of successful companies were based regionally.

Screen Ireland will introduce a new €3.5 million Regional Fund for the screen sector in 2023 that will support further film production in the regions.

The Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 was signed into law on 10 December 2022. It provides for the dissolution of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and the establishment of a new regulator, Coimisiún na Meán, which will be responsible for overseeing the regulation of broadcasting and video on-demand services and the new regulatory framework for online safety. An Coimisiún will also have functions relating to the promotion of an open, trusted and pluralistic media and online environment, including research, education, media literacy, the protection of children, and journalistic and creative supports. The Act was commenced and An Coimisiún formally established on 15 March 2023.

Enhancing Sport Facilities Throughout Ireland

The Sports Capital Equipment Programme (SCEP) is the main channel of Government support for developing sports facilities and purchasing sports equipment for sports clubs and organisations across Ireland. The latest round of the SCEP closed for applications in March 2021. Over 3,100 applications were submitted seeking over €200 million. Approximately 1,000 of applications were for 'equipment-only' projects. Grants with a total value of €16.6 million were announced within those applications in August 2021. 1,865 individual grant offers with a total value of over €143.8 million were announced from the remaining capital applications in February 2022.

Further allocations (totalling €6.14 million) on foot of successful appeals were announced in May 2022. A total allocation of €166.6 million for the 2020 round of SCEP represents the highest level of allocation ever made under the SCEP, with 2,878 individual grant offers in total and 59 different sports funded. All valid applications received a grant offer. As well as grants to local clubs, over €22 million was allocated to projects deemed to be of "regional" significance. Such projects include regional centres of excellence, Local Authority Projects and sports facilities at third level institutions.

Sustaining Gaeltacht Communities and Promoting the Irish Language

A priority of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media is to sustain Gaeltacht communities through investment in Udarás na Gaeltachta and to promote the Irish language. A number of supports in 2022 are outlined below.

- In Mayo, 'Solas' is being developed as a strategic tourism attraction, on an international level, on the Iorras Peninsula. The project, being led by Udarás na Gaeltachta, is funded through the RRDF, the Department and Udarás. Construction began in 2022 on (approx.) 800m² building in Eachléim. Solas is due to open in Summer 2023.
- €100,000 was allocated to develop initial interpretations plans for 3 visitor attractions in the Galway Gaeltacht – the Seaweed & Heritage Centre in Leitir Mealláin, The Immigrant's Centre, Carna and The Aran Experience in Inis Mór, Árann. Construction on the Carna project is due to begin mid-2023.
- The development of 15.5 linear kilometres of looped trails to include 9km of tarred and chipped primary trail and 1.3km linear meters of raised board walk were completed in Casla, Co. na Gaillimhe.
- An enhanced relationship with Fáilte Ireland was underpinned by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Fáilte Ireland and Udarás na Gaeltachta in early 2022, leading the way for collaboration across tourism initiatives in the Gaeltacht.
- With investment of €192,592 de chuid an Udarás leveraged European funds the EU Project Digi2Market, enabling a project with a total value of €357,670 for Gaeltacht tourism SMEs to enhance their digital capabilities.
- Udarás na Gaeltachta invested over €450,000 in Community Gaeltacht tourism projects to recruit, enable and train a cohort of 15 Gaeltacht Tourism officers.

Gteic – Gaeltacht Digital Network

Gréasán gteic Digiteach na Gaeltachta has continued to grow and develop in 2022. The network has established itself as a base for entrepreneurs, innovators and established companies, and has become a landing spot for members of the Gaeltacht Diaspora with a desire to return home to remote work or to start their own business. At the end of 2022, 441 people were working in the 27 gteic hubs in operation, a 37 per cent increase from the 2021 figure. 220 of these people are not included in employment figures, and 69 were remote workers. 136 companies were located in gteic hubs at that time.

During 2022, the gteic@An Spidéal and gteic@Na Forbacha have become home to numerous start-ups and growing projects in the MedTech sector in the Galway region. The IPSOS MRBI project has continued to grow in Béal an Mhuirthead and Acaill and employs 64 people in the Maigh Eo Gaeltacht. The gteic@Gaoth Dobhair hub continues to experience success in enticing companies to develop “second site” operations, with Keelings Knowledge establishing an office focussed on software development in the hub.

As well becoming an invaluable economic development resource to the Gaeltacht regions, the gteic network provides important support to social and community development projects in their regions. The gteic network has engaged with the Educational and Training Board to provide courses in weaving and business administration in Cill Charthaigh and Gaoth Dobhair respectively. Numerous gteics throughout the Gaeltacht regions are home to companies working on community and language development projects. In 2022, the gteic@Gaoth Dobhair hub welcomed the world renowned traditional Irish musician, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, as its artist in residence

Regional and Local Roads

2022 saw investment of €607 million under the Regional and Local Road Grant Programme. Most of this funding was allocated to road maintenance and rehabilitation and grant assistance in 2022 provided for:

- the maintenance of 3,192 kilometres of road;
- the strengthening of 2,518 kilometres of road;
- €14.5 million for bridge rehabilitation projects;
- €9 million for safety improvement projects;

- €15.6 million for community involvement schemes;
- €20 million for drainage works
- €8 million for maintenance works on former national roads

In addition, funding of €14.7 million was provided under the new climate change adaptation grant for works on roads at risk due to the impact of climate change and severe weather events.

A significant number of regional and local road projects relating to safety/minor improvement and bridge rehabilitation works were also progressed in 2022. Examples include the Edenderry Inner Relief Road Phase 1, Offaly; the Dale Road improvement scheme, Kerry; the R390 re-alignment at Walderstown, Westmeath; a safety scheme at Cunningham's Corner, Wicklow; the Bundola Sea Wall project, Mayo; the R586 realignment at Ille Bridge, County Cork and the R194 Derrylea Bridge project, Cavan.

Some investment is also being made in larger scale road improvement schemes. Twelve strategic regional and local road improvement schemes were listed in the original NDP for implementation and six schemes have been completed to date.

- In 2022 construction continued on the Athy Southern Distributor Road scheme together with the Tralee Northern Relief Road.
- The main construction contract commenced for the Shannon Crossing, Killaloe Bypass and R494 Upgrade scheme.
- While construction of the Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road commenced in 2021, the contract was terminated as a result of the receivership of the main contractor. Pending a retender of the main construction contract, a contractor was appointed to complete bridgeworks over the railway line.

Preparatory work, including detailed design, advance works and land acquisition was also underway for other schemes.

In the Eastern and Midland Region, there are three major regional and local road transport projects including the Sallins Bypass, the Athy Southern Distributor Road and the Laytown to Bettystown Link Road.

- **Sallins Bypass** – Construction completed in 2021
- **Athy Southern Distributor Road** - Construction programme continued in 2022

- **Laytown to Bettystown Link Road –**

Construction completed in 2021

There are two major regional and local road transport projects in the Northern and Western Region:

- **Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Road** - Procurement process for engineering consultants for detailed design is underway. This project is being part funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund.
- **Sligo Western Distributor Road** - Completed in 2021

Other projects include the Coonagh to Knockalisheen Road in the Southern Region, which is part of the Limerick Regeneration programme, the Shannon Bridge which is part of the Killaloe Bypass, the Tralee Northern Relief Road and the realignment of the Nenagh to Thurles Road (R498) at Latteragh to cater more safely for traffic.

- **Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road** – While construction of the Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road commenced in 2021, the contract was terminated as a result of the receivership of the main contractor. Pending a retender of the main construction contract, a contractor has been appointed to complete bridgeworks over the railway line and works are also underway to install a new watermain.
- **Shannon Crossing/Killaloe Bypass/R494 Upgrade scheme** - The main construction contract commenced for the Shannon Crossing, Killaloe Bypass and R494 Upgrade scheme.
- **Tralee Northern Relief Road** – Construction programme continued in 2022.
- **R498 Nenagh/Thurles (Latteragh) Upgrade** – Scheme was at detailed design and land acquisition stage.

The National Broadband Plan

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) is the initiative to rollout high-speed broadband to the 1.1 million people living and working in almost 560,000 premises, including almost 100,000 businesses and farms, along with 679 schools, where commercial operators will not commit to deliver the service. It is expected that eventually over 600,000 premises will be served by the NBP, including new builds.

The NBP has stimulated commercial investment in this vital service. In 2012, fewer than 700,000 or 30 per cent of all Irish premises had access to high-speed broadband. At the end of 2022, there were 1.96 million premises across Ireland with broadband subscriptions.

The NBP contract was signed with National Broadband Ireland (NBI) in November 2019. NBI commenced the rollout of a high speed and future-proofed broadband network within the State Intervention Area in 2020 and will operate and manage this network over the next 25 years. For 2020, which was the first year of the contract, the principal focus was on mobilisation activities, together with survey, design and make ready work to prepare the way for the fibre deployment. Design work was completed in target townlands across every county in Ireland with over 153,000 premises surveyed by the end of 2020. This survey work fed into detailed designs for each deployment area and fibre deployment commenced in late 2020 with the first fibre to the home connections in January 2021.

By the end of 2022, design work was underway or completed on over 351,000 premises. High-speed broadband services were available for order or pre-order to over 117,900 premises. NBI advises that over 109,000 premises had a network connection available by the end of 2022 and over 27,600 premises were connected and availing of high-speed broadband services. "Network Connection" refers to the number of "premises passed" by NBI. When a premises is passed, it can then be made available for a network operator to offer services to the customer, who can place an order for a high-speed broadband service. The network connection therefore becomes available to customers.

By the end of 2022, 281 Broadband Connection Points were in place and 278 of these were open for business. These are located in places of community importance including community centres, library hubs, local sports facilities, tourism locations and other public places. In addition, more than 560 schools in remote rural locations had a connection installed and 199 of these schools were provided with high-speed connectivity by the end of 2022. The installation of BCPs and the delivery of public BCPs throughout the country is almost complete. NBI is working to accelerate the rollout of high-speed broadband to schools across the State.



Rollout of National Broadband Plan

Agriculture, Food and the Marine

A wide range of investment supports for farmers, fishermen and agri-food sector companies were delivered during 2022.

- During 2022, grant support totalling €70.4 million for improvements in equipment and facilities on farms was paid under the Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Scheme.
- Over 100 horticulture producers received a combined total of €6.81 million in support for specialised building and equipment through the scheme of investment aid for the development of the commercial horticulture sector in 2022.
- In 2022 some 308 new afforestation sites and 69 kilometres of new roads were funded. The total expenditure for forestry for 2022 amounted to some €74.085 million.
- Over €8 million was invested in a range of projects across the fisheries, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors, including:
 - €1.3 million invested in the economic diversification of coastal communities through the seven Fisheries Local Action Groups;
 - €0.8 million invested in capital improvements to fishing vessels, including for energy efficiency, value adding and health and safety;
 - €2.5 million invested in value adding investments in the seafood processing sector; and
 - €2.8 million invested in productive investments in the aquaculture sector. Some of these schemes will continue through 2022 aiming to enhance the efficiency and viability of our primary producers and processors in facing the challenges ahead.

Key projects under the 2022 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme included the completion of the middle pier berthing project (the Fishing Pier) at Howth Fishery Harbour Centre (FHC), the continuation of the Smooth Point pier extension at Killybegs FHC and the substantial completion of the Dinish Pier extension and breakwater at Castletownbere FHC.



Fishing Pier, Howth Fishery Harbour Centre



Dinish Wharf North Quay Essential Completion Works, Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre



2.4

Sustainable Mobility

Project Ireland 2040 contains a commitment to a more environmentally sustainable public transport system to enable economic growth and meet growing passenger demand. While many of the major projects under this strategic priority will take a number of years to deliver fully, 2022 saw clear progress against this goal.

2.4 | Sustainable Mobility

BusConnects

BusConnects will transform the bus network, and provide significantly enhanced cycling infrastructure, in all major cities

The programme preliminary business case for BusConnects Dublin and the detailed project brief for next-generation ticketing were approved by Government in March 2022. This decision gave Decision Gate (DG) 1 approval to the programme in principle, DG1 approval to the Core Bus Corridors, which facilitates the submission of planning applications, and DG2 approval to next generation ticketing, facilitating the commencement of competitive dialogue.

To date the National Transport Authority (NTA) has submitted planning applications to An Bord Pleanála in respect of six of the Core Bus Corridor schemes and expects to submit applications for all remaining schemes by the end of Q2 2023.

The Network Redesign for the entire Dublin network is being rolled out over 11 phases and currently the NTA expect it to be completed by early 2025. Roll out of the plan began in 2021 with the launch of the first two phases – the H-Spine (Howth/Malahide to City Centre) in June and the C-Spine (Lucan/Celbridge to Ringsend via City Centre) in November 2021. Phase 3 was launched in May 2022. It consisted of two Northern Orbital Routes (N4 Blanchardstown to Point Village and N6 Finglas to Howth Junction). Phase 4, the G-Spine and Route 60 (Ballyfermot/Liffey Valley/Red Cow to the Docklands via city centre) was launched in October 2022.

Next Generation Ticketing (NGT) is another important element of the BusConnects programme, involving the upgrade of fares and ticketing systems across bus services in Dublin. The NTA continued to progress the procurement phase through 2022, having identified 5 PQQ candidates in 2021, and the next step, the Competitive Dialogue process, is currently underway. NTA hope to award the contract by end-2023.

172 new buses for PSO bus fleets were delivered in 2022, including 107 fully electric vehicles and 24 hybrids for urban fleets.

Following an extensive public consultation process, the NTA published the proposed BusConnects Cork network in June 2022. The draft network provides an increase of over fifty per cent in bus services across

the city, to allow more people to gain access to more places quickly.

The first round of public consultation in relation to the 12 new Sustainable Transport Corridors proposals closed on 3 October 2022. A second round of public consultation will take place in 2023 following the updating of the proposals.

BusConnects Galway will deliver a rationalised network of five high-performing cross city routes. All routes will serve major city centre attractions as well as linking all major destinations across the city, comprise next generation bus lanes, including segregated bike lanes, enhanced services, cashless fares and account-based ticketing. A network of park and ride sites, serviced by the more efficient bus network, will also be put in place.

Non-statutory public consultations were held for two of the five proposed routes – the Cross City Link and the Dublin Road scheme.

Galway City Council submitted a planning application in September 2022 to An Bord Pleanála for the Galway Cross-City Link, a new bus priority corridor through Galway City Centre, connecting the west and the east of the city from University Road to the Dublin Road. The consultation period closed on 18 November 2022. The Dublin Road scheme will enter the planning process in 2023, following a second non-statutory public consultation process.

In August 2021 An Bord Pleanála gave consent for the development of the Salmon Weir Bridge, a pedestrian and cycling bridge which is an important element of BusConnects Galway. Construction began on the project in mid-2022.

Work also continued in 2022 on a draft new bus network for Limerick City, which was then published for public consultation on 22 February 2023. It was developed by the NTA with the assistance of Jarret Walker & Associates, a specialist bus network designer, in collaboration with Limerick City & County Council, Clare County Council and Bus Éireann.

Under the proposals within the Limerick bus network redesign report, the level of bus services in Limerick city and its suburbs will increase by approximately 70 per cent. The added service levels will be enabled by the extension of bus services to new areas, more routes with frequent services, an enhanced Sunday timetable and a new 24-hour route.

NTA expects that the new bus network will be finalised in Q3 of this year, with the rollout on the new system planned for 2025.

Half of the fleet in Limerick was converted to Hybrid buses in 2021. There are a further 20 Zero Emission Electric Double Deck Buses on order for Limerick, which are expected to be delivered and commissioned in 2023. This will convert the entire bus fleet in Limerick to Low / Zero Emission by end of 2023.

DART+ Programme

The DART+ Programme will significantly expand rail services in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and effectively double the capacity of the existing network through the electrification of the Kildare (to Hazelhatch), Maynooth (to Maynooth/M3 Parkway) and Northern (to Drogheda) Lines, expansion of the rail fleet and various other infrastructure and signalling improvements.

In December 2021, Government approved the DART+ Programme Preliminary Business Case. This allowed for DART+ West to enter the statutory planning system. The Railway Order for DART+ West was submitted in July 2022. Government approval also allowed for the NTA and Iarnród Éireann to conclude a 10-year procurement framework contract for additional DART fleet with an initial order of 95 new carriages (65 battery-electric and 30 electric units) placed. These units will enter service in 2025 and greatly expand the fleet as part of the broader DART+ Programme, with services to Drogheda commencing using battery-electric carriages in advance of overhead electrification.

In November 2022 the Government approved a second purchase of fleet under the framework agreement with Alstom, which will see a further 90 new battery-electric carriages enter service in 2026.

DART+ West was subject to two non-statutory public consultations before a three-month statutory consultation between July 2022 and October 2022 as part of the Railway Order application process.

The first non-statutory consultation on DART+ Coastal North concluded on 8 April 2022, with a second round to be conducted in Q2 2023. The first non-statutory consultation on DART+ Coastal South is to be conducted in Q1 2023.

Heavy Rail

Construction of the National Train Control Centre (NTCC) commenced in 2021. Building work was complete in 2022, with project completion expected in 2026. The NTCC is a key enabler for expansion of

rail services as it will enhance rail traffic management and will underpin both the planned and potential future expansion of rail services across the entire rail network and, in particular, the planned expansion of DART services under the DART+ Programme.

The NTA and Iarnród Éireann progressed the order for an additional 41 Inter-City Railcars (ICRs), delivery of which commenced in 2022 and which are expected to enter into service in 2023. As with the bi-modal units under the DART+ Programme, the new ICRs will further enhance and expand the rail fleet.

The Cork Area Commuter Rail Programme represents the largest investment in the rail network in Cork undertaken by the State. The programme comprises a number of separate but interrelated projects that encompass:

The integration of the three existing railway corridors in the Cork area, which arrive in the city at Kent Station, providing a high-frequency north-east connection through the city and creating an integrated network;

Full electrification, or alternative fuelling, of the suburban rail network;

Other infrastructure improvements required to accommodate a transformative 10-minute frequency (from current 30-minute frequency) for the suburban rail network in Cork;

Additional rolling stock to be introduced to meet the potential of existing and future demand;

A multi-modal integrated transport hub for the city provided at Kent Station to promote modal shift from the private car and enhance attractiveness of the city docklands regeneration and development; and

New stations at prime regeneration sites, Park & Ride interchange points and new development areas.

Certain key enabling elements of the programme were packaged into Phase 1 of the programme and included in Ireland's National Recovery & Resilience Plan (NRRP), as submitted to the European Commission in 2021. All works associated with Phase 1 will be completed by end-2026 as required by the European Commission.

This will see a €185 million investment (€164m of EU funds) in Cork's rail infrastructure, which will facilitate the longer-term electrification of the network through construction of a new 'through' platform at Kent Station to create an integrated suburban network, re-signalling of the network, and double-tracking from Glounthaune to Midleton.

Work is already underway on Phase 1 of this programme. In 2022, a planning application was submitted to Cork City Council seeking planning consent for the additional platform at Kent Station. Separately, the tender process for the re-signalling project has commenced. A four-week non-statutory public consultation on the preferred option for double tracking the current single line between Glounthaune and Middleton concluded on 16 August 2022. The feedback received fed into the Railway Order application, which was submitted to An Bord Pleanála on 10 November.

In addition to the infrastructure works described above, the frequency of a number of rail services in the Cork Metropolitan Area were doubled in July 2022, with a frequency of every 30 minutes to/from Cork-Cobh and Cork-Middleton and a frequency of every 15 minutes to/from Cork and Glounthaune.

MetroLink and Light Rail

MetroLink will be a fully electrified, segregated and mostly underground new rail line from the Swords area to Charlemont in the south of Dublin City Centre. It is a key project under the National Development Plan 2021-30.

A significant milestone in the progression of the MetroLink project was cleared in July 2022, when the Minister for Transport secured Decision Gate 1 approval in principle under the Public Spending Code from Cabinet. This decision enabled the project to move to planning application stage and on 30 September Transport Infrastructure Ireland submitted a Railway Order application to An Bord Pleanála. The statutory planning consultation for the project closed on 16 January 2023.

Assuming timely planning approval from An Bord Pleanála, and Government approval in 2024 at Decision Gate 2 of the Public Spending Code, the procurement process for the project could be finalised by 2025. On the basis of the above, a final project tender price for the project could be submitted to Government for its decision at Decision Gate 3 in 2025. MetroLink could then commence construction in late 2025 such that it would start operations in the early 2030s.

Work also continued through 2022 on the options selection process for Cork Light Rail. Transport Infrastructure Ireland expect to begin a non-statutory public consultation process on the emerging preferred route for the project in early Q2 2023.

Following Ministerial approval at Decision Gate 0 of the Public Spending Code in 2021, the Department expects to receive a Preliminary Business Case for Luas Finglas from the NTA for the project at Decision Gate 1 of the PSC in 2023.

Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies

Transport investment in the five cities is guided by metropolitan area transport strategies which set out programmes of investment across all modes of transport for each city over a 20-year timeframe. These strategies are consistent with the spatial planning objectives in the National Planning Framework and the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

The statutory basis on which the metropolitan area transport strategies are developed differs currently with an explicit statutory basis to the strategy in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and a specific statutory role for the NTA. Outside the GDA, the strategies are currently non-statutory transport plans which are developed by the NTA in cooperation with the relevant local authorities and other agencies.

The Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy was published by the NTA in 2020 while the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy and Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy were published in 2022. A revised Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042 was published by the NTA in January 2023 following the Minister for Transport's approval of the strategy.

A review of the 2016 Galway Transport Strategy and the development of a new Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy will be carried out by the NTA in 2023, in conjunction with the local authorities.

Active Travel

The NTA, through its Active Travel Unit, supported over 1,000 individual projects in 2022 through its Active Travel Programme. The previous Sustainable Transport Measures Grants (STMG) and the newer Active Travel Programme, which funded local authorities based outside the GDA and the regional cities, were amalgamated in 2022 to form one funding programme through the NTA for all Active Travel infrastructure investment around the country. The NTA, through this fund, supported over 1,000 individual walking and cycling infrastructure projects in 2022.

The 2022 funding for Active Travel allocated through the NTA were as follows:

2022	Allocation
Active Travel - Walking and Cycling	€251,000
Active Travel – Protection and Renewal	€38,000
Total	€289,000

During 2022, delivery and spend exceeded expectations with almost €310,000 invested in Active Travel infrastructure by DoT through the NTA by the end of the year. Local authorities delivered over 25km of new or upgraded cycle facilities and around 153km of new or upgraded footpaths through the Active Travel Programme, in addition to 16km of shared space (pedestrian and cycling) and 17km of off-road urban greenway.

Major projects progressed in 2022 include the Clontarf to City Centre route in Dublin (due to be completed in Q4 2023), the Belmayne Main Street in Dublin (due to be completed in Q1 2023), the Mahon to Marina Greenway in Cork (substantially complete), and the Bilberry to City Centre route in Waterford (due to be completed in Q1 2023). Other major achievements include the launch of the Salmon Weir Bridge across the River Corrib in December, and the signing of the contract for the Waterford Sustainable Transport Bridge in November, and the completion of the first extensive quietway network linking schools in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area (Sea to Mountains).

Significant progress was also made with the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme, with delivery plans almost complete for all Round 1 schools and many front of school treatments now moving from detailed design to construction stage and some already complete, including the Model School in Limerick and Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh, Cork. In addition almost 5,000 cycle/scooter spaces have been provided at 283 schools around the country throughout 2022 as part of the SRTS programme.

The following Active Travel projects, along with many more, are expected to commence or continue construction in 2023 include:

Safe Routes to School

- Design work on Round 2 schools is to commence in January.

- Construction is expected to start on over 100 front of school treatments throughout 2023.

Donegal

- Donegal Town One-Way Active Travel Scheme

Dublin

- Royal Canal, North Strand to Cross Guns Bridge.
- Dodder Greenway, Herbert Park to Donnybrook Road.
- Dodder Greenway, Springfield Avenue to Rathfarnham Road.
- D24 Neighbourhood Pathfinder Project, Tallaght
- Clonskeagh Road, UCD to DCC County Boundary.
- Wyattville Road Phase 2 in DLRCC.
- Stillorgan Park Road to Carysfort Avenue.

Cork

- MacCurtain Street Public Transport Improvement Scheme, Cork.
- N40 New Cycle / Pedestrian Overbridge (Tramore Valley Park).
- Dunkettle to Carrigtwohill final phase.

Galway

- South Dougiska Cycle Scheme
- Eglinton Canal Active Travel Scheme
- Salmon Weir Bridge

Kildare

- Royal Canal Greenway, Leixlip to Maynooth.

Monaghan

- Monaghan Town Greenway Upgrade

Sligo

- Carraroe to City Centre Active Travel Pathfinder Scheme

Waterford

- River Suir Sustainable Transport Bridge.
- Bilberry to City Centre (Waterford Greenway connection to City).

Wicklow

- Bray Dart Station Interchange.

Greenways

In 2021 TII became the approving Authority for Greenways facilitating the use of TII'S established processes and procedures to support the expansion, oversight and delivery of the Greenways programme.

Table 3: Additional Funding to eight construction projects co-funded in 2022

Greenway Project	Project Information	Original Grant Funding Awarded 2019	Total Projected Project Cost 2020	Additional Funding Allocated for 2021/22
Midleton to Youghal	23 km of Greenway linking Midleton to Youghal along an old rail-line.	€8m	€19.8m	€11.8m
Connemara	Part of the proposed Clifden to Galway Greenway which will complete a section 21 km from Clifden to Recess.	€2.6m	€4.2m	€1.6m
Listowel to Limerick County Boundary	Extension of the Great Southern Greenway (GSG) westwards into Kerry towards the sea - 10.5km of new Greenway increasing the GSG to over 50km.	€3.5m	€5.6m	€2.1m
Clew Bay Greenway	13.6km of Greenway linking Achill Sound to Bunacurry and West to Murrisk sections of Clew Bay. Will contribute to a 56km route.	€3.2m	€5.5m	€2.3m
Grand Canal Greenway- Tullamore to Daingean	Will complete 40km link from Daingean to Lough Borra.	€2.35m	€2.65m	€0.3m
Grand Canal Greenway - Alymer Bridge to Sallins	Alymer Bridge to Sallins	Wexford County Council	Southern Region	Planning Approved
Ferrybank, Waterford to New Ross Greenway	A 24km section with the potential to link to the Waterford Greenway in Waterford City.	€8m	€15.7m	In Planning
Blessington Lake Loop	42 km of Greenway around the Blessington Lakes, incorporating Russborough House and the villages of Vallemount, Ballyknockan and Lackan.	€5m	€15m	€10m
Total		€37.35m	€76.35m	€39m

€4.5 million was allocated to pre-construction phases to 26 projects from the Carbon Tax as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Carbon Tax Funded Pre-construction Projects

Name of Project	Amount Awarded	Managing/ Lead Managing Local Authority	Brief Description
Barrow Valley Greenway	€150,000	Carlow County Council	Concept and Feasibility, Project Execution Plan, Project Appraisal Plan and Project Brief for a 38.8 km section from Bagnalstown to Palace East
Cavan Railway Greenway	€175,000	Cavan County Council	Options selection for the 26.km section from Ulster Canal Greenway north of Castle Saunderson and with a link to the Cavan - Leitrim Greenway at Belturbet.
West Clare Railway Greenway	€255,000	Clare County Council	Concept and Feasibility, Project Execution Plan, Project Appraisal Plan, and Project Brief from Ennis to Moyasta. To bring a 20km priority section from Kilrush to Kilkee to Preliminary Design and Environmental Evaluation.
Mallow to Dungarvan Greenway	€80,000	Cork County Council	Scope, Pre- Appraisal, Concept, Feasibility and Options Selection for a 39.15km section from Mallow/Youghal to Ballyduff / on the Waterford border.
Inishowen Greenway	€45,000	Donegal County Council	Route Options selection on an 8km section from Muff to Quigley's Point.
Inishowen Greenway	€180,000	Donegal County Council	Route options selection on a 32km section from Buncrana to Cardonagh.
Foyle Valley Greenway	€115, 000	Donegal County Council	Route options for a 28.5 km section of the Foyle Valley Greenway from Carrigans to Castlefinn.
Fingal Coastal Way	€200,000	Fingal County Council	Route options selection for a 21 km section from Newbridge Demesne, Donabate to Fingal county boundary, north of Balbriggan.
Connemara Greenway	€140,000	Galway County Council	Preliminary Design and Environmental Evaluation for a 17km section from Clifden to Kylemore Abbey.
Connemara Greenway	€100,000	Galway County Council	Preliminary Design and Environmental Evaluation for an 8km section from Clifden to Derriglimlagh.

Quiet Man Greenway	€75,000	Galway County Council	Concept and Feasibility Design, Project Appraisal Plan – Athenry to Milltown.
Grand Canal Greenway	€96,850	Kildare County Council	Detailed Design, Detailed Business Case, Total Scheme Budget (TSB) and Enabling Procurement for a 38.5km section in County Kildare (13km of which has already received funding) from Sallins to Clonkeen on the Offaly border.
Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) Greenway	€500,000	Leitrim County Council	To bring a 75km section from Sligo Town to Blacklion in Cavan through Statutory Process.
Limerick Greenway (part of the Great Southern Greenway)	€150,000	Limerick County Council	Feasibility Study and Options Report for a 22km section from Rathkeale to Patrickswell through Adare.
Mid-Shannon Greenway	€60,000	Longford County Council	Preliminary Design and Environmental Evaluation, Statutory Process and Detailed Design Enabling Procurement for a 65.9km section.
Carlingford Greenway	€200,000	Louth County Council	Preliminary Design and Environmental Evaluation for a 12.31 km section from the Tourist Office in Carlingford to Templetown Beach.
Mayo Interurban Greenway	€95,000	Mayo County Council	Concept and Feasibility Study, 60km link from Westport via Castlebar to Ballina
Boyne Greenway & Navigation Scheme	€750,000	Meath County Council	Feasibility Study, Route Option Selection, Preliminary Design and Environmental Evaluation, Land Procurement / Agreements and Part 8 Planning Process for a 26.5 km section from Oldbridge Estate Entrance to Navan.
Ulster Canal Greenway	€100,000	Monaghan County Council	Preliminary Design and Environmental Evaluation for a 14km section from Smithsboro to Clones.
Grand Canal to Old Rail Trail Cycleway Link	€60,000	Offaly County Council	A Feasibility Study and environmental screenings for a key Regional Greenway 26 km link from the Grand Canal Greenway at Ballycommon (Tulare) to the Old Rail Trail Greenway and the Dublin-Galway Eurovelo route.
Shannon Monastic Greenway	€95,000	Offaly County Council	Feasibility, Consultation, Route Selection, Design and Environmental Screenings for a 28 km section from Shannonbridge in Offaly to Athlone in Westmeath.

Lough Ree Greenway	€100,000	Roscommon County Council	Concept and Feasibility Study, Project Execution Plan, Project Appraisal Plan and Project Brief for a 68km section of Greenway from Tarmonberry to Athlone.
Sligo Greenway	€300,000	Sligo County Council	Preliminary Design and Environmental Evaluation for a 35.5 km from Collooney Sligo to Bellaghy Cavan.
Clonmel to Carrick on Suir Greenway (Suir Blueway)	€200,000	Tipperary County Council	To bring a short 1km section from Gas House Bridge Clonmel to Suir Island Clonmel through the Statuary Process stage.
Waterford Greenway Network	€80,000	Waterford County Council	Options Selection and a Project Appraisal Report for a 38.5 km section from Dungarvan to Cork County boundary west of Ballyduff Upper.
Rosslare to Waterford Greenway	€58,000	Wexford County Council	To bring a 58km section from Rosslare Europort to the Bellview connection in Waterford through Statuary Process. This will enable connection the South East Greenway from Waterford to New Ross.
Limerick to Scarrif	€140,000	Waterways Ireland (covering Limerick and Clare)	Preliminary Design and Environmental Evaluation for a 41km section from Black Bridge, River Shannon, Limerick to Scarriff Town Square, County Clare.

Public Transport Accessibility Retrofit Programme

Accessibility features are built into all new public transport infrastructure projects and vehicles from the design stage. However, there are legacy issues in relation to older infrastructure and facilities. The Department of Transport funds an on-going Public Transport Accessibility Retrofit Programme, which is managed by the National Transport Authority (NTA.)

During 2022, the following accessibility initiatives and works were undertaken with this funding:

Railway Stations - Construction on the installation of Footbridges and Lifts started at Dalkey and Gormanstown stations. Planning and design works proceeding for Little Island and Banteer Rail Stations.

Ennis Platform works were completed. Minor Accessibility Works were completed in Thurles, Kent Cork, and Newbridge Stations.

Accessible bus bays at bus stations - The NTA is providing funding to install wheelchair accessible bays (for coaches with wheelchair lifts) in all 23 Bus Éireann stations. 16 bus stations (in Cavan, Drogheda, Letterkenny, Monaghan, Ballyshannon, Killarney, Sligo, Tralee, Athlone, Ballina, Cork, Rosslare, Tramore, Clonmel, Macroom, Ennis, Waterford, Wexford, Galway and Limerick) have been completed with 4 under construction (Ennis, Cork, Kilkenny and Mullingar).

Accessible bus stations - Accessibility Audits were carried out on 15 Bus Stations to ensure they comply with Building Regulations on accessibility.

Bus stops in rural areas - All bus stops in Dublin, regional cities and towns are wheelchair accessible.

The NTA set a target of having wheelchair accessible bus stops (one stop in each direction) in 43 towns with a population over 5,000. This means 50 per cent of main towns would have a wheelchair accessible bus stop. To date 31 stops have been completed and 11 stops are in construction.

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) / Taxis - Since 2010, all new taxi and hackney licenses issued must be associated with WAVs. The NTA issued 302 WAV23 grants (€1.2m) in 2022. The total number of WAV vehicles in the fleet is 3,348, which is over 17 per cent of the total fleet

The Travel Assistance Scheme - provides assistance for people who need it to access public transport or plan journeys across the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). The travel assistants carried out 1,782 assists in 2022 in the GDA. Following the success of the scheme, the NTA started a Pilot of this Scheme in Cork, in September 2022. This is managed by Bus Éireann and has two assistants.

Public Transport Investments

In addition, a number of other projects and programmes are underway which benefit all members of society, including disabled people / people with disabilities¹, those with mobility difficulties and older people. These include

Lift refurbishment/replacement - Lifts out of service significantly impact people with disabilities and older people who rely on functioning lifts to access rail services. During 2022 Irish Rail continued its “Big Lift” Programme and replaced or renovated 10 lifts and 2 escalators in stations nationwide. A Lift Video security system was installed on 13 lifts.

Regional bus fleets - Bus Éireann's PSO coach fleet is now 100 per cent wheelchair accessible with the wheelchair lift. The NTA purchased single deck regional commuter vehicles with a dedicated wheelchair space (seats will not need to be removed) to allow a wheelchair to board with normal ramp access. On the East Coast commuter services operated by Bus Éireann, the first of 20 of these coaches entered service.

Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan

The Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan is a major national public transport initiative with the aim of increasing public transport connectivity, particularly for people living outside the major cities and towns.

Over 100 rural villages will benefit from frequent public transport service (at least three return trips daily) for the first time. The plan will also see a 25 per cent overall increase in rural bus services, and over 60 new connections to regional cities from surrounding areas.

Collectively, these measures will not only further improve connectivity in the area but will provide viable alternatives to the private car for those living in the region.

The Plan is managed by the National Transport Authority (NTA) and TFI Local Link offices with the help of funding from the Department of Transport.

Connecting Ireland (CI) was launched in October 2021 with a public consultation which was completed in December 2021.

The first year of implementation of CI was in 2022, with 38 new and enhanced services launched.

The original distribution of services was defined by a baseline audit undertaken by the NTA and subsequent amendments to the Plan based on public consultation feedback.

In 2022, routes identified through the 2021 Connecting Ireland consultation process were prioritised to provide emergency public transport services to areas where the population and transport demand increased due to the requirement to house Ukrainian refugees in rural locations.

This was achieved by accelerating network improvements, including additional stops, route modifications, and more services to increase connectivity.

This acceleration served a dual purpose by catering for both the new and existing demand.

¹ The terms “persons with disabilities” and “disabled people” are used interchangeably in line with advice from the National Disability Authority (NDA)



2.5

A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills

Project Ireland 2040 is designed to catalyse a strong economy, supported by enterprise, innovation and skills. This is a critical goal both as an end in itself but also as a means of generating the economic resources and expertise to invest in each of the national strategic outcomes.

2.5 | A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills

National and Regional Enterprise Development

IDA Ireland's Performance 2022

- Over 32,400 new jobs were created in 2022 in IDA supported client companies.
- The numbers directly employed in the multinational sector in Ireland grew to 301,475.
- The existing base of FDI has shown continued resilience.
- 242 investments were won in 2022 - 103 of which were new name investments.
- Every region experienced growth in 2022
- More than half (52%) of investments went to regional locations.
- Net job creation in 2022 was 24,019.

IDA Ireland - employment performance 2022

Category	Results 2021	Results 2022
Total Employment	275,384	301,475
Job Gains	29,057	32,426
Job Losses	-12,231	-8,407
Net change	16,826	24,109

Source: 2022 Annual Employment Survey, DETE

IDA Ireland's New Strategy - Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021-2024

IDA's current strategy has been developed in the context of the Government's National Economic and Recovery Plan. The strategy positions IDA Ireland to respond to the trends that accelerated because of

the COVID-19 pandemic and identifies opportunities for sustainable growth among IDA's established base of clients. With emphasis on transformative investments to increase the productivity of Irish operations and their workforce through RD&I, digitisation, training and actions on sustainability, the strategy also maintains a focus on attracting the next generation of leading multi-national companies.

The strategy will be delivered through a focus on five pillars: Growth, Transformation, Regions, Sustainability and Impact.

- Under the **Growth pillar**, IDA will win investment to support job creation & economic activity
- Under the **Transformation pillar**, IDA will partner with clients for future growth in Ireland
- Under the **Regions pillar**, IDA will win investment to advance regional development
- Under the **Sustainability pillar** IDA will embrace an inclusive and green recovery.
- And under the **Impact pillar**, IDA will maximise FDI's positive impact on local businesses and communities.

These five interlinked pillars align with and are guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Over the period 2021-2024 IDA Ireland will

- Win **800** Total Investments to Support Job Creation of **50,000** and Economic Activity
- Partner With Clients for Future Growth Through **170** RD&I and **130** Training Investments
- Win **400** Investments to Advance Regional Development
- Embrace a Green Recovery with **60** Sustainability Investments
- Target a **20%** Increase on Clients Expenditure In Ireland to Maximise The Impact of FDI

IDA Ireland Employment by Region

There are now close to 1,800 multinational operations supported by IDA in Ireland accounting directly for 12 per cent of the Irish workforce. Their impact nationally and regionally to public finances, regional development, global value chain integration, spin-off indigenous enterprise, innovation and more can be clearly seen in their expenditure in the Irish economy. The most recent ABSEI results, which relate to 2021, show that payroll spend was €19.6 billion, up 9.8 per cent, combined spend of €11.9 billion on materials and services sourced in Ireland up 6.2 per cent to give a total spend in the Irish Economy of €31.5 billion, up 8.4 per cent on 2020. Exports of €315.5 billion represented an increase of 8.7 per cent year on year.

The 2022 figures show a pattern of sustained, robust growth in FDI investment and FDI-related employment over a continuous period of more than ten-years. These results represent a strong start to IDA's 2021-2024 strategy, Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth, which seeks to further enhance FDI's place at the centre of a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive Irish economy. The global competition for FDI is intense and will be an increasingly key feature of the global environment during IDA's new strategy as countries compete for investment to support economic recovery. It is in this context – of greater competition for potentially fewer projects

– that IDA wins investment for Ireland and engages with MNCs on the benefits of choosing regional locations for their investment projects. IDA's success in doing so has come despite the preference of MNCs to locate in large urban areas, including megacities and metro regions, and Ireland's lack of large urban centres outside of Dublin.

IDA Ireland employment by region

Region	2022	% Growth
Border	8,885	6%
Dublin	137,822	11%
Mid-East	21,861	13%
Mid-West	26,004	4%
Midlands	7,665	10%
South-East	15,520	3%
South-West	52,228	7%
West	31,490	7%
National total	301,475	9%

IDA Ireland indirect employment by region 2022

Region	2022 Direct	2022 Indirect	Combined
Border	8,885	7,108	15,993
Mid-East	21,861	17,489	39,350
Mid-West	26,004	20,803	46,807
Midlands	7,665	6,132	13,797
South East	15,520	12,416	27,936
South West	52,228	41,782	94,010
West	31,490	25,192	56,682
Total Regions	163,653	130,922	294,575
Dublin	137,82	110,25	248,080
Total	301,475	241,180	542,655

Source: DETE Annual Employment Survey 2022, multiplier of 1.8

Enterprise Ireland's Performance 2022

There were 19,660 new jobs created by Enterprise Ireland (EI) supported companies in 2022. In another challenging year, with a significant inflationary impact, overall net job gains of 10,841 occurred in client companies. There are 218,178 people now employed by EI supported companies following another challenging year for exporters.

Region	2022	% Growth
North-East	19,158	2%
Dublin	70,785	7%
Mid-East	21,105	4%
Mid-West	25,418	4%
North-West	7,258	2%
Midlands	11,506	4%
South East	21,805	7%
South West	25,585	5%
West	15,558	8%
National Total	218,178	5%

Source: Annual employment Survey, DETE

Investment in World-Class Research and Technology Centres

Digital Manufacturing Ireland

Significant progress has been made in delivering Digital Manufacturing Ireland in the IDA National Technology Park in Limerick. Digital Manufacturing Ireland will be an International Centre of Excellence and go-to destination for MNCs and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) to access, trial, adopt, deploy, and scale new Industry 4.0 & 5.0 technologies & processes at a time of accelerating digitisation and is aligned with Government's Industry 4.0 Strategy (2020-2025) and IDA Ireland's Strategy.

Digital Manufacturing Ireland will enhance Ireland's capabilities as a location for advanced manufacturing and safeguard our existing discrete manufacturing base. Digital manufacturing Ireland will foster increased levels of collaboration on training, technology and testing across MNCs, Irish enterprises, and the interlinking of the research and education systems. Digital Manufacturing Ireland will integrate with, and compliment, existing state-funded infrastructure which supports Ireland's manufacturing sector such that there now exists a continuum of resource from early-stage manufacturing research to late-stage technology adoption and deployment.

Government has to date committed of €10.6 million to support delivery of Digital Manufacturing Ireland for 2021 & 2022. IDA committed €12.4 million to end 2022. This funding has enabled progress on delivery of the Digital Manufacturing Ireland building, purchase of essential equipment and technologies, recruitment of key personnel and overall operationalisation of the centre.

Overall, Digital Manufacturing Ireland will contribute to positioning the Irish discrete manufacturing base at the forefront of digital transformation and will contribute to enhancing Ireland's competitiveness and attractiveness as an investment location for manufacturing thereby retaining and creating jobs.

National Institute for Bioprocessing, Research and Training – NIBRT

National Institute for Bioprocessing, Research and Training (NIBRT) is a global centre of excellence for training and research in bioprocessing, located in a world class facility of the grounds of University College Dublin. It was established primarily through IDA funding and since opening in 2011, NIBRT has transformed Ireland's capacity to train and educate a skilled workforce in support of major biopharmaceutical investment in Ireland.

NIBRT partners with Higher Education Institutes to provide training and research infrastructure facilities not previously available in Ireland. NIBRT has played a critical role in providing the skilled workforce to match this rapid growth and in carrying out industry-relevant research projects. NIBRT sets out to support the biopharmaceutical industry by providing a unique learning experience for trainees in an environment that replicates the most advanced industrial bioprocessing facility.

In parallel, NIBRT also undertakes cutting-edge research in key areas of biopharmaceutical manufacturing in collaboration with industry and academia.

NIBRT's research and training building features state-of-the-art pilot scale manufacturing facilities. In 2022, NIBRT delivered a 29 per cent growth in training and education revenue, resulting in over 31,000 learning days delivered to nearly 4,500 trainees and students.

NIBRT has global recognition as a successful research organisation and as a centre of excellence for training and upskilling of staff in the biologics industry. It has been hugely impactful in influencing the establishment of the twenty biologics manufacturing sites now located around the country which collectively employ in excess of 12,000 people directly with significant expenditure on Irish-sourced materials and services.

On 13th September 2022, the Tánaiste officially launched NIBRT's Cell and Gene Therapies Expansion, marking a significant expansion that will build NIBRT's capability and Ireland's Cell and Gene Therapy offering. This expanded offering includes an investment of €15 million into a new 1,600 sq. m. building expansion, with further investment to hire three new principal investigators and teams, as well as additional trainers with cell and gene therapy expertise.

European Digital Innovation Hubs

The Commission's restricted call for the EU-wide European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) network launched in November 2021 and closed in February 2022, with results issued in late June 2022. Further to evaluation, all four of Ireland's designated EDIHs passed the Commission threshold and are eligible to become part of the EDIH network. Two EDIHs (FxC and CeADAR) will be funded jointly through the Digital Europe Programme and Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF). The remaining two hubs (ENTIRE and DATA2SUSTAIN) have been awarded a 'Seal of Excellence', which permits them to become full EDIH network members subject to national funding. Funding for all four hubs has been allocated to Enterprise Ireland under the RRF to administer the EDIH network. DETE officials are currently liaising with the Commission and Enterprise Ireland on Irish programme requirements, grant agreements, hub staffing and technical administrative matters. The Irish EDIH network is expected to become

operational in Q1 2023, with two EDIHs (FxC and Data2Sustain) announcing their establishment on 24 February 2023.

SME Loan Schemes

Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme

To assist the wider business sector with liquidity and to invest in energy efficiency, a new State-backed loan scheme was introduced in Q1 2023. The Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme was jointly developed by Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM) in partnership with Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) in 2022. This will provide low-cost working capital to SMEs, primary producers and small mid-caps (businesses with fewer than 500 employees) of up to €1 million, on a six-year term, with no collateral required for loans up to €250,000.

Growth and Sustainability Loan Scheme ('GSLS')

The 'Growth and Sustainability Loan Scheme' (GSLS) is a new long-term loan guarantee scheme that is being jointly developed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM) in partnership with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) and the European Investment Bank Group (EIBG). It is planned that the GSLS will be launched in the market in mid-2023 and is currently designed to be available until 30 June 2026 or until the Scheme has been fully utilised, whichever is the earlier.

When implemented, the GSLS will make up to €500 million in longer-term lending available to SMEs, including farmers and fishers and small mid-caps. Up to 70 per cent of lending will be for strategic investments with a view to increasing productivity and competitiveness and thus underpinning future business sustainability and growth. The GSLS will also target a minimum of 30 per cent of the lending volume towards Environmental Sustainability purposes.

Brexit Impact Loan Scheme and the COVID-19 Loan Scheme

The Brexit Impact Loan Scheme (BILS) was launched in October 2021. Its purpose was to provide an appropriate option for access to finance to SMEs, including fishers and farmers, and small mid-caps that have been exposed to the dual impact of Brexit and COVID-19. BILS was funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and underpinned by support from the European Investment Fund and operated by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland. The scheme made up to €330 million in low-cost lending available until the end of 2022 through participating finance providers (three banks and 5 Metamo Credit Unions). Loans are for working capital and investment purposes, with terms of up to six years available and loans of up to €500,000 available unsecured. The Brexit Impact Loan Scheme closed on 31st December 2022. As of 15th May 2023, 1,931 loans have progressed to sanction under the scheme, to a total value of €261.2 million.

To ensure that an appropriate option for access to finance remained in place for COVID-19 impacted SMEs, the Brexit Impact Loan Scheme (BILS) was widened by Government to allow access to COVID-19 impacted SMEs. The implementation of this change resulted in the launch of a new scheme called the Covid-19 Loan Scheme (CLS) on the 4th of July 2022. As of the 15th May 2023, 276 loans have progressed to sanction under the scheme, to a total value of €28 million. Like BILS, the scheme closed on 31st December 2022.

COVID-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme

Jointly developed by DETE and DAFM in partnership with SBCI, the Covid-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme, which operated in accordance with the European Commission's Temporary Framework on state aid rules in response to the Covid-19 emergency, was launched in September 2020 and closed on 30 June 2022, following the expiration of the Temporary framework. In 2022, 1,862 loans with a total value of €165.4 million were drawn by businesses under the Covid-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme. A total of 9,857 loans for a value of €708.7 million were drawn under the scheme.

Future Growth Loan Scheme

The Future Growth Loan Scheme (FGLS) launched in 2019 and made lending available to SMEs and small mid-caps seeking financing for long-term strategic investment, including in response to the impacts of Brexit and COVID-19. The scheme initially made available up to €300 million in lending, however it was expanded by €500 million in July of 2020 in response to the impacts of the pandemic. Loans under the scheme range from €25,000 to €3 million and are offered for terms of 7-10 years. Loans of up to €500,000 are available unsecured. As of the 15th May 2023, 3,512 loans have been sanctioned under the scheme to a total value of €771.2 million. All of the participating lenders are now closed to new applications.

Microfinance Ireland Loan Schemes

The Microenterprise Loan Fund was established in 2012 to make loans available to viable micro-enterprises with commercially viable proposals in order to sustain and create jobs. Microfinance Ireland (MFI) was set up to administer the Fund on behalf of the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

Businesses can apply for an unsecured loan of between €2,000 and €25,000 for working capital, equipment, start-up costs, or marketing purposes. The loan term is typically 3 years for working capital purposes and can be extended to 5 years for capital expenditures. Interest rates range from between 5.5 per cent for clients of Local Enterprise Offices and other partners to 6.5 per cent for direct applications. Mentoring can be provided from an experienced business mentor on the Local Enterprise Office (LEO).

There is wide regional spread of loans across the country. As of the 31st March 2023 78 per cent of loans approved have been to microenterprises outside Dublin. The dominant sectors availing of loans from MFI have been the wholesale and retail sector (24%), manufacturing (14%), accommodation and food services (7%), and construction (8%). From the 1st of Oct 2012 to 30th April 2023, the Fund approved 4,791 loans to micro-enterprises for a total value of €79.14 million. These funds supported over 10,000 jobs.

Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund

The Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) was established in 2018, with €500 million in funding committed over the period to 2027 for co-funded collaborative projects involving the enterprise and research sectors. DTIF projects focus on the development and deployment of disruptive technologies to deliver new solutions through investment in the development and implementation of innovative products and services that will alter markets, or the way business operates.

Since 2018, DTIF has allocated €288 million to 86 collaborative disruptive innovation projects with strong commercialisation potential under the first four calls of the Fund. These projects cover areas such as life sciences, medical devices, ICT, artificial intelligence, manufacturing and environmental sustainability. Funding to each project is allocated over three years subject to reaching agreed milestones. It is expected that additional DTIF Call 4 projects and the successful projects under the fifth DTIF call, which was launched in April 2022, will be announced in 2023.

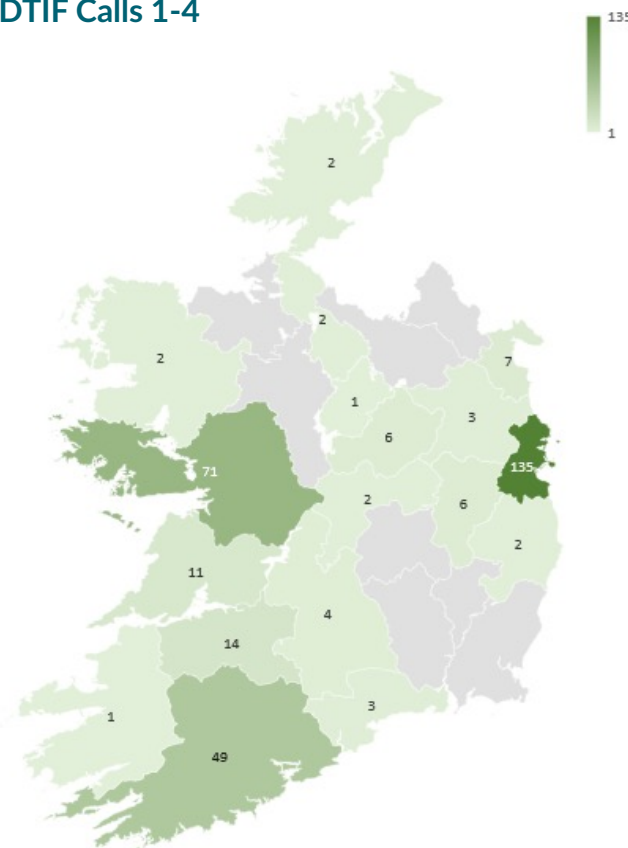
Each project is a collaborative partnership of between two and thirteen research and enterprise partners. Small and medium enterprise (SME) participation in every project is essential - SMEs constitute the largest grouping of partners within the consortia. They also represent the majority of lead applicants, leading 62 of the 86 projects.

Over 58 per cent of the 321 project partners allocated funding to date are located outside Dublin in eighteen counties across Ireland.

The Department completed a process review of the Fund in February 2022, in line with a recommendation in the DTIF Spending Review that was published in 2020. The purpose of the research consultancy was to:

- **Part A:** examine whether DTIF processes are administered in an efficient, effective and timely manner and to address any barriers within its processes which might limit the range and number of applicants and prevent the fund from operating in an optimum manner.
- **Part B:** make recommendations in relation to the processes required to embed and operationalise the programme logic model (PLM), as proposed in the DTIF Spending Review, to ensure that it aligns with existing reporting mechanisms.

Project Partner Locations - DTIF Calls 1-4



The 13 recommendations for **Part A** focus on improving knowledge sharing through:

- better communication and clarity around terminology and processes for applicants on the DTIF process
- the establishment of shared databases and enhanced ICT tools to streamline internal processes by Enterprise Ireland
- adequate levels of resources and appropriate allocation of roles within the DTIF team in Enterprise Ireland, and
- the removal of overt bottlenecks that are occurring within the processes particularly within the grant claims and contract management stages.

The 3 recommendations for **Part B** relate to the implementation of actions to track the remaining seven priority metrics and focus on enhanced data tracking and documented procedures to gather information from participants.

The Department is working with Enterprise Ireland to deliver the recommendations contained in the report.

Examples of DTIF Projects under Calls 1-4 by Research Priority Area (RPA)

Research Priority Area	Examples of DTIF Projects
ICT 15 projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a sustainable internationally trading Earth Observation services sector in Ireland Quantum computing software programme for multiple qubit technologies. Leveraging Artificial Intelligence to automate the creation of 3D models and worlds. Child-protection software for smartphones that detects/blocks cyberbullying, grooming and suicide/self-harm content.
Health and Well-Being 47 projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a sustainable internationally trading Earth Observation services sector in Ireland A disruptive micro-needle drug delivery platform. A disruptive gene therapy platform, replacing viruses in the treatment of genetic conditions. Combining rapid point-of-care diagnostics, AI, and machine learning to transform lung infection screening and diagnosis
Food 4 projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a sustainable internationally trading Earth Observation services sector in Ireland Combining targeted nutraceuticals and traceability technology for a smarter and sustainable Irish fish aquaculture industry. Cultivation of protein-rich biomass for the generation of health-enhancing plant-based ingredients.
Energy, Climate Action and Sustainability 10 projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a low-cost, high-performance sodium-ion smart battery system using entirely sustainable materials and processes. Development of a zero-emission, refrigerant-free heat pump. An advanced environmental decision support system to address issues, such as coastal pollution and flooding. Closed-loop, whole-cycle approach to reducing the carbon footprint of livestock.
Manufacturing 7 projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using AI to create fast cell analytics for bio-manufacturing. Micro-assembly of advanced electronic and photonic components for use in sensing and communication applications Develop 3-D printed, biocompatible, metallic components for the medical device industry
Innovation in Services & Business Processes 3 projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A control tower that provides full visibility of large construction sites and enables visual communication A blockchain and AI-enabled trustworthy and GDPR-compliant stratified clinical trials system.

Regional Enterprise Plans

Nine Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 were launched in 2022. These Plans focus on undertaking collaborative initiatives that can help strengthen the regional enterprise ecosystem thereby realising enterprise growth across all regions of the country.

Regional Enterprise Development Funding

The Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF), the Border Enterprise Development Fund (BEDF) and Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme (RETS) support the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects that can sustain and add to employment at county, regional and national level.

These funds which are administered by Enterprise Ireland, have been an effective instrument of policy particularly as a complement to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's Regional Enterprise Plans where it has served as an enabler for projects emerging from that regional collaborative process.

Between 2018 and 2020 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, through Enterprise Ireland, approved grants totalling over €126 million for 79 projects to drive regional enterprise development initiatives, under the REDF, the BEDF and RETS.

In response to the impact of inflation on construction projects during 2022, Enterprise Ireland launched €12 million in additional funding to support REDF/ BEDF construction projects. This **REDF/BEDF Addendum** funding was directed at projects which experienced Tender Price Inflation and related additional costs to fund their completion.

Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme

Following the publication of the new Regional Enterprise Plans and Government plans for new multiannual regional enterprise development funding from early 2023, Enterprise Ireland launched the Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme (REISS). The REISS was introduced to enable promoters to investigate and confirm early-stage concepts with potential for enterprise innovation and accelerate the progress of significant or disruptive

projects seeking to develop new innovative activities.

The REISS supports the development of potential innovative regional projects aligned with the objectives of the nine new Regional Enterprise Plans. In July 2022, 47 projects were approved feasibility and priming funding under the REISS with a total grant aid request of €3.4 million.

Under the REDF, BEDF, RETS, REISS and Addendum schemes over €140 million in approved grants have been secured by 127 innovative Regional enterprise projects between the years 2017 and 2022.

Green Transition Fund

The Green Transition Fund was officially launched by the then Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Leo Varadkar TD, Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality with responsibility for Law Reform, James Browne TD and Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity, Senator Pippa Hackett on 16th June 2022.

As part of the roll out of the fund, in Budget 2022, Government announced that €55 million would be made available under the National Recovery & Resilience Plan to assist enterprises through the Green Transition Fund. This budget is split into two streams, the **Enterprise Emissions Reduction Investment Fund** (€30 million) and the **Climate Planning Fund for Business** (€25 million) which will both run from 2022 and 2025.

From its launch in June until the end of 2022, over €2 million in funding was approved for approximately 150 companies for projects under the Green Transition Fund. Approximately €1.2 million was approved under the Climate Planning Fund for Business (CPFB), and over €800,000 approved under the Enterprise Emissions Reduction Investment Fund (EERIF).

National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan

In 2020, the Programme for Government – Our Shared Future committed to the development of a National SME Growth Plan, which would map out an ambitious long-term strategic blueprint beyond COVID-19.

The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar TD, established an SME Taskforce in September 2020, appointing a diverse

membership of entrepreneurs, business and agency representatives to deliver upon this commitment. The Taskforce's report, the **SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan**, was published on 21 January 2021.

In February 2021, a Ministerial-led **SME and Entrepreneurship Implementation Group**, was established to take forward the recommendations of the Taskforce, in conjunction with relevant Departments, Agencies and other stakeholders.

The Implementation Group identified ten priority areas within the Growth Plan in which to drive progress in 2022. They include: access to finance; digital transformation; increasing first time exporters; enhanced assistance for high-potential businesses; clustering and networks; SME management skills; reducing the regulatory burden on SMEs; delivery of a single portal for business information and assistance; ensuring comprehensive enterprise agency coverage for SMEs; and promoting SME participation in public procurement.

In 2022, the SME and Entrepreneurship Taskforce met in July and November, at which updates on progress made were provided.

In December a memorandum for information was brought to Government to report on the significant progress made to date under the 10 priority areas which include:

- The extension of the LEO mandate to work with companies with the potential to export and who have grown to more than 10 employees;
- Reducing the regulatory burden on small businesses through the rollout of the SME Test;
- The launch of the new Skills for Better Business tool to help small businesses improve SME management skills;
- An improved portal for business information and assistance which has recently gone live: www.supportingsmes.gov.ie;
- A new clustering framework;
- A range of new instruments launched in 2022 to improve access to finance and digitalisation

The work of the SME and Entrepreneurship Taskforce will continue into 2023.

Update on Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Activity

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), under the guidance of the Enterprise Ireland's LEO Centre of Excellence, completed a 9th year of consecutive

jobs growth and continued their mission to promote entrepreneurship and act as a "first-stop-shop" for those beginning a new business as well as those wishing to expand their existing one. In 2022 the 7,221 businesses supported by the LEOs provided employment to 37,863 people, and helped to create 7,870 new jobs, seeing a net increase in employment of 3,447.

The LEOs continue to provide a 'signposting' service to local businesses for all government supports available to the SME sector and can provide information/referrals to other relevant bodies under agreed protocols.

The LEOs continue to offer direct grant aid to SMEs in the manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors, which, over time, have the potential to develop into strong export entities. However, in November last year the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Leo Varadkar sought and received Government approval to implement the Programme for Government Commitment to extend the mandate of the Local Enterprise Offices. This sees the introduction in 2023 of a pilot framework allowing the Local Enterprise Offices to offer financial assistance to businesses with up to 50 employees who can demonstrate real export potential and who, with some additional support, could migrate to the Enterprise Ireland suite of supports.

The LEO Direct Grant assistance is offered alongside an extensive suite of high-quality management training and development supports and business productivity programmes which are tailored to meet specific business requirements. In 2022, LEOs provided 2,722 training Programmes to 43,873 participants.

In continued support of the government priority of decarbonisation, the Local Enterprise Offices continued their Green for Micro Programme which offers green transition advice and technical support to micro-enterprises. This support is free of charge for eligible enterprises and represents the potential for increased efficiencies within companies that adopt these principles. With climate change, changing regulations, rising resource costs and changing customer expectations adopting an eco-friendlier approach is the best way forward for business. The Local Enterprise Offices approved 416 Green for Micro projects in 2022, helping to prepare microenterprises for the low carbon, more resource efficient economy of the future.

Equally important is the need for small businesses to engage with and adopt digitalisation, in April 2022 the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment launched the Digitalstart programme as a pilot. The aim of Digitalstart is to help business owners or managers to prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across their businesses. The pilot phase attracted 155 applications and saw 24 projects completed and despite a somewhat slow start it is believed that the programme can provide significant value to LEO Clients as improving the digital capability of our many enterprises is a central tenet of the recently published White Paper on Enterprise 2022-2030.

Alongside this new assistance measure, the LEOs continued to provide a gateway to online trading through the Trading Online Voucher scheme (TOVS). It is crucial for Irish micro-enterprises to further develop their capacity to trade online and embrace the digital marketplace and the TOVS recognises that this need is greatest among the smallest businesses. The TOVS offers skills training, mentoring and financial support of up to €2,500 to help micro-enterprises to develop their ecommerce capability.

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)

Launched in 2021, SFI's strategy to 2025, Shaping Our Future, has been developed to unlock the potential of Irish research to meet current challenges, seize future opportunities and support the priorities outlined in the Programme for Government: Our Shared Future and National Development Plan.

By funding consistently excellent and impactful research, SFI has played a key role in building Ireland's research and innovation capabilities. From training highly sought after PhD students to supporting early career frontiers researchers and senior research leaders, SFI is working to attract and retain the best talent. This is delivering tangible benefits to Ireland today and into the future.

A feature of Shaping Our Future is enhanced collaboration. With additional support from the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science, SFI established a new partnership with the Irish Research Council, to deliver the SFI-IRC Pathways Programme. In August 2022, an investment of €28.5 million across 53 research projects to support Ireland's emerging research talent through this new partnership was announced.

Funding of €16.2 million for 15 collaborative projects aimed at increasing research capacity within the Technological Universities (TUs) and Institutes of Technology (IoTs) was announced in November 2022.

Collaborating with the Higher Education Institutes, government and industry, SFI supports the development of a wide range of inclusive STEM career pathways, creating a diverse scientific, research and innovation workforce which is welcoming to all. SFI aims to shape a cohesive and vibrant research ecosystem with a common purpose and vision.

Programme Activity

In line with its new strategy, in 2022, Science Foundation Ireland approved 324 new awards across 20 programmes with a total commitment value of €141 million. 20 of these awards include co-funding with other partners. Total payments to research bodies and organisations in 2022 were €213.4 million.

Key Areas of 2022

Minister Simon Harris TD, UK Minister for Science and Investment Security, Nusrat Ghani MP and Northern Irish Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Edwin Poots MLA, announced a historical €74 million (£64 million) investment to create new collaborative research centres across Ireland, Great Britain and Northern Ireland in October 2022. The call under the 'Co Centres: Collaboration for Transformative Research and Innovation' Programme opened in November and will focus on two thematic areas: Climate, and Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems. The findings of Creating Our Future, a unique national brainstorm that received more than 18,000 ideas on how to create a better future through research, were published in July 2022. The diverse breadth of public submissions on where research should be focused ranged from ideas on the environment, mental health, food and sustainable and green living, to housing, health, the arts, digital challenges, learning and development, and nurturing community.

In May of 2022, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, announced 76 grants valued at €53.7 million to support frontiers research across ten Higher Education Institutions through Science Foundation Ireland (SFI). The research supported will investigate areas such childhood ADHD, future

coastal sea levels, and new generation batteries, antiviral drugs to treat Covid-19 infections, safety critical software, the link between obesity and cancer and the futureproofing of crops to withstand flooding.

An ambitious academic, clinical and industry research programme that will provide new insights in our understanding of Motor Neuron Disease (MND), also known as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), was launched in March 2022 by then Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar TD. The research is supported by the Irish Government through a Science Foundation Ireland investment of €5 million which will be leveraged with an additional €5 million from industry partners.

The prestigious SFI St. Patrick's Day Science Medal recognises distinguished Irish scientists, engineers or technology leaders living and working in the USA, for their significant scientific contributions to academia and industry. In 2022, Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD, presented the Medal to Prof Donald McDonnell, Associate Director for Translational Research for the Duke Cancer Institute and Glaxo-Wellcome Professor of Molecular Cancer Biology at Duke University, North Carolina, and to John and Patrick Collison, founders of the finance software company, Stripe.

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD and Minister for Education Norma Foley TD announced an investment in 47 projects aimed at improving public understanding of science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) in June 2022. The funding, which totals €3.7 million, will be focused on encouraging diversity and inclusion in STEM, while also targeting a wide range of ages including young children, teens and adults. These projects received their funding through the SFI Discover Programme.

Programmes and Awards Highlights

In January 2022, €5.6 million in funding was awarded to Prof Subrata Ghosh, a global leader in research into Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, to establish a world-leading research lab at University College Cork (UCC).

Simon Harris TD announced 27 new academic and industry research collaborations on behalf of Science Foundation Ireland, valued at €2.1 million in April 2022. The SFI Industry RD&I Fellowships will support the temporary placement of academic researchers in 19 companies to undertake research projects across a

variety of areas including microbiology, virtual reality (VR), chatbots optimisation, biotechnology, coastal erosion, breast cancer, photodynamic therapy and more. The industry partners on these awards will provide co-funding with a combined value of €1.9 million.

In September 2022, Simon Harris, TD, announced an award of €3.2 million to the EYE-D research project into degenerative retinal diseases, led by researchers from Trinity College Dublin. Science Foundation Ireland will provide €1.3 million funding to EYE-D through the SFI Strategic Partnership Programme, matched by the project partners.

The network of 16 world-leading SFI Research Centres is making important scientific advances, enhancing enterprise and industry, training students with critical, in-demand skills, supporting regional development, and enhancing Ireland's international reputation. As of end 2022, the SFI Research Centres have signed 1,426 collaborative research agreements with 688 companies – 366 of which are Irish companies. 317 of the 688 companies are categorised as MNC, 340 as SME with the remainder being a mix of start-ups and "other" company categories.

Challenge based funding is a solutions-focused approach to research funding that empowers researchers to find solutions to societal and economic problems. Teams are inter- and trans-disciplinary – scientists, engineers and researchers from different domains working together with non-technical experts. SFI is operating a suite of Challenge based funding programmes. Announcements were made under several of these programmes during 2022.

- SFI-Defence Organisation Innovation Challenge - €2.4 million
- UN Sustainable Developments Goals – €2.47 million
- National Challenge Fund - €65 million
- SFI Future Innovator Prize - €2 million – Food Challenge
- SFI Future Innovator Prize - €2 million – Plastics Challenge

An investment of €53.3 million in 33 research infrastructure projects through the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Research Infrastructure Fund was announced in late 2022. The awards will contribute to the advancement of high-quality and high-impact research activities. Examples of projects include:

- National Soil Greenhouse Gas Test Platform, Teagasc, will provide a facility to examine the efficacy of a range of novel fertiliser, bio-actives, bio-stimulants, manure, and digestate additives.

- National Rechargeable Battery Fabrication and Test Facility, University of Limerick, co-funded by SEAI, is one-stop-shop for battery development, not present anywhere else in Europe. It will combine electrode fabrication, cell assembly, testing and state of the art materials characterization within one location for the first time within Ireland.
- MICROFERM, University College Cork, is a facility for rapid development of microbial bioprocesses for applications in the food and bio-economy sectors. It comprises four fermentation platforms at a micro-scale to enable simultaneous screening and testing of large numbers of strain and process variables.

372 schools across the country received the SFI Discover Science and Maths Award. Led by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), the programme aims to increase interest in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) among primary school students, parents, and teachers, nationwide in a fun and engaging way. The programme was rebranded to Curious Minds in 2022.

The winners of the prestigious 2022 Science Foundation Ireland Awards were revealed at the annual SFI Science Summit, held in person for the first time in two years. Joined by over 500 leading members of the Irish research community, SFI celebrated the contribution researchers have made to our society and economy. Professor Orla Hardiman, TCD, was announced as SFI Researcher of the Year 2022.

In late 2022, Ministers Simon Harris and Norma Foley announced €1.2 million in funding to extend the STEM Passport for Inclusion project. The project, led by Dr Katriona O'Sullivan at Maynooth University, addresses gender inequalities among female pupils in socially disadvantaged communities through an innovative programme of mentoring and education supports. The €1.2 million project will be funded jointly by the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Discover Programme (€300k), the Department of Education (€300k), and Microsoft Ireland (€600k).

2022 also saw continued collaborations with international partners such as the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institutes of Health (NIH), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and the Royal Society.

- Royal Society – six awards €3.5 million.
- EPSRC-SFI Joint Funding of Research - two awards €2 million.
- US-Ireland R&D Programme – seven awards €9 million.

In July, a further combined investment of €3m in the CoQREATE (Convergent Quantum Research Alliance in Telecommunications) US-Ireland R&D Partnership was announced to investigate technologies that will form the foundations of a quantum internet.

A new programme was launched in partnership with the US National Science Foundation. The SFI-NSF student mobility programme seeks to enable Irish based PhD students to collaborate on research projects in academic laboratories in the United States of America for a period of 4 weeks to 12 weeks.

Following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation SFI launched the SFI Supplemental Grant for Displaced Researchers – Ukraine programme. The scheme was brought about to encourage and enable holders of existing SFI grants, and their associated Host Institutions, to provide opportunities for displaced researchers from Ukraine to join and collaborate on existing SFI-funded grants in order to integrate swiftly into the Irish research system, to enable them to maintain continuity in their research career and to bring added benefit to the SFI grant from their expertise.

Higher Education

In 2022, a number of programmes and projects were advanced to deliver on ambitions for Ireland's higher education sector as outlined in National Strategic Outcome 5, A Strong Economy supported by Skills, Enterprise and Innovation. These projects will expand capacity in higher education institutions, will support a pipeline of talent and skills aligned with national and regional needs, and will also upgrade existing infrastructure to improve the campus environment – taking account of energy efficiency, as well as best practice in teaching and learning.

Higher Education Strategic Infrastructure Fund

Some €96 million in Exchequer support is being provided as co-funding towards five major projects under the Higher Education Strategic Infrastructure Fund of which one - the Technology Society and Innovation building in Maynooth University was completed and was officially opened by An Taoiseach at a ceremony in September 2022. A further project, the Extension to Central Campus (EO1 Project) at Atlantic Technological University (Sligo) commenced construction in 2021 and continued through construction in 2022.



Technology Society and Innovation building in Maynooth University

The remaining projects are as follows:

- UCC, Cork University Business School (CUBS) Project;
- University of Galway, Learning Commons Project and
- UCD, Future Campus Project.

These projects will expand capacity in line with demographic growth and skills needs, and are also leveraging non-Exchequer investment in higher education infrastructure. A second call for applications (HESIF II) was launched in 2022.

This year also saw the launch of the Technological Sector Strategic Projects Fund, aimed at the Technological Universities, with an indicative budgetary envelope of some €155 million (2022-25). Fourteen applications were received, with six successfully progressing to the next evaluation phase (together with three legacy projects) which necessitates submission of a Preliminary Business Case.

Other Higher Education Capital Projects Progressed

€70.7 million has been approved for co-funding of other significant projects being progressed through the pipeline in 2022. The projects are:

- DCU Polaris Building;
- TCD E3 Learning Foundry;
- TUD - Tallaght Sport Science Health and Recreation Building

- Department of Health National Children's Hospital (contribution to Higher Education elements); and
- Royal Irish Academy of Music Westland Row project.

The major Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) redevelopment project at Westland Row was substantially completed in 2022. The new 6,500 sq. meter space includes a purpose-built opera studio and rehearsal space; 75 teaching rooms featuring adjustable acoustics; a new state-of-the-art library to underpin an ambitious research agenda; a sonic arts hub for electronic music composition; a 60-seat tiered lecture hall; and a dedicated music therapy facility for people of all ages and needs.

Phase 2 will conclude in May 2023, when RIAM open a professional standard recital hall of over 300 seats, designed by acousticians Sounds Space Vision and theatre consultant Roger Spence.

The Dublin City University (DCU) Polaris Building, Trinity College Dublin (TCD) E3 Learning Foundry – Phase 1, and Technological University Dublin (TUD) Tallaght, Sport Science & Recreation Building, projects progressed on site in 2022.

Climate Action Plan - Energy Efficiency Decarbonisation and Pathfinder Programme

In 2022 a number of infrastructure-related initiatives under the Climate Action Plan were progressed; including the ongoing development of a Pathfinder programme for the Further Education and Training



Lecture Theatre at the Royal Irish Academy of Music

Sector, and these will be key in preparing the sector for larger scale energy efficiency and decarbonisation programmes.

An Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Pathfinder Programme 2020 was co-funded with Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) in order to test and demonstrate energy retrofit approaches, build scale, and inform key stakeholders. A total of eight projects with a Programme fund of up to €5.9 million (co-funded by the SEAI) in the initial phase were approved across the sector and progressed through various stages of design, planning and construction in 2021 and seven are nearing completion or at completion stage at year end 2022.

A new phase of the Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Pathfinder Programme (EEDPP) (Higher Education) was agreed in 2021 and a further eight projects have initially been progressed. The EEDPP 2021 (HE) aimed to consolidate the learnings from EEDPP 2020 and build on the solutions or pathways identified in the 'Higher Education Decarbonisation Pathways' Report. The programme made funding available for six pathways identified in the report with the aim of assisting key stakeholders to better understand how these pathways might be undertaken. Under the EEDPP 2021, HEIs were invited to submit proposals for retrofit works to existing buildings which were in line with the pathways identified in the Decarbonisation Report. Eight projects were successful under EEDPP 2021 and are currently at design stage. A new round of the EEDPP will be progressed in 2023.

Higher Education Infrastructure Upgrade and Refurbishment Fund

Projects have also been identified for funding under the Higher Education Infrastructure Upgrade and Refurbishment Fund. Projects range from small emergency works to large scale refurbishment works. The Higher Education Infrastructure Upgrade Programme saw the progression of eight projects through various stages of design, planning and construction in 2022 with a ninth project at the South East Technological University (Carlow) completed. A number of the projects provide for major strategic upgrades and energy efficiency improvements, including in ATU Sligo, Dundalk IT and the MTU Cork campus.

Higher Education PPP Projects

Eleven projects in the Technological University/ Institute of Technology sector continued to be progressed under the Higher Education Public Private Partnership Programme. These projects are strongly aligned to skills needs in the regions and will make a significant contribution to the realisation of dynamic Technological Universities – a key policy priority for Government. Approval to proceed with the Programme was provided by Government Decision in July 2020. The programme is split across two bundles. The contracts were signed in December 2022 for the Bundle 1 projects with the construction phase due to commence on site in January 2023. Bundle 2 of the Higher Education PPP Programme reached tender stage in 2022.

Grangegorman

Construction completion was achieved on the Grangegorman PPP project with the delivery of the East Quads in 2020 and Central Quad in 2021.

Together the Quads provide c.52, 000 sq. m of purpose built academic space, and allowed 10,000 TU Dublin students and 1,200 staff to vacate their former homes in Kevin Street and Cathal Brugha Street to bring life to the new buildings.

In addition, €12 million Exchequer funding was approved to support the second largest project in Programme III, namely the Academic Hub & Library, which began construction in 2022.

The opening of the historic Lower House, East Quad and Printmaking Workshop brought university life to the east side of the Grangegorman campus for the first time. The opening of the gateway at Broadstone Plaza further opened the campus allowing greater access to the site from the city.



Central Quad, Grangegorman

Devolved /Minor Works Funding

The 2022/2023 academic year Devolved Capital Grant allocation of €40 million, disbursed to the sector in July 2022, was split across seven universities, five Technological Universities, two Institutes of Technology and a number of other colleges to support small scale building works. This programme provides flexible capital funding to support small-scale building works including investments to support universal access, energy efficiency and decarbonisation upgrades, general ICT and equipment-related upgrades, health and safety works, and other building upgrades. Three smaller colleges, the Royal Irish Academy (RIA), the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS) and the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) were allocated a Devolved Capital Grant for the first time in 2022.

Apprenticeship Equipment

The Apprenticeship Expansion Programme 2021 received initial DFHERIS approval for an allocation of €10 million to enable an expansion in apprenticeship provision across the sector comprising fourteen projects. A further allocation of €4.6 million was approved by DFHERIS in July 2022 for five of the projects. By the end of 2022, eleven of the projects had been delivered.

Funding was also approved in 2022 for apprenticeship programmes identified to introduce Phase 6 electrical training in both ATU Donegal and MTU Kerry and for the introduction of Metal Fabrication training, across all three phases, to serve the Donegal area.

Further Education and Training (FET)

The NDP provided for the first time a dedicated capital envelope for the FET sector. Expenditure increased from €5.5 million in 2018 to €44.1 million in 2022.

This increased level of funding provided an opportunity to establish and support a range of programmes including:

- Targeted support of €5.1 million was provided during 2022 to support fifteen Apprenticeship applications providing for both additional capacity and new and to provide funding for minor capital projects and equipment renewal,
- Modernised apprenticeship syllabi, for off-the-job Phase 2 training in ETB training centres
- Devolved Capital Grant of just over €8 million was split across sixteen ETBs
- The progression of fifty one capital and emergency health and safety projects,
- The acquisition and development of a property in 2022 for Louth Meath ETB,
- Thirteen projects under the Strategic Infrastructure Upgrade Fund (SIUF), announced in February 2022, were approved for appointment of a design team.
- Capital support was approved for the provision of NZEB (Near Zero Energy Building) Centres of Excellence. Four NZEB capital projects were progressed in 2022 for Cork ETB, Limerick Clare ETB, Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB and Laois Offaly ETB.

FET College of the Future

Ten College of the Future (CotF) projects spread throughout Ireland were announced in 2022 and are currently at Preliminary Business Case stage



2.6

High Quality International Connectivity

As a small open economy, wider global challenges and the recovery and return to operations following COVID-19 continues to frame the context in which Ireland does business with the world. High quality international connectivity through our ports and airports is arguably more important now than ever.

With a view to enabling and ensuring the long-term ability for the Irish economy to rebound and grow, it is imperative that Dublin Airport has adequate capacity. Passenger numbers had grown by over 50 per cent since 2014 and so a pivotal investment in the early years of Project Ireland 2040 is the new North Runway. This project is the fulcrum of the future development of the Airport, which in turn is critical to the functioning of the Island economy.

2022 saw the delivery of Dublin Airport's new North Runway which is an investment by the DAA in a key piece of strategic national infrastructure for current and future generations in Ireland. Delivery of the project enhances capacity at Dublin Airport which will ensure that Dublin Airport can meet expected future demand. It will also facilitate enhanced connectivity to existing and emerging markets and benefit the aviation sector and wider economy.

The Shannon Airport Group has continued with development of its property portfolio in the Shannon Free Zone, assisting the IDA and EI in their drive for inward investment and increased employment in the region. The Shannon Airport Group continues to implement its business plan to redevelop and refurbish its core commercial properties at the Shannon Campus; construction and the development within the Shannon Free Zone is ongoing with a number of older properties having been upgraded and with the development of new high-grade

commercial/light industrial buildings offering superior property solutions for existing and potential tenants. The Group is currently working on a number of future projects which include further development opportunities as well as expansion for existing tenants seeking additional space.

The Shannon Airport Group is a key project partner in Future Mobility Campus Ireland (FMCI). FMCI is the first complete development centre and full-scale test bed in Ireland, based in the Shannon Industrial Estate.

The facility focuses on comprehensive mobility technologies that span both ground and air uses (for example autonomous driving, micro-mobility, smart cities, and unmanned drones). FMCI supports a range of parties, from individual researchers to multi-national corporations, as well as start-ups and government entities. FMCI assists organisations to conceive, develop, trial, and deploy transformative transport solutions locally in Shannon but relative globally.

The Shannon Airport Group is a founding partner of FMCI and has been a driving force in setting up the company along with providing significant contributions towards its establishment.

FMCI Testbed has seen Connected Autonomous Vehicle companies already start to locate in Shannon, for example, EXIDA and RENOVO Auto.



North Runway Dublin Airport

Throughout 2022 the Shannon Airport Group supported the development of FMCI new Control Centre investment, with refurbishment works on the new FMCI Control Centre, test car park area and estate infrastructure completed in 2022. The funding for FMCI is a Government initiative under Project Ireland 2040 and aligns with the Future Jobs Ireland framework.

Continued Exchequer support for smaller regional airports is provided under the Regional Airports Programme 2021-2025. In the period 2018 to 2022, over €29.5 million was provided towards the cost of capital projects at three airports: Donegal, Kerry and Ireland West Airport (Knock). This funding included support for projects such as a significant runway overlay project at Ireland West Airport, which was completed in 2019. In addition, due to the impact of COVID 19 on regional State airports and suppressed passenger numbers in 2020 and 2021, Exchequer funding was also provided to both Shannon and Cork regional State airports in 2022 under the Regional Airports Programme. In 2022, the Programme provided Shannon Airport with €4.4 million towards capital projects to ensure regulatory compliance in the areas of safety and security and funding of €5.5 million was provided to Cork airport to support safety and security projects including a significant runway overlay project. This runway project is considered to be a key strategic asset for the South of Ireland for the next 20 years.

In relation to ports, the Port of Cork Company's Ringaskiddy Redevelopment Project was completed and became operational in April 2022. The €90 million Cork Container Terminal (CCT) at Ringaskiddy was officially opened in September 2022. The new 360m-long quay has a 13m depth of water, meaning it is capable of handling some of the biggest container ships in the world, typically 300m long and 16 containers wide. The development will enable the Port to increase capacity and throughput, accommodate larger vessels and further develop it as an international gateway for trade. The completion of the project represents the first phase of the Port's Strategic Development Plan and capital investment program which will see new cargo handling equipment, an extension of the deep-water berth, and a further extension of Ringaskiddy over the coming years.

The project was part funded by the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) which is European grant funding along with finance from the European Investment Bank and Ireland Strategic Investment Fund.

Shannon Foynes Container Port

Shannon Foynes Port Company's (SFPC's) Infrastructure Development Programme is well underway and will consist of a jetty expansion program, the joining of the East and West Jetties and the infill behind, land purchase and 38-hectare site development for a new port logistics park at Foynes Port and the Foynes Rail Reinstatement. The investment programme will improve international connectivity and increase capacity through the construction of new quay walls and associated port infrastructure and external connectivity with the upgrade of the N69 and the reinstatement of the Limerick-Foynes rail line. The project has successfully been awarded European Grant funding from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). In addition, in accordance with its Masterplan, Vision 2041, SFPC has commenced pre-planning for a new 800m deep water berth with 18m draught alongside at Foynes. This infrastructure will also enable SFPC operate as a marshalling port for offshore wind, providing the necessary port capacity requirements for floating offshore wind on the Atlantic coast. The future development of the Deepwater Port at Foynes Island will provide both offshore wind integration services as well as a Neo-Panamax-capable container terminal providing the required capacity to expand the container business at the inner Port of Foynes.

€64 million of Exchequer funding was provided to Iarnród Éireann in 2022 to undertake rehabilitation works on the Foynes – Limerick freight line. Subject to funding allocation it is expected that works to reinstate the line will take 18 months to complete, and it is anticipated that the route will open for freight services in 2025.

Dublin Port is progressing implementation of its Masterplan 2040 in order to ensure that the Port can provide for future sustainable growth and changes in facilitating seaborne trade in goods and passenger movements to and from Ireland and the Dublin region in particular. This will see significant investment over the next 10 years in essential port infrastructure and facilities. The works are being part funded by the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) funding and European Investment Bank finance.

Approximately 25 per cent of the overall project has been completed to date, with considerable work already completed on the Alexandra Basin Redevelopment Works. The company are also commencing on elements of the MP2 project.



The new deep-water Cork Container Terminal in Ringaskiddy

Dublin Port Company has now secured all of the planning permissions required for the major development works planned on the northern side of the port under ABR and MP2. The company is also progressing the third and final Masterplan project, the 3FM project, with the commencement of the pre-planning stage and in particular the preparation of the detailed project design and the environmental impact reports. The company envisages lodging a planning application with An Bord Pleanála in early 2023.

In line with the Strategic Masterplan for Rosslare Europort, Iarnród Éireann and Rosslare are investing in customer facilities, port infrastructure, freight facilities, port assets, new technology and linking the new entrance of the port with a proposed new port access road. Additionally, to support the free flow of import and export trade through Rosslare to GB, plans are underway by the OPW to progress the construction of permanent State Agency facilities within the Port for the regulatory controls required by the State post Brexit.

Rosslare Europort and Irish Rail are also progressing plans for the development of largescale facilities at the port for the development of offshore renewable energy and anticipate that they will lodge a planning application in 2023.



2.7

Enhanced Amenity and Heritage

Project Ireland 2040 recognises cultural heritage infrastructure as an essential component for sustainable, attractive and liveable cities, towns, villages and rural areas.

In 2022 the following infrastructural developments were completed by Waterways Ireland and its partners under the Shannon Tourism Masterplan:

- Athlone Slipway Development, Co Westmeath.
- New Jetties and Canoe Launch Athlone, Co. Roscommon.
- New Jetties and Canoe Launch at Red Bridge, Ballymahon, Co. Longford.
- New Jetties at Rooskey, Co. Leitrim.
- Blueway Accreditation on Lough Derg Blueway.

Natural Heritage

A key pillar of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's Project Ireland 2040 investment programme is continued investment in our natural heritage.

In terms of our National Parks and Nature Reserves, Project Ireland 2040 investment consists of an ongoing series of investments in maintenance and upgrading of the 87,000 hectare network of sites. Individual projects are targeted at tackling invasive species and enhancing conservation, improving visitor facilities and information, improved signage, as well as developing and maintaining new and existing trails and walkways, including the development of new routes.

Wexford Wildfowl Reserve Re-Opens

After closing its doors in March 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions, Wexford Wildfowl Reserve Visitor Centre is re-opened with an enhanced visitor experience.

A new, fully accessible walking trail of circa 500m allows access around the enclosed area of the Visitor Centre ponds. More picnic benches make a trip to the Centre a chance to relax and enjoy nature, whether you're a keen birdwatcher, photographer or just someone seeking a quiet escape from the stresses of the day. The trail creation is the initial stage of the redevelopment of the Visitor Centre grounds. The Visitor Centre (with its display area and observation tower) and the grounds (with short trail and birdwatching hide) will be open four days a week.

Conservation Measures in the Natura 2000 Network

In 2022, the Nature Conservation Directorate of NPWS was established and a new conservation measures programme commenced in Natura 2000 sites. A single pilot conservation measures project was completed under the new programme and a further 32 conservation measures projects are under way covering 26 Natura 2000 sites. The projects covered a wide range of types of conservation measures including, for example, removal of laurel in an oak woodland and the renovation of a Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) roost both in Special Areas of Conservation.



Wexford Wildfowl Reserve Visitor Centre and Observation Tower

Conservation and Restoration of Peatlands

In 2022 restoration works were undertaken across 6 raised bog Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Natural Heritage Areas. In addition, preparatory works including the installation of hydrological monitoring equipment have been undertaken across a further 12 raised bog SACs and NHA's with restoration works continuing across the raised bog network in 2023.



Bunding and peat dams installed on Cloncrow bog NHA, Co. Westmeath

LIFE Projects

Two major EU LIFE projects, LIFE IP –PAF Wild Atlantic Nature, which aims to improve Ireland's performance in conserving habitats, particularly blanket bog, and LIFE Atlantic Crex, which focuses on improving the conservation status of the Corncrake continued to progress in 2022. Also in 2022, NPWS was the Coordinating Beneficiary for LIFE on Machair, a major project focussing on coastal habitats which will launch in 2023. NPWS is also participating in two other LIFE projects, LIFE Lough Carra and LIFE Insular. A LIFE Irish Strategic Nature Project (SNaP) application submitted in 2022 was not successful at the full proposal stage and an amended application will be submitted in 2023.

Scientific Programme

This expenditure goes to scientific survey of habitats and species listed in the EU Habitats Directive, as well as all bird species that occur in the State. Work is spread over a six year cycle to lead into detailed scientific reports to the EU on the status of these habitats and species. The most recent reports were submitted in 2019 and a new cycle of work is underway.

Zoos

The Department is required to carry out inspections and licensing of establishments with collections of wild species that are open to the public, ranging from large zoos to smaller collections as well as aquaria. The work of inspecting is ongoing and is contracted to zoo management experts.

Support to the National Biodiversity Data Centre

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is a national centre that collects and manages data on Ireland's biodiversity, to document Ireland's wildlife resource and to track how it is changing over time. It is a programme of the Heritage Council, operated on contract. The Centre holds over four million records on 16,000 species, and provides these to its many stakeholders through a range of media channels. The NPWS provides approximately €450,000 p.a. to the Heritage Council in support of this work, in addition to supporting a range of additional projects managed by the NBDC.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is a national centre that collects and manages data on Ireland's biodiversity, to document Ireland's wildlife resource and to track how it is changing over time. The Centre holds over four million records on 16,000 species, and provides these to its many stakeholders through a range of media channels. In 2022 the Scientific Advice and Research Directorate of the National Parks and Wildlife service provided €735,000 in funding to the NBDC (€550k core and €185k non-core activities). Final Government approval was sought and granted in November 2022 to establish the NBDC as a company limited by guarantee (CLG) subject to oversight by the Heritage Council.

National Monuments Service and Built Heritage

In 2022, €8 million in funding was provided to assist with the conservation and restoration of our built heritage across the country: grants of €4 million were provided each to the Historic Structures Fund and the Built Heritage Investment Scheme. Additionally, the Heritage Council was supported to invest €2 million in the heritage-led renewal of town centres through the Historic Towns Initiative (HTI). In 2022, €6 million in funding was allocated to the Community Monuments Fund. This funding invests in our valuable archaeological heritage and helps safeguard monuments in to the future for the benefit of communities.

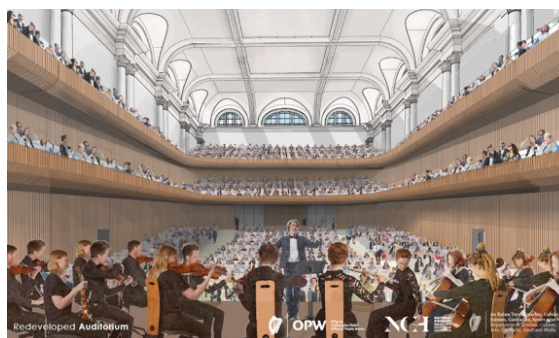
National Cultural Institutions Investment Programme

The Department continues to implement the National Cultural Institution Capital Investment Programme under the National Development Plan. The plan commits to investing €460 million in our National Cultural Institutions over the ten years of the NDP and, on this basis, a number of projects were advanced in 2022, including the following:

- Work continues on the final business case preparation for the redevelopment of the Crawford Art Gallery in Cork including further exhibition and office spaces. These plans include the integration of the Crawford Art Gallery into the wider urban regeneration initiative at Opera Lane and the creation of a cultural plaza. The project was submitted for planning in November 2022 and the project received a formal grant of planning permission in March 2023.
- The Government announced approval in principle of the preliminary business case for the redevelopment of the National Concert Hall in December 2022. This major project will upgrade 16,300m² of the Earlsfort Terrace site, much of which pre-dates the foundation of the State. This project will protect and restore this unique heritage asset while also creating the necessary facilities for a greatly expanded National Concert Hall.
- The preliminary business case for the redevelopment of the Natural History Museum was approved to proceed to planning and detailed design stage. A particular focus of the project is

to address long-standing issues with accessibility, to restore the building fabric, and to enhance the visitor experience, telling important stories of our biodiversity and to showcase the unique heritage building.

- Progression, under the Public Spending Code, in developing strategic assessment reports and preliminary business cases for other significant institutions, such as IMMA, the National Museum's Collection Resource Centre and the Chester Beatty library.



NCH – Redeveloped Auditorium*



NCH – Catered Public Spaces*

Cultural Heritage – Digitisation

Over €1.3 million was disbursed through the Cultural Digitisation Scheme in 2022, which will preserve and enhance the accessibility of our cultural heritage. €360,000 was provided during the year towards the digitisation of the 1926 Census and €96,600 was provided for National Library digitisation projects.

A flagship initiative under this scheme is the commitment to invest in the Beyond 2022 digitisation and research project led by Trinity College Dublin which was progressed further during the year (€872,000 in funding was provided). This project seeks to rediscover and restore much of the archival material lost in the destruction of the Public Record Office in 1922.

*Image: OPW Images, Grafton Architects

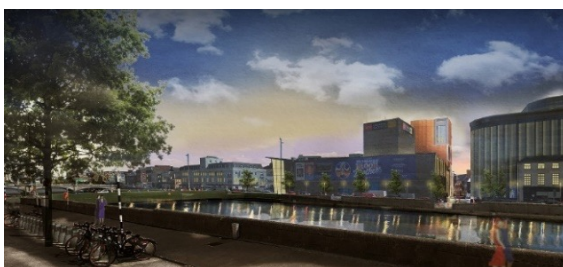


**Maoinchiste Annála
Samhalta na hÉireann**
Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland

The Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland (an outcome of this five-year State funded programme of research) was launched on in June 2022. The project has combined historical investigation, archival conservation, and technical innovation, to re-imagine and recreate through digital technologies, the Public Record Office of Ireland, which was destroyed on 30th June 1922 in the opening engagement of the Civil War. This project was endorsed by the Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations who identified it as key legacy project of the Decade of Centenaries Programme 2012-2023. It was supported through a capital grant allocation of €2.5 million from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, under Project Ireland 2040.



*CAG Emmet Place Artistic Impression**



*CAG Pope's Key Artistic Impression**

Led by Trinity College Dublin, this all-island and international collaborative research project has recreated, to a greater extent than anticipated, the record collections lost in the destruction of the Public Record of Ireland in the opening engagement of the Civil War on the 30 June 1922. The outcome of the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland has far surpassed the original expectations in terms of the scale of resources now committed by national and international partners and the reception and the

engagement the work has received.

From working with five core partners (the National Archives, the National Archives (UK), the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, the Irish Manuscripts Commission, and the Library of Trinity College Dublin), there has also been unprecedented engagement from over seventy archives, libraries and museums around the world.

The digital content publicly available and fully-searchable at the end of 2022, exceeded 60 million words of text (over 20 per cent more than anticipated), and includes an extensive collection of over 6,000 historical maps of Ireland whose inclusion was not anticipated at the time of launch.

Extensive conservation and listing work has been completed on the 1922 Salvaged Records during the year. These are the precious archival survivors pulled from the rubble in 1922. Arising from this successful collaboration a new 'community of conservation practice' has developed between the Core Partners project, another unexpected legacy from the project.

Other key achievements from the project include an open-access Web3D reconstruction of the ruined Public Record Office of Ireland, which allows visitors to experience the impressive Record Treasury for the first time in a century. This 3D model is an interactive showcase for the project's research. The Knowledge Base for Irish History, which will allow for greater engagement and understanding of the resources, was also published. An extensive outreach programme was also developed and carried out during the year including public talks, academic papers and media interviews.

Three Gold Seams, which is triple the number initially projected, were also launched in 2022. A 'Gold Seam' describes a particularly rich collection of replacement materials. Ranging from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries these are the Medieval Exchequer papers, Cromwellian Surveys and the 1766 Religious Census. These Gold Seams are three of a number of collections that have been identified as been of particular significance.

The launch of the Virtual Treasury attracted extensive media coverage in print, broadcast and online from across the island of Ireland and global including audiences in Britain, Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Over 11 million readers and viewers were reached nationally and 268 million globally.

*OPW Images

The Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland was also the recipient of a number of awards including the prestigious Roger Ellis Prize awarded by the Archives and Records Association, UK & Ireland. Beyond 2022 was also recognised with three nominations: The Trinity Innovation Award for Societal Good which was awarded to the programme director in November 2022; The AI Ireland, Nomination in the Category of Society Good in Artificial Intelligence, November 2022 and the Spider Awards, Digital for Good, Shortlist, December 2022.

In December 2022, an allocation of €3.6M was approved for Phase III (2023–2025), of Beyond 2022: The Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland. This will facilitate further research and fresh collaborations with new partners expanding the collections in the Virtual Treasury which will be made freely accessible to all.

Sport Facilities

The Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF) was launched in 2018 to provide support for larger sports projects where the level of exchequer support is greater than that available under the Sports Capital Expenditure Programme (see details of the SCEP under NSO 3). The fund initially focused on the requirements and development plans of National Governing Bodies of sport and Local Authorities. Following a detailed assessment process, provisional and formal allocations of €86.3 million have been announced for 33 successful applicants. A number of projects have commenced, while the majority of the projects are undergoing examination of economic analyses and financial workings or completing legal formalities before commencing on site.



National Velodrome and Badminton Centre



National Velodrome and Badminton Centre

The National Sport Campus

In November 2022, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to the phased delivery of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus and approved a new masterplan for its future development. The masterplan provides the framework for the long-term development of the campus over the next 15-20 years incorporating world-class sporting facilities for elite athletes, facilities for recreational and community use, office accommodation for National Governing Bodies and athlete accommodation. The vision for the campus is that it will be a local, national and international centre for sporting excellence within Ireland, the home for the development of athletes and a focal point for the promotion of sport, health and wellbeing within the community.

The National Velodrome and Badminton Centre is one of the first projects expected to be delivered under the masterplan. The objective of this project is to contribute to the success of high performance programmes and to increase participation in both track cycling and badminton, with positive impacts for both national pride and social well-being. In December 2022, Fingal County Council notified Sport Ireland of its decision to grant planning permission. Final grant of planning was awarded in January 2023.

Tourism

Project Ireland 2040 recognises cultural heritage infrastructure as an essential component for sustainable, attractive and liveable cities, towns, villages, and rural areas. Tourism development plays a key role in enhancing amenity and heritage (NSO 7) around the country, in conjunction with its role in strengthening rural economies and communities (NSO 3).

As noted under NSO 3 of this report, Fáilte Ireland has developed a series of strategic partnerships with key State bodies (OPW and Department of Housing,

Local Government and Heritage; NPWS; Coillte; and Waterways Ireland) that own and manage attractions and sites considered to be of vital importance to tourism.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) in Partnership with DRCD

Since 2018 Fáilte Ireland has a partnership in place with DRCD on the funding of that Department's Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme. Fáilte Ireland continues to collaborate with DRCD on the evaluation of the ORIS Scheme and the roll out of previous years investments. Collaboration is ongoing with regard to the opportunities for tourism recreation infrastructure within the scheme.

Amenity and Heritage Related Projects Advanced in 2022

Despite a second year of COVID-19 restrictions, work continued on the following Fáilte Ireland-funded amenity and heritage projects:

- The Shannon Tourism Masterplan (developed under strategic partnership between Fáilte Ireland and Waterways Ireland and in collaboration with the 10 Local Authorities along the navigation) was launched in March 2021. The Plan sets out an ambitious roadmap with 120 actions to support the Shannon to become an iconic visitor experience for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. In 2022, new mooring and cruise berths were completed at Redbridge, Co Longford, Rooskey, Co Longford and at two locations in Athlone, Co Westmeath. Work commenced on the redevelopment of Connaught Harbour in 2022 and is scheduled for completion in Q2 2023. This will see the addition of 40 additional cruise berths, enhanced public realm, trail head for the Hymany Way on the Beara Breifne Way, campervan facilities as well as a blueway connection from Connaught Harbour to Castle Harbour and an off road pedestrian linkage to the town.
- Significant progress was made on the Beara Breifne Trail Audit Plan, once the COVID-19 lockdowns ended in May 2021. Work is well

underway on the Interpretation, Wayfinding and Branding strategies which will ensure the development of the trail as an internationally motivating long distance walking trail. The Beara Breifne Way Trail Audit, Interpretation and Wayfinding Plan was completed in 2022. The Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan is currently being finalised.

- Work continued on development of the Dublin Visitor Orientation Programme, which includes the creation of a coastal trail to encourage visitors to explore and experience the Dublin coastline.
- As noted under NSO 3 in this report, Fáilte Ireland and Coillte also progressed the International Mountain Biking Proposition for rural Ireland, and Fáilte Ireland continues to work with DRCD on the Walks Scheme and with the National Parks and Wildlife Service on enhancing and expanding the visitor experience of national parks.

In addition to the above projects, Fáilte Ireland also progressed its strategic partnership with the OPW and Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. This led to the completion and opening of a tourism development at the Customs House, Dublin, in 2021. Three further projects were completed in 2022 under this partnership – visitor centres at Knowth in Co. Meath, Céide Fields in co. Mayo, and the Blaskets Centre in Co. Kerry. A further nine projects remain under development with the OPW/DHLGH under the strategic partnership.

Urban Animation Scheme

Fáilte Ireland's Urban Animation Capital Investment Scheme is a pilot capital grants scheme for Local Authorities. Launched in April 2021, this scheme is aimed at supporting sustainable tourism development through public realm and urban animation projects that have the potential to transform and re-imagine urban centres for visitors and communities. Following a competitive assessment process, €4.2 million in funding was awarded to urban animation projects in six counties, where the local stories, culture and heritage will be brought to life through a variety of large-scale outdoor performance spaces, public art and light installations. Funding has been awarded to:

- **Cork City Council** (€673,310): Five impactful public art works at locations across the city centre; the GPO, Exchange buildings, Carey's Lane, Cook St. & Coal Quay and Cornmarket St., will create a trail highlighting Cork's collective culture and heritage.

- **Dublin City Council** (€847,487): A flexible cultural hub at Smithfield Square will include a carousel, an outdoor gallery (including media screens to promote upcoming cultural events), an outdoor performance space and a multi-functional indoor space which can be used by creative organisations.
- **Galway City Council** (€1,030,834): A signature lighting installation at Woodquay Park featuring a hand carved steel sphere will reflect the stories and traditions of Galway alongside a traditional Galway Hooker and intimate performance space.
- **Kilkenny County Council** (€439,875): Installations at five locations across the city will reflect Kilkenny's medieval heritage, culture and creativity including a Cartoon Saloon Mural at Watergate Performance Space, an upcycled Copper Tank at Brewhouse Square at the Abbey Quarter, a sculpture adjacent to Riverside Park, digital Culture Screens and lighting of the Butterslip and Market Slip to encourage visitors to the newly developed Market Square outdoor dining experience.
- **Louth County Council** (€672,208): Five landmark buildings and structures in Drogheda's historic streetscape will be brought to life to tell the myths and legends associated with the River Boyne through lighting installations and street art: Barlow House, St. Peter's Church, Millmount, St. Laurence's Gate, Scotch Hall and The Boyne Viaduct.
- **Waterford City and County Council** (€539,275): City of Lights – 21 illumination installations across Waterford City will connect the City's four zones: Viking Triangle, Cultural Quarter, Retail Spine and Apple Market.

By Q4 2023, four projects will be successfully completed thereby enhancing and reimagining urban centres for both the local community and visitors alike. Two further projects will be completed by Q4 2024, bringing the scheme to a close.



2.8

Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society

This remains the single largest investment priority under Project Ireland 2040. The investment priorities in this area represent a step-change in Ireland's delivery of climate-action objectives which are designed to place a decarbonisation pathway to 2030 and are consistent with the adoption of a net zero target in Ireland by 2050.

2.8 | Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate Resilient Society

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, enacted in July 2021, commits Ireland to a 51 per cent reduction in our overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 at the latest, compared to our 2018 levels, and to achieving net zero emissions no later than 2050. This landmark legislation sets a legally binding framework for Ireland to achieve the national climate objective of a transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy no later than 2050. Our climate commitments are fully in line with the European Union's similarly ambitious targets. As part of the European Green Deal, the EU has committed to reduce its emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

The net-zero transition requires a targeted balance between Exchequer-supported expenditure, taxation measures, regulation and behavioural change. The investment priorities included in this NSO must be delivered in order to contribute to meeting the targets set out in the current and future Climate Action Plans, and to contribute to achieving our climate objectives. The investment priorities represent a decisive shift towards the achievement of a decarbonised society, demonstrating the Government's commitment to securing a carbon neutral future.

Key developments in 2022 include:

- The preparation and introduction, under the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, of Ireland's first ever Carbon Budget programme (April 2022) and Sectoral Emission Ceilings (July 2022)
- Publication of the Climate Action Plan 2023
- Ireland's first Maritime Area Consents were granted to the first phase of seven offshore renewable energy projects by the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications as part of the new Maritime Area Consent regime provided for under the Maritime Area Planning (MAP) Act 2021.
- Two projects – supporting a large-scale peatlands restoration project and a residential retrofitting loan guarantee scheme – included in Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, co-funded

by the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility and Exchequer funding.

- Over 5,000 hectares of Bord na Móna peatlands were rehabilitated in 2022 as part of the Enhanced Decommissioning, Rehabilitation and Restoration Scheme, funded via the National Recovery and Resilience Plan as part of the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility. This is one of the largest peatland rehabilitation projects in Europe with over 10,000 hectares rehabilitated to date.
- Announcement of grant schemes to assist homeowners with home energy upgrade projects as part of the National Residential Retrofit Plan.
- Publication of a Climate Action Framework for the Commercial Semi-State Companies.
- The Tallaght District Heating Scheme, supported by the Climate Action Fund, became operational.
- Launch of Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan 2023-2027 including €1.5 billion in funding for Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES).
- Government approval of the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.
- 27,200 home energy upgrades were supported in 2022, compared to 15,246 in 2021, representing a 79 per cent increase year-on-year.
- Continued implementation of the €60 million Community Climate Action Programme from Climate Action Fund (CAF) to empower local communities in the transition to a net zero emissions future, including the development of a sub-stream involving €3 million funding from the Shared Island Fund.
- The first Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auction for onshore wind and solar projects was held in 2020 with 63 projects progressing through delivery milestones in 2021 representing a combined 1,049 MW of new renewable generation. The second RESS auction results were approved by government in June 2022 with 2,748 GWh successful, equating to over 400 MW of onshore wind and over 1,500 MW of solar.
- ESB Networks invest approximately €800m per annum, which is due to grow over the years ahead as the energy transition accelerates. By the end of 2022, they successfully installed 1.1 million smart meters across Ireland and with the commitment to have 2.4 million smart meters installed by the end of 2024. They have 3,500 employees working in all parts of the country delivering a safe and resilient network.

- ESB has a joint venture, Future Energy Ireland, with Coillte to develop wind farms. Three wind farm projects (net ESB capacity 110MW) have secured planning consent and have been accepted into the ECP2.3 grid capacity allocation process.
- Engagement with over 4,500 stakeholders and people from across Irish society through the 2022 National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA) promoting public participation in the Climate Action Plan 2023.

The Climate Action Plan 2023 setting out the actions, measures, policies and plans to meet the emission reduction targets required by our Carbon Budgets and Sectoral Emission Ceilings was published in December 2022, and the supplementary Annex of Actions was published in March 2023. The Plan contains 346 actions, that Ireland must implement to meet our emission reduction targets and to achieve net zero emissions no later than 2050. The climate actions identified are being implemented by 18 Government Departments and up to 60 agencies under the remit of those Departments, requiring a deep level of collaboration across Government.

Climate Action Fund

The Climate Action Fund was established on a statutory basis with effect from 1 August 2020. It is resourced from proceeds from the levy paid to the National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA) in respect of relevant disposals of petroleum products, after the funding requirements of NORA have been met, as well as income from the Energy Efficiency National Fund and Official Air travel Offsets. At least €500 million is expected to accrue to the Climate Action Fund to 2027.

The Climate Action Fund - EU LIFE Programme 2021 Co-financing Grant Scheme was launched in September 2021. Under the scheme, the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications issued approval-in-principle to co-finance projects, with a total budget of €4 million. Final approval for this funding was subject to projects securing funding under the EU LIFE Programme 2021. To date, one project has been successful and was approved for up to €1.5 million support from the Climate Action Fund subject to contract.

The Community Climate Action Programme was launched in November 2021. This Programme will see €60 million from the Climate Action Fund invested in

community climate action projects and initiatives, as well as capacity building. The Programme will support and empower communities to shape and build low carbon, sustainable communities in a coherent way. The Programme will roll out in two phases with €30 million allocated for the first phase. The first phase is comprised of two strands:

- **Strand 1 - Action: Building Low Carbon Communities** - €24 million is being provided from the CAF to local authorities to support communities, large and small, rural and urban, to build low carbon communities in a considered and structured way. There is also an additional €3 million available from the Shared Island fund for similar all-island or cross-border projects.
- **Strand 2 - Education: Climate Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing.** A total of €5 million was provided to build community capacity in relation to climate action. The 18 successful projects were announced by the Minister in October 2022 and the projects have moved to implementation. Under strand 2 €1 million was allocated the first round of Creative Climate Action, which is joint initiative with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. A further €1.5 million from the CAF was allocated towards a second phase worth €3 million.

National Just Transition Fund

The National Just Transition Fund¹ is a key pillar of the Government's plan for the Midlands region. The Government is committed to a just transition in the Midlands region and has dedicated significant funding to supporting workers, companies and communities affected by the ending closure of the peat-fired power stations and the end of peat harvesting by Bord na Móna. The focus is on retraining workers and generating sustainable employment in green enterprise across the region.

There was a call for applications in 2020 to support communities transitioning to a low carbon economy. Funded projects are diverse and cover a range of opportunities for the region, including new enterprise hubs, supporting local business development, tourism and heritage projects, and opportunities for reskilling. 56 Just Transition Fund projects have been approved costing €32.5 million and with grant support of €22 million.

1 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ed10d-just-transition-fund/>

EU Just Transition Fund

The EU Just Transition Fund (EUJTF) is a fund for the 2021-2027 period which aims to address the adverse socio-economic effects of the climate transition by supporting the most affected territories and workers and ensuring a fair transition. The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and EMRA developed a Territorial Just Transition Plan and EU JTF Programme which were approved by Government and the European Commission in December 2022.

The Territorial Plan and EUJTF Programme² designates the Midlands Territory most impacted by the ending of peat extraction for energy production. This includes the entire counties of Laois, Longford, Offaly, Roscommon, Westmeath, and municipal districts of Ballinasloe (Co. Galway), Athy and Clane-Maynooth (Co. Kildare), and Carrick-on-Suir and Thurles (Co. Tipperary).

The EU JTF Programme sets out the investment priorities and planned allocation of up to €169 million (€84.5 million EU funding and €84.5 million Exchequer funding) which will be focused on three priorities, including:

- generating employment by investing in the diversification of the local economy
- supporting the restoration and rehabilitation of degraded peatlands and the regeneration and repurposing of industrial heritage assets
- Providing former peat communities with smart and sustainable mobility options to enable them to benefit directly from the green transition.
- The Programme is being managed by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA).

Bord na Móna Peatlands Restoration

Up to € 108 million was approved in November 2020 for Bord na Móna's large-scale peatlands restoration project. This is funded via the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, funded by the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility. This project and the National Parks and Wildlife Service Peatlands Scheme will support up to 350 jobs (or 230 full-time equivalents) over the lifetime of the schemes, with 215 jobs supported on the Bord na Móna large-scale peatlands restoration project in 2022.

Climate Research

EPA Research Call was launched on 14 April 2022. 42 awards were made by December 2022 (commitment of €10.75 million (inclusive of co-funding)) across climate, circular economy, natural environment, and health themes, with 13 new projects awarded under the Addressing Climate Change Evidence Needs Research Hub (i.e. €3.1 million of the €10.75 million (inclusive of co-funding) relates to commitments made under the Climate Hub). In addition, 23 awards made in 2022 were projects in other thematic areas with climate co-benefits (commitments of € 5.6 million).

102 Climate Research projects were ongoing at the end of 2022 (not including those projects in other thematic areas with climate co-benefits), of which 20 were in final completion stage.

Decarbonising Energy

The target of delivering up to 80 per cent of Ireland's electricity from renewable sources by 2030 will play a central role, not only in meeting the emission reduction targets for the electricity sector, but will be critical to accelerating the reduction of overall economy-wide emissions through the displacement of emissions in other sectors, including the transport sector through electrification of vehicles and in our homes, industry, and public and commercial buildings through electrification of heat.

Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) - Onshore

The first Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auction for onshore wind and solar projects was held in 2020 with 63 projects progressing through delivery milestones in 2021 and 2022 representing a combined 1,049 MW of new renewable generation.

Over 1,900 MW of renewable generation was secured in the second RESS auction in 2022. 75 projects were contracted, representing over 400 MW of onshore wind and over 1,500 MW of solar, to be delivered by year-end 2024. This offers a potential increase of nearly 20 per cent in Ireland's renewable energy generation.

² <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4d421-eu-just-transition-fund/>

Government is committed to frequent auctions and an acceleration of the connection of new renewables to the grid. In that regard the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications published an indicative RESS auction schedule in December 2021 and will be publishing an updated RESS auction schedule shortly. This will give confidence to industry by providing clear pathways for renewable developers to plan and develop their projects, ensuring a strong project pipeline.

The Government supports community ownership of renewable electricity generation assets through the creation of a community category in each of the first two RESS auctions.

Micro-generation Support Scheme

The Micro-generation Support Scheme was approved by Government in December 2021, as a mechanism to enable the deployment of up to 380 MW of new renewable generation capacity. The phased introduction of supports commenced in 2022 with capital grants for domestic applicants and non-domestic applicants, for installations up to 6.0 kW in size.

In 2022, 46.5 MW of solar PV was installed, comprising 10,018 installations supported by grants from the SEAI, saving over 12,200 tons of CO₂ emissions.

The Clean Export Guarantee (CEG) tariff also became available in February 2022 for micro-and small-scale generators in Ireland, which allows them to receive payment from their electricity supplier for all excess renewable electricity they export to the grid. This remuneration will reflect the wholesale market value of the electricity.

National Smart Metering Programme

The National Smart Metering Programme (NSMP) is co-ordinated by the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU) with ESB Networks delivering the electricity meter rollout. By the end of 2022, over 1.1 million smart meters were installed. Ireland has now achieved a critical mass. The NSMP will install over 2.4 million meters by 2025 and in the process make available new products and services to energy consumers. In addition, over 33,700 customers with registered micro-generation installations now have

smart meters that have enabled them to measure the electricity they export to the grid so that they can benefit from a micro-generation tariff from their electricity supplier.

Offshore Renewable Energy

The establishment of offshore wind in Ireland is a significant undertaking, involving action across many areas of Government. In that regard, a cross-Departmental Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce was established by Minister Ryan in April 2022 to accelerate and drive delivery and capture the wider and longer term economic and business opportunities associated with the development of offshore renewables in Ireland.

The Taskforce is chaired by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and its membership comprises senior officials from the Government Departments and Agencies that are vital to the delivery of Ireland's ORE ambitions.

One of the main objectives of the Taskforce is the development of a consolidated plan (the Offshore Wind Energy Programme), collating all activities underway across departments and agencies to ensure delivery of offshore wind and related targets.

Up to 2030, Ireland has targeted up to 7 GW of renewable energy generation (including 2 GW dedicated to green hydrogen production), mostly along shallower East and South coast regions. 2022 saw an advancement of Phase I deployment as well as significant work to establish Phase II deployment in the form of a plan-led enduring regime. This plan-led model aims to maximise the potential of offshore renewable energy with generation deployment located with sensitivity to both system demand and export potential, while solidifying the long-term security of supply in our energy system.

The Maritime Area Planning (MAP) Act, 2021, has introduced significant reform to enable the sustainable development of our offshore resource. It provided the legal authority for the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications to assess Maritime Area Consent (MAC) applications from a set of 7 pre-qualified offshore renewable energy projects, while the new agency, the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority, is being established in early 2023. Significant work was undertaken by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in 2022 to build the detailed procedures required to enable these projects to apply for MACs. Following detailed assessment of the applications, seven Phase I projects were granted a MAC in December 2022.

This is an important step in making sure that viable Phase One projects can progress through the planning system in a timely manner and become operational later this decade.

In November 2022, Government published the terms and conditions for the first offshore wind auction under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS 1). This auction will take place in the first half of 2023, with awards to be announced by end June 2023. It is anticipated that a large proportion of Government's 5 GW offshore wind target will be developed under Phase One / ORESS 1. However, with a combined capacity of Phase One projects totalling around 4.4 GW, coupled with prospects that some Phase One projects may fail to secure a route to market or development consent, additional offshore projects will be needed to meet 5 GW by the end of this decade. At least three offshore energy auctions are currently planned for this decade. Terms and conditions for the second ORESS auction, ORESS 2, are being drafted with a view to launch ORESS 2 by the end of 2023.

In April 2022, Minister Ryan established a cross-Departmental Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce to accelerate and drive delivery and capture the wider and longer term economic and business opportunities associated with the development of offshore renewables in Ireland. The Taskforce is chaired by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and its membership comprises senior officials from the Government Departments and Agencies that are vital to the delivery of Ireland's ORE ambitions. One of the main objectives of the Taskforce is the development of a consolidated plan (the Offshore Wind Energy Programme), collating all activities underway across departments and agencies to ensure delivery of offshore wind and related targets.

Work to publish the draft Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (ORED II) continued in 2022, with the draft plan published for stakeholder consultation in early 2023. This plan will assess Ireland's offshore energy resource potential, including for floating wind off the west coast. Together with an economic assessment, it will provide an evidence base to identify areas most suitable for the sustainable development of fixed and floating wind, wave, and tidal technologies in the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone, while also considering other maritime activities and marine biodiversity.

Security of Supply

The National Development Plan (NDP) sets out the importance of secure supplies of energy for the proper functioning of society and the economy. In the electricity sector, a need for 2,000 MW of additional generation capacity (the majority of which is expected to be gas-fired) by 2030 was identified in the plan. The Commission for Regulation of Utilities, which has statutory responsibility for ensuring security of electricity supply, is leading a programme of work to deliver this capacity. This includes holding auctions in the capacity market which offer 10-year supports for new generators and the procurement of temporary generation in order to ensure adequate capacity in the short-term.

The NDP also sets out that a review of the security of energy supply of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems will be carried out. This review, which is nearing completion, will inform future Government policy in relation to security of supply and the potential need for further investment.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, a new Energy Security Emergency Group was established which developed and is overseeing the implementation of a new National Energy Security Framework. The Framework, which was published in April 2022, incorporates the work already underway in relation to energy security and sets out a range of additional policy responses to deal with the additional risks posed to energy security by the Russian war in Ukraine.

Decarbonising the Built Environment

Increasing the energy efficiency of our buildings is considered the most cost-effective method of addressing climate change and moving to decarbonising our homes, businesses and public buildings.

We are ensuring that the owners and occupants of our existing building stock are supported to improve the efficiency of the buildings in which they live and work, so that they too can avail of the multiple benefits, while also benefiting us all through reduction in energy use and carbon emissions.

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications funds the energy efficiency support schemes administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). These schemes target the residential, commercial and public sector.

Residential Energy Efficiency

The Programme for Government and the Climate Action Plan 2021 set ambitious targets to retrofit the equivalent of 500,000 homes to a Building Energy Rating of B2/cost optimal, and to install 400,000 heat pumps to replace existing heating systems by 2030. These targets represent a significant increase in both the volume and depth of retrofit activity in Ireland. This represents approximately 30 per cent of the housing stock and is among the most ambitious retrofit programmes worldwide.

Exchequer investment of €8 billion through the NDP - €5 billion of which will come from Carbon Tax revenue - to 2030 will be invested in energy efficiency and will underpin the National Retrofit Plan, published under the Climate Action Plan. It will also enable the supply chain to scale up, creating thousands of high-quality jobs. The National Retrofit Plan sets out how the Government will deliver on these targets across four key areas:

1. Driving demand and activity.
2. Financing and funding.
3. Supply chain, skills and standards.
4. Structures and governance.

In February 2022, Government approved a new package of SEAI retrofit supports to make it easier and more affordable for homeowners to undertake home energy upgrades for lower energy bills. Following the introduction of the new measures, demand across SEAI residential and community energy schemes was exceptionally high and as the figures below highlight, there was a significant increase when compared to 2021 levels:

- 7,200 home energy upgrades were supported in 2022, compared to 15,246 in 2021, representing a 79 per cent increase year-on-year.
- Of these, 8,481 upgrades were to a post works Building Energy Rating (BER) of B2 or better, compared to 4,345 in 2021, representing a 95 per cent increase year-on-year.
- Of the overall number, 4,438 homes were upgraded under SEAI energy poverty schemes, compared to 2,398 in 2021, representing an 85 per cent increase year-on-year.

Energy Efficiency in Public Sector and Commercial Sectors

The Programme for Government and the Climate Action Plan 2021 set a number of ambitious targets for the public sector to achieve by 2030. These targets are reaffirmed in the Climate Action Plan 2023. For the public sector, the targets and requirements include:

- 50 per cent Energy Efficiency improvement,
- 51 per cent emission reduction,

Developing an approach to cost effectively retrofit the public sector buildings stock as part of the Pathfinder Programme.

Public Sector Performance

Public bodies report their energy and emissions data to SEAI who publishes an annual report on public sector decarbonisation and energy efficiency performance towards the above targets. The latest SEAI Annual Report 2022 shows that the sector had improved its energy efficiency by 31.5 per cent by end of 2021. This amounts to €307 million in energy savings and 4,353 GWh of avoided primary energy consumption for 2021.

The Public Sector Pathfinder Retrofit Programme provides capital funding for projects aimed at testing building retrofit approaches and developing a model that can be replicated across the wider public sector. Between 2017 and 2022, this programme had facilitated energy efficiency works and retrofit in over 500 public buildings across the public sector. The Programme is co-funded by the Department of the Environment Climate and Communications and a number of partners and is administered by the SEAI. Current partners include the Department of Education, the Higher Education Authority, Further Education and Training the Office of Public Works and the Courts Service, Local Authorities and the Health Service Executive.

The **Excellence in Energy Efficiency Design (EXEED)** programme, relaunched in early 2021, continues to attract significant interest in both supporting deeper emissions reductions and more efficient processing and approvals cycles. Following a mid-scheme review in 2022, the approved changes will increase maximum grant funding available and change evaluation thresholds to ensure appropriate targeting of grant funding. The programme has engaged with

a variety of sectors including pharmaceuticals, food and drink, retail, hospitality, agriculture, mining/quarrying and manufacturing.

The Support Scheme for Energy Audits (SSEA) has proved extremely popular with 1,440 vouchers issued (total value of €2.88 million) to end 2022. At the current rate the SEAI expect to attract at least 1700 vouchers in 2023 (total value of the following changes were implemented in January 2023).

- Limit of one audit voucher per company - to maximise the availability of the scheme to assist as many businesses as possible.
- Change the €10k energy spend limit to include utilities only (gas, heating oil and electricity) – currently this includes transport, and 10 per cent of availed for a voucher where transport is >50 per cent of the overall energy spend.

As a result of rising energy costs, many more businesses are now eligible for the scheme as many more are spending more than €10,000 per annum on heating and electricity costs.

Energy Research

The SEAI National Energy Research Development & Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme invests in innovative energy RD&D projects which contribute to Ireland's transition to a clean and secure energy future. The SEAI National Energy RD&D Programme is a key enabler of Ireland's medium to long term energy policy targets and Ireland's Climate Action Plan. In 2022, the programme awarded funding to over 40 innovative energy RD&D projects to the value of approximately €19 million (up to 4-year term of awarded projects).

Flood Risk Management

Project Ireland 2040 includes investment of €1.3 billion in flood risk management measures in the period to 2030. There was a significant expansion of the delivery programme of flood relief schemes arising from the publication of Flood Risk Management Plans in 2018. These solutions to flood risk are set out in a series of 29 Flood Risk Management Plans, available on www.floodinfo.ie, and includes some 150 additional flood relief schemes. The Government has committed €1.3 billion to the delivery of these flood relief schemes to protect approximately 23,000 properties in threatened communities from river and coastal flood risk. Since 2018, as part of a phased approach to scheme delivery this funding has allowed the OPW to treble to over 90 schemes at design,

planning and construction at this time. The OPW and Local Authorities have been actively engaged in putting in place the necessary arrangements for the implementation of the priority flood relief schemes and work is well advanced in this regard.

Capital investment in flooding projects associated with FRM measures and programmes was €54.6 million for 2022. At the end of 2022, 53 flood relief schemes were completed, with approximately €1.9 billion of damage being avoided and protection provided to over 12,200 properties. In 2022, two major flood relief construction projects were substantially completed: the Douglas Flood Relief Scheme (including Togher Culvert) and the Ashbourne Flood Alleviation Scheme. Collectively, these schemes provide protection to some 270 properties.

A total of 9 major flood relief schemes have been completed since the launch of the NDP in 2018.

Development of a Shared Government Data Centre

The objective of the shared Government Data Centre is to deliver high-quality Data Centre facilities which are fit for purpose and are capable of meeting the Government's requirements now and in the future. Currently, there are disparate inefficient Government server rooms and data centres that are sub-optimal in terms of location, operational and cyber resilience, and physical risk. The project aims to develop a shared Government data centre to address these security, operational, financial, and strategic issues.

The Government Data Centre will be developed at the Backweston Campus in Co. Kildare is a stand-alone campus comprising various facilities for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the State Laboratory, and Forensic Science Ireland (FSI). The Government Data Centre will be owned by the state and operated by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine on behalf of the state. As the shared service provider of accommodation, property solutions, and advisory services to the Civil Service, the OPW is providing architectural and engineering design services on the project as well as construction project management services in the delivery of this critical piece of state infrastructure.

The majority of current public service server rooms and data centre facilities are old, not fit for purpose, and in city centre office locations which are inherently inefficient from a power usage perspective.

The target Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE) for the new Government Data Centre is 1.2, which is at least twice as efficient as most of the existing public service server rooms and data centre facilities. This represents a large power (and subsequently monetary) saving in the new purpose-built facility over the power usage and costs in existing server rooms.

The new Data Centre is of strategic importance as it will support reform initiatives and Digital Transformation in line with the new public service ICT Digital Strategy.

The procurement process for the project is now complete and the contract for the construction of the new Data Centre was placed in December 2022. Works commenced on site in Q1 2023 and are expected to be completed in Q2 2025.



Shared Government Data Centre

Efficiency Strategy (Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment January 2017).

To this end, the Courts Service is planning a programme of deep retrofit works. The objective of the programme is to implement a range of fabric upgrade and energy efficiency measures, and test a variety of approaches, in a number of pilot projects, with a view to developing a model for retrofit works to achieve a building energy rating of B that can be rolled out across a wider range of buildings. As a first step in this programme, the Courts Service and OPW have identified an initial list of Courts Service buildings where the scope for significant improvements in energy performance, and reduction in carbon emissions will be assessed. This will allow OPW and the Courts Service in 2022-2024 to build an evidence base and to develop a scalable model for energy management and retrofit investment in both OPW's and the Courts Service's building stock in the achievement of national policy targets. In conjunction with the Courts Service, SEAI and OPW, the Pathfinder project was initiated in 2022 and assessments of the selected buildings are underway.

Work in the Courts

In line with Climate Action Plan 2019, the Courts Service's Statement of Strategy 2021-2024 includes themes relating to both Sustainability, and Climate Action, and sets out objectives to:

- ensure sustainability informs all of the Courts Service's decision making; and
- deliver clear plans and actions to contribute to implementing the Climate Action Plan 2019.

One of the key principles of Courts Service's Sustainability Policy is to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions across the estate, in order to contribute to the achievement of both Programme for Government and EU requirements to transition to a low carbon, climate resilient, and environmentally sustainable economy. As part of the Courts Service's Strategy, the aim is to have an energy efficient accommodation portfolio that complies with all relevant building regulations; meets both State and EU Climate Change/energy efficiency targets; and supports Ireland's Public Sector's Energy



2.9

Sustainable Management of Water Waste and other Environmental Resources

Investment in the water and wastewater network is required to support environmental and economic wellbeing, deal with population growth and the effects of a changing climate. The year 2022 continued to see the commencement and completion of a range of important projects throughout the country.

2.9 | Sustainable Water and Environmental Resources Management

Water and Waste Water

2022 saw Uisce Éireann deliver the highest level of investment in water and wastewater services in its history, with €1.1 billion invested to fund critical infrastructure projects. This brings overall investment since 2014 to approximately €6.5 billion (or €4.8 billion since 2017). This allowed Uisce Éireann to deliver jobs, increase capacity for housing and development, and support economic growth.

Important achievements in 2022 include:

- A new Water Treatment Plant (WTP) was completed (Lee Road, Cork) and a further five WTP upgrades were completed (Lough Forbes, Ballymagroarty, Tuam Regional, Doolough, Burncourt / Ballylooby).
- Five new Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP) were completed (Castletownbere, Coachford, Dripsey, Inishannon and Arthurstown, Ballyhack and Duncannon WWTP) and four upgraded WWTPs were completed (Gweedore, Killea, Carrigans and Lifford WWTPs).
- Over 18,584 people were removed from 'Boil Water Notices' that had been in place for more than 30 days.
- 11 water supplies were removed from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Remedial Action List improving water quality for over 130,000 people. Six schemes were removed from Q2 in 2022 and five schemes removed from Q4, as confirmed in EPA reports.
- 4,473 new connection offers to water infrastructure issued in 2022, associated with 36,989 housing units.
- 4,258 new connections to water infrastructure completed, associated with 25,347 housing units.
- 10 agglomerations were removed from the EPA's priority list of areas for wastewater improvement. The EPA figures are net (schemes removed plus schemes added)
- Over 11,993 backyard and public lead services were replaced.
- Four agglomerations with no wastewater treatment were connected to newly-constructed treatment plants (Castletownbere, Duncannon, Ballyhack and Arthurstown).
- Works were completed on eleven agglomerations listed in the 2018-2021 River Basin Management Plan.
- Net Water Saving of 30 Million Litres per Day (MLD) (to end of Q3 2022) as a result of delivering specific initiatives to address national water leakage. These are net water savings - gross leakage savings are 214.3 megalitres of water per day saved through the dedicated leakage reduction plan in 2022.
- 315 km of new and rehabilitated water main were laid.
- 102 km of new and rehabilitated sewer were installed.
- Investment in the water and waste water network is required to support environmental and economic wellbeing, deal with population growth and the effects of a changing climate.



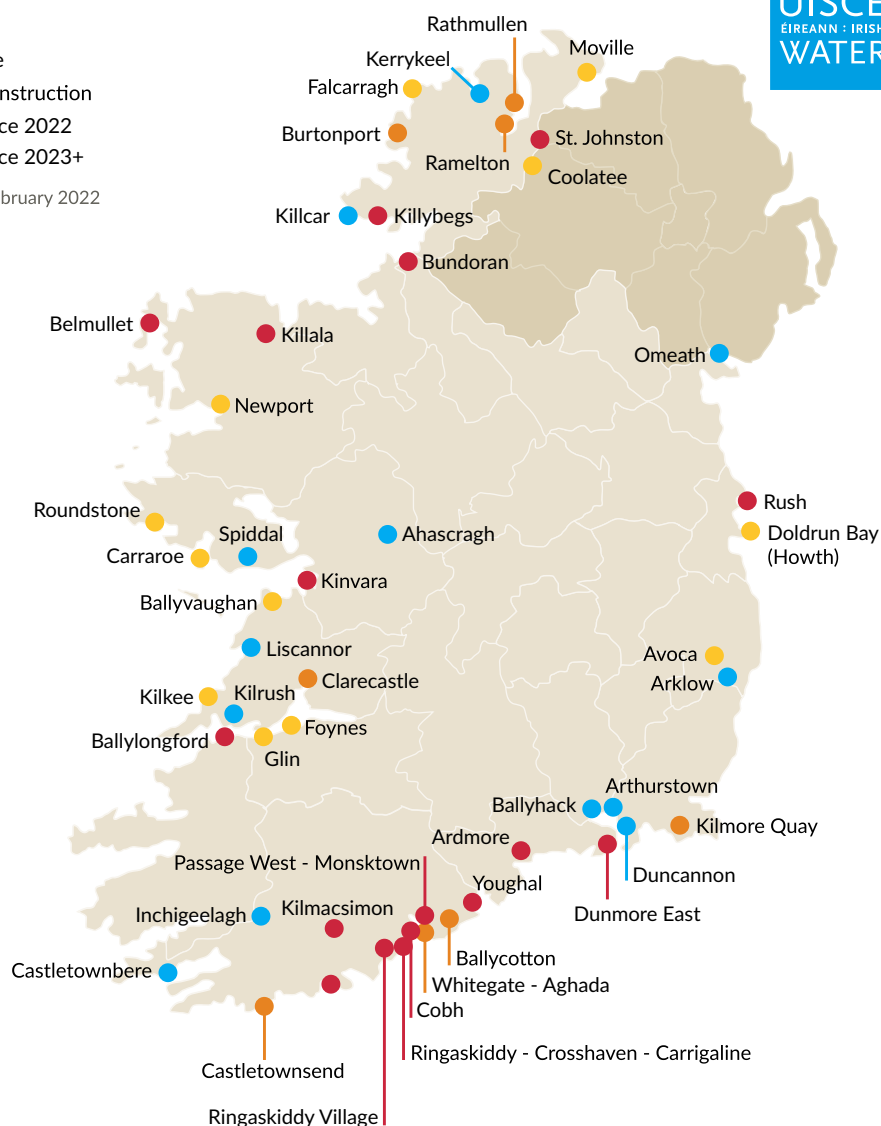
Vartry Reservoir

Eliminating raw sewage discharges in Ireland



- Complete
- Under construction
- Commence 2022
- Commence 2023+

Dates as of February 2022



Circular Economy and Sustainable Resource Management

A circular economy will deliver positive environmental, economic and social impacts, through more access to better designed products which can be shared, reused, repaired and remade. This in turn will provide opportunities for local manufacture and remanufacture, supporting local jobs and services with the lightest impact possible on the quality of our water, air, soil and health.

The Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022 was enacted in July 2022 and is being implemented on a phased basis throughout 2023. This Act provides a clear legislative framework for

Ireland's transition to a circular economy and will place the Circular Economy Strategy, Programme and Food Waste Roadmap on a statutory footing.

The Act also provides for the introduction of a number of environmental levies, including a waste recovery levy and levies on single use cups, packaging and food containers, as well as mandatory segregation and an incentivised charging regime for commercial waste, to ensure waste minimisation and proper segregation in the sector. It is also intended to introduce legislation which will ensure all households on a kerbside waste collection service will be provided with an organic waste bin by end of 2023. The National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap, which will set out a series of actions to help deliver the reductions necessary to halve Ireland's food waste by 2030 was published in December 2022.

The Office of Government Procurement has led on the development of the GPP Criteria Search which is available at [GPPCriteria.gov.ie](https://gppcriteria.gov.ie). The online search tool which was launched in November 2022 allows users to rapidly find, select and download Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria relevant to a specific procurement project. To support better GPP, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published updated GPP Criteria for ten sectors along with Green Public Procurement Guidance for the Public Sector in September 2021. The online search tool will facilitate the use of these criteria in a user-friendly and efficient way. The search tool was developed in collaboration with the EPA and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, with support from the Public Service Innovation Fund.

In November 2022, the Minister launched the first phase of the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for plastic bottles and aluminium cans. DRS will be operated by Deposit Return Scheme Ireland CLG (trading as Re-turn) and will support the achievement of our ambitious EU recycling rates for these two important material streams.

Landfill Remediation Grant Programme

Total funding of €21.3 million was provided in 2022 to support landfill remediation work on 67 sites across 21 local authorities.

Of this, €14.6 million was for the completion of the final stage of works at the former landfill at Kerdiffstown, Kildare which is provisionally scheduled for completion in 2023.

Landfill remediation grant projects

Region	Local Authorities	No. of sites per Region
Southern Region	7	31
Connacht Ulster Region	6	16
Eastern Midlands Region	8	20
Total	21	67

Diesel and Tyre Site Clean-up

In addition to funding landfill remediation, the grant programme also supports local authorities in addressing other site types, namely diesel laundering, tyre sites and farm plastic. In 2022, €194,217 funding was provided to two local authorities, Monaghan and Louth, for clean-up of 41 diesel laundering incidents. In 2022, a further €1.78 million supported remediation of 2 tyre stockpile sites and 1 farm plastics site located in three local authorities, namely Clare, Westmeath and Waterford.

Litter Infrastructure Support 2021

In response to the easing of COVID-19 restrictions and the emphasis on outdoor living, which was expected to drive higher levels of outdoor dining and domestic tourism during summer 2021, and in order to support anti-littering efforts in that context, the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications announced the provision of an additional once-off €5 million in litter supports in May 2021. Of the €5 million announced, €4 million was set aside in support of a new local authority Litter Infrastructure Support Grant Scheme, while the remaining €1 million supported a nationwide anti-litter/anti-dumping information campaign which ran throughout summer 2021 and a Picker Pals initiative aimed at primary schools across the country. Under the scheme, over 1,300 new bins were purchased and installed by local authorities in 2021, including over 400 smart bins.

Geological Survey Ireland

In 2022, Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) continued investing in geological understanding, mapping, research and development of the Geoscience Sector, much of which supports implementation of the National Development Plan.

Important achievements in 2022 include:

- Progression of INFOMAR, Ireland's national seabed mapping programme, delivered in collaboration with the Marine Institute, mapped 8,800 square kilometres of Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) mapped in 2022, reaching 73 per cent areal completion.

- Work continued on developing methodologies for monitoring Coastal Change (erosion and accretion) using satellite data and mapping Coastal Vulnerability Index in support of the National Coastal Management Strategy.
- INFOMAR also supported the development of Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan II, through provision of data and expertise.
- Tellus survey, which is carrying out modern airborne geophysical and ground geochemistry, was temporarily suspended in 2022.
- 32 Catchment reports related to Groundwater for supply were completed in the eastern Region, supporting the Drinking water Directive and work of Uisce Éireann.
- The Groundwater Monitoring network continued to expand, reaching 77 stations, 35 with telemetry (20 turloughs and 15 boreholes) and 42 without telemetry (13 turloughs and 29 boreholes).
- GSI research supported 26 new projects, for a total of 41 underway, and participated in 8 EU-funded projects.
- Work continued on developing a National Geothermal Energy Database, including a new temperature map developed with Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies and further research at the Grangegorman test site in Dublin.
- Work continued on the project to develop a UNESCO Geopark in the Joyce Country and Western Lakes area of Counties Galway and Mayo, with funding from DRCD, and support from Údarás na Gaeltachta, resulting in a submission to UNESCO.
- Continued to support the National Building Control Office and DHLGH in market surveillance of the quarry sector with the Donegal Audit report published.
- Supported research on pyrite and mica in construction materials and on critical raw materials for the Climate Action Plan and upcoming EU CRM Act.
- Geological Survey Ireland commenced participation in a new project, a Geological Service for Europe (GSEU) collaborating with the 37 geological surveys across Europe to provide data supporting EU policy and decision making.



2.10

Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

Access to quality primary education, health services and childcare, relative to the scale of a region, city, town, neighbourhood or community, is a defining characteristic of attractive, successful and competitive places. Project Ireland 2040 provides significant public investment in education and health infrastructure to meet current infrastructure needs, cater for an estimated population growth of one million and respond to Ireland's changing demographic profile.

2.10 | Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

Education

School Building Programme

The first three years of Project Ireland 2040 saw growth in investment in schools, childcare and health services.

Since 2018, there has been in excess of €4.5 billion invested in Capital Infrastructure in the Education Sector for Schools at Primary and Post Primary levels.

This investment will build on the good progress being made on adding capacity to cater for demographic changes and provision for children with special educational needs. This investment will also facilitate an increased focus on the modernisation of existing school stock and help transition the school system for an era of net zero carbon by 2050.

Key Achievements under the School Building Programme in 2022

Under Project Ireland 2040, in 2022, investment in the School Building Programme exceeded €1 billion. This included:

- In excess of €800 million involved adding capacity and modernisation of school buildings
- Circa €110 million invested in necessary smaller scale refurbishment and maintenance in circa 1,000 schools.
- Over €25 million providing funding for general classroom furniture and equipment, specialist equipment for science labs, woodwork rooms, home economic rooms etc., and specialised furniture and equipment for pupils with additional needs in both mainstream and special classes.
- In the region of €20 million invested in 16 schools through the Pathfinder Programme.
- There were over 180 school building projects delivered during 2022 which included accelerated delivery of modular accommodation to support provision for 900 pupils with special education needs.
- Strategic initiatives were put in place to support planning for school provision requirements and also setting up of 16 Regional Education and

Language Teams (REALTs) to facilitate enrolment of 15,000 children from Ukraine

- Strategic initiatives put in place to support delivery include use of project manager supports, procurement frameworks, variety of delivery mechanisms and a strong pipeline of projects.

During the NDP period 2018 to 2022, over 870 school building projects were completed under the Large Scale Capital Programme (LSCP), Additional School Accommodation Scheme (ASA), Energy Retrofit Pathfinder Programme and Modular Accommodation programme. Of these, in excess of 260 projects had a capital value in excess of €1 million and the remainder a value of less than €1 million.

Schools designed and built in accordance with the Department's schools technical guidance documents have been achieving A3 Building Energy Ratings since 2009 with schools typically achieving up to 20% higher performance and 25% better carbon performance than required by the 2019 Building Regulations, along with 10% of primary energy provided via photovoltaics and infrastructure provision for electric vehicle charging.

In 2023, some 300 school building projects are currently under construction, including 40 new school buildings and 260 projects at existing schools. There are also over 1,000 other school building projects in the Department's pipeline at various stages of development.

The current status of projects being delivered is listed on a county by county basis on the Department of Education's website at www.gov.ie and updated on a monthly basis to reflect their progress.

Under a jointly funded pathfinder programme with the SEAI, testing and demonstrating energy efficiency and decarbonisation retrofit approaches, 48 projects have been completed. The pathfinder is paving the way for, and informing, a much larger national schools programme for the decarbonisation of schools. It is facilitating research on a range of typical retrofit options, which will have been tried and tested ensuring the deployment of new design approaches and technologies are introduced to the educational environment on an evidence based approach

Under Project Ireland 2040, Minor Works Grant funding totalling €62 million issued to all eligible Primary and Post Primary schools in the free scheme in December 2021 for school year 2022/2023.

Project Ireland 2040 committed to investing €420 million to assist in the implementation of the

Digital Strategy for Schools to embed the effective use of digital technology in teaching, learning and assessment.

Under the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 to 2020 overall investment of €210 million issued to all recognised primary and post-primary schools in annual grant funding to support schools to invest in appropriate digital infrastructure to embed the use of digital technology in teaching learning and assessment. Schools were instructed to use this funding to enable the continuity of teaching and learning during the pandemic, including through the provision of digital devices on loan to learners and teachers.

The new Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 has now been published, which will be underpinned by some €200 million to issue to support schools over the period. The first tranche of €50 million has already issued to all recognised primary and post-primary schools in late 2021 respect of the 2021-2022 school year. The extensive consultation undertaken to inform the new Digital Strategy recognised the importance of the investment under the previous Strategy, and emphasised the importance of ongoing investment to enable the progression of schools to continue to progress the embedding of digital technology.

The vision of the new Digital Strategy to 2027 is to empower schools to harness the opportunities of digital transformation to build digital competence and an effective digital education ecosystem so as to develop competent, critically engaged, active learners while supporting them to reach their potential and participate fully as global citizens in a digital world. The investment committed to in the National Development Plan will be key to enabling this vision.

Children

During 2022, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth spent almost €60 million across its various capital programmes to support a range of key services in respect of children and young people and international migrants.

2022 saw the Department playing a leading role in the response to the war in Ukraine which resulted in the need for the Department to develop a new capital programme as part of the response to the unprecedented scale of the influx of refugees from Ukraine. In this regard, €29 million was spent to fund the delivery of rapid build accommodation in the form of modular housing (in partnership with OPW). Additionally, since the publication of the

White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a new International Protection Support Service, the number of International Protection (IP) applicants and the associated need for accommodation has increased very substantially and almost €8.5 million was spent on the purchase of 35 properties for the delivery of supported accommodation for vulnerable IP applicants in 2022.

The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) spent €18.5 million on the continued development of its accommodation and ICT. Of this, €8 million was spent on ICT infrastructure and investment, €4 million was spent on minor capital works on existing Tusla buildings across the country and €3 million was spent on the purchase of houses for residential care services. In addition, there was expenditure of €1m on two major projects in Limerick and Portlaoise respectively, which involve major refurbishment and extension of existing Tusla facilities in each case. This will result in fully compliant and fit for purpose accommodation for Tusla public-facing services in these areas. The balance of €2.5 million was spent across a range of areas including the fit out and equipping of Tusla offices/houses, the purchase of a number of Electric Vehicles, and on building construction services and planning for future projects.

In addition, in line with the Department's normal capital programme spending, there was continued capital investment in youth services, youth justice and early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC) services, with €2.7 million being provided in capital funding to youth services and organisations, just over €1 million spent on capital works at Oberstown Children Detention Campus and €0.23 million spent on grants for ELC and SAC services.

Healthcare

Healthcare Capital Overview

Under Project Ireland 2040, the National Development Plan Review 2021 provided funding ceilings up to 2025 of €5.657 billion to facilitate the delivery of health capital projects.

In 2022, considerable progress was made on the development of the Strategic Healthcare Investment Framework (SHIF). The publication of same is anticipated to be Q2 2023. SHIF provides the high-level strategic framework for use in

investment decision making in health. It is the first time that an overarching framework has been set out for infrastructural investment in the sector. It will be used to guide the development of health infrastructure in the years ahead, investment of NDP funding, progress in line with National Planning Framework objectives and delivery of Project Ireland 2040 strategic outcomes. It contains three component parts: the six Investment Criteria, the Continuum of Care principle (Sláintecare vision) and a four-level Intervention Hierarchy. Proposals that align with SHIF can then be considered for approval to advance through to the Public Spending Code.

Healthcare Programmes and Projects

In 2022, healthcare programmes continued to feature as an important part of delivering healthcare infrastructure. The Primary Care Centre Programme and the HIQA Community Nursing Unit (CNU) programme continued to construct and upgrade facilities to deliver on the Sláintecare commitment to provide care closer to the home. Also in 2022, completed projects from the Enhanced Community Care (ECC) programme began to come on stream. ECC aims to deliver increased levels of healthcare with service delivery reoriented towards general practice, primary care and community-based services. The focus is on an end-to-end pathway that will prevent admissions to acute hospitals where it is safe and appropriate to do so. Progress will continue in 2023.

Significant acute and critical care capacity projects were completed in 2022, adding additional and replacement beds to the healthcare sector. Essential investment continued in infrastructural projects, minor capital initiatives, the equipment replacement and ambulance replacement programmes, all of which support patient safety, clinical and infrastructural risk.

Key achievements in NDP programmes and projects for 2022 include:

- Seven CNUs were completed in 2022, bringing the total to 44 units in the HIQA CNU programme. These facilities provide long stay beds for older people. A further 10 projects are expected to be completed by the end 2023.
- In December 2022, the contract for the CNU PPP Project was awarded to deliver 530 beds overall as part of the HIQA compliance programme. The sites are at Ardee (50-beds), Athlone (50-beds), Clonmel (50-beds), Killarney (130-beds), Midleton (50-beds), St. Finbarr's, Cork (105-beds), and Thomastown (95-beds). Construction on all sites will have commenced in the first half of 2023, with all facilities expected to have construction completed by the end of 2024.
- Outside of the HIQA CNU programme, facilities for older people delivered included the 51-bed replacement project at St Mary's, Phoenix Park, the completion of Blarney CNU providing 50 additional beds, and the extension to Heather House, Cork (60 additional beds).
- The National Forensic Mental Hospital, Portrane became operational.
- As part of the Primary Care Centre programme, 165 Primary Care centres are now fully operational across the country. 16 new facilities were completed in 2022, of which 3 were HSE own-build and the remainder were delivered through an operational lease arrangement. 12 centres are expected to be completed in 2023, again mainly through operational lease.
- Five Enhanced Community Care projects were completed and another seven are expected to complete in 2023.
- Acute projects completed included the 12-bed Integrated Care Unit at Tallaght University Hospital, the new 72-bed replacement medical ward block at St Luke's General Hospital Kilkenny, the Bone Marrow Unit and Outpatient Department extension at St. James's Hospital, the new 30-bed modular ward block at Mercy University Hospital Cork, the interim Emergency Department and the Cardio Thoracic Ward at University Hospital Galway, the replacement Orthopaedic Theatre Block at Merlin Park University Hospital and the Blood Science Project at Cork University Hospital.
- Other developments in 2022 included the completion of 3 Ambulance Bases Ardee (winner of the 2023 RIAI Choice award in the Wellbeing category), Merlin Park and Mullingar, the first phase of the electrical resilience programme at Tallaght University Hospital, reconfiguration works at Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore, the phased redevelopment of Ennis General Hospital, reconfiguration works at University Hospital Kerry on the High Dependency Unit, redevelopment works to facilitate neurosurgery rehabilitation for children over six, at CHI Temple Street, an extension to radiology at St Luke's General Hospital Kilkenny and the replacement of four lifts at University Hospital Limerick.

- Looking to 2023, community projects nearing completion include Primary Care Centres in Monaghan Town, Killeshandra, Co. Cavan, Portumna, Co. Galway and Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick. On the HIQA CNU Programme projects nearing completion include St. Ita's, Newcastle West and St Mary's Hospital, Drogheda.
- Acute bed capacity projects nearing completion include the 12-bed modular unit at Naas General Hospital, 112-bed Ward Block at The Mater Misericordiae Hospital, and the 48-bed Replacement Medical Ward at Mallow General Hospital. At University Hospital Galway, practical completion has been achieved on the National Programme for Radiation Oncology centre with equipping and commissioning taking place in 2023.
- On completion, the 12-acre NCH site will consist of a 7-storey structure with 2/3 below-ground levels. Its internal 'street' will be the length of Grafton Street, it will consist of 6,150 internal spaces, of which 4,600 are clinical rooms. Features of the development will include: 380 individual, en-suite in-patient bedrooms each with parent sofa-bed; 60 critical care beds (currently 32); 93-day beds; 110 outpatient examination rooms; 22 theatres including specialised theatres for cardiac, neuro and orthopaedic surgery; 4 acres of outdoor space for children across 14 gardens/ courtyards and 1,000 car park spaces underground.

New Children's Hospital

- Despite challenges arising from, but not limited, to Brexit, the pandemic, and the invasion of Ukraine, global supply chain difficulties and shortages of raw materials, significant progress was made on the New Children's Hospital (NCH) project in 2022.
- The two satellite centres that are key to the project are now open and successfully delivering a new model of ambulatory and urgent care for children in the Greater Dublin area.
- At the end of December 2022, the project was approximately 80 per cent complete against the contract value, on the building phase. Major focus throughout 2022 was, and continues in 2023 to be, the internal fit-out and commissioning of mechanical and electrical services.
- Key milestones in 2022 at the main site at St. James' included the completion of the first clinical rooms and the main biome glazed structure encasing the feature stairway and lifts, and connection to a permanent power supply.
- In November 2022, the first of four hundred trees were planted by Án Taoiseach and Minister for Health, marking the beginning of landscaping in the 14 outdoor areas and gardens at the hospital grounds.
- In July 2022, Cabinet gave its approval for CHI to enter into a contract for delivery of the Electronic Health Record (EHR) system for NCH and contracts were subsequently signed in August.

Other Major Capital Projects

- Progress on other major capital projects included on 7 December 2022, Government approved the next stage of the Enhanced Provision of Elective Care Programme and progression of the development of new Elective Hospitals in Cork and Galway (with Dublin to follow in due course). The new Elective Hospitals will provide significant additional capacity, enabling the separation of scheduled and unscheduled care. This will change the way in which day cases, scheduled procedures, surgeries, scans and outpatient services can be better arranged across the country, ensuring greater capacity in the future and helping to address waiting times.

Healthy Ireland Framework

The Healthy Ireland Framework, 2013-2025 is the national strategy for improving health and wellbeing and is underpinned by a whole-system philosophy, involving cross Government and cross societal responsibility. In 2022, the implementation of the Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-25 was achieved through the development of settings-based initiatives including the Sláintecare Healthy Communities, Healthy Campuses, Workplaces and Cities and Counties. Healthy Ireland continues to engage nationally through Citizen Engagement campaigns, and via initiatives through national organisations such as Sport Ireland, the Local Government Management Agency, and Creative Ireland. The programme also led out on the development and implementation of the free contraception scheme and a programme to address period poverty.

Climate Action

In November 2021, the Government launched the Climate Action Plan. The plan commits Ireland to a legally binding target of net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions no later than 2050, to an absolute reduction of 51 per cent in GHG emissions by 2030, (against a 2016-2018 baseline) and increase the improvement in energy efficiency in the Public Sector from the 33 per cent target in 2020 to 50 per cent by 2030 (against a 2009 baseline)

The HSE is committed to becoming a sustainable organisation, delivering low carbon, quality sustainable healthcare into the future. The climate crisis is also a health crisis, with a range of health risks associated with climate change. The HSE is fully committed to leading by example in reducing Green House Gas emissions and promoting a preventative approach to minimise the negative impacts of climate change on the health of our citizens.

In 2022, the HSE developed a Capital and Estates Strategy. The first objective within this Strategy is to achieve a net zero carbon estate by 2050. The route to achieving this objective is outlined in the HSE Infrastructure Decarbonisation Roadmap, published in November 2022. It contains the approach and detailed actions to achieve climate action targets and satisfies the Government mandate on public sector organisations to publish an action plan to achieve targets set out in the Climate Action Plan.

At the end of 2021 the HSE had improved its energy efficiency by 16 per cent against a 2009 baseline.

HSE Energy consumption 2021 and 2020* (Total Primary Energy Requirement)

Key areas progressed in 2022 included:

- Development of a HSE Infrastructure Decarbonisation Strategy and Implementation Roadmap
- Continuation of the HSE and SEAI joint capital funded partnership agreement to cover the period to end 2023. The agreement funds the delivery of the Energy Bureau, Energy Teams, Shallow Retrofit Works and the Pilot Pathfinder Programme
- Completion of €10.2 million of energy and decarbonisation shallow retrofit works to date. In 2022 these works resulted in a reduction of approximately 14.1 GWh of Energy and 7,814 Tonnes of CO2.
- Expansion of the network of supported Energy and Green teams to 111 significant energy

- users across the HSE and Section 38 and 39 organisations.
- Publication of the HSE Energy Efficient Design (EED) guide and continued implementation of an EED and towards carbon zero design approach, for all projects in the HSE Capital Plan
 - Progression of a pilot deep energy and carbon retrofit programme for existing buildings, in

Type	Consumption 2021	Consumption 2020
Electricity	457,299,438 kWh	399,568,791 kWh
Thermal	585,453,533 kWh	600,604,642 kWh
Transport	51,806,396 kWh	56,132,709 kWh
Total HSE 2020 Energy Consumption	1,094,559,368 kWh	1,056,306,142 kWh
Improvement in Energy Efficiency since 2009 baseline	16%	14%
Total Greenhouse Gas (GHG)	211,259 tCO2	
Total GHG Emissions – change since GHG Baseline (2016-2018 average) 9 per cent decrease		
*Section 38/39 Organisations report separately to SEAI and are not included in these figures.		
Data source: Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)		

partnership with the SEAI. In 2022 a total of €2.04 million was invested in this programme.

- Development of an online sustainability assessment tool for smaller healthcare sites, providing support and guidance on energy, carbon, water and waste reduction
- The HSE initiated the establishment of an overarching Climate Action Steering Group. The purpose of this group is to oversee the development, implementation and reporting of a comprehensive strategic plan to address wider decarbonisation of the HSE. This will include decarbonisation opportunities in supply-chain, procurement, transport, infrastructure and clinical services.

eHealth Investment

The Irish health service is underpinned by a vast technology landscape which is the largest ICT operating environment in the State. As well as delivering ICT services, the eHealth and Disruptive

Technology function is a key enabler for health service reform, facilitating integration within and across community services, hospitals and other specialised care providers. By accelerating the digitisation of our health services, improvements in population wellbeing, health service efficiency and economic opportunity were achieved, while supporting a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.

Key achievements in 2022 include:

- Continued focus on improving the security and resilience of critical national infrastructure through investment in the refresh of technology and devices to address cyber security weaknesses related to legacy infrastructure. This was supported by a programme to increase awareness of staff on cyber security risks and improve practices across the organisation, through the roll out of cyber security education and communication programmes, to raise awareness and reduce the risks associated with cyberattacks and to embed a culture of security compliance.
- Staff who had been assigned to COVID-19 and the cyber response were re-assigned back to their pre covid roll to accelerate the migration of HSE users to a single national domain and email exchange (HealthIRL). 19,578 users are now on HealthIRL versus a year-end target of 20,608.
- The HSE continued to roll out Office365 in 2022 with more than 16,000 users now using Exchange Online.
- The HSE commenced the integration of Individual Health Identifiers (IHI) into iPMS (the Integrated Patient Management System) to improve patient safety and efficiency. IHI was also integrated into 3 of the 4 GP systems for all public patients.
- The contract for the Electronic Health Records system at Children's Health Ireland was signed and the implementation of this system supports our ambition to deliver integrated care and other national healthcare reform priorities
- A business case for an EHR for community (Integrated Community Care System/ICCMS) was developed in 2022 and a peer review group has now been established.
- A business case for Shared Care Record, which is a strategic initiative to develop a shared patient record for clinical review, and a patient portal, was also developed.
- The Health Performance Visualisation Platform (HPVP), a single software approach to the provision service performance information across health and social systems, was delivered to 18

phase 1 hospital sites.

- A replacement Systems Integrator for Integrated Financial Management System was sourced through open procurement. The programme is now in the build and test phase.
- There were further rollout of the National Integrated Staff Records and payroll system across the HSE in 2022 with implementation now ongoing in the South.



Ardee Ambulance Base



2.11

Other Public Investment Sectors

Project Ireland 2040 also includes a range of wider investment in important areas.

Justice Sector



New Forensic Science Laboratory at Backweston, Co. Kildare

Courts Service

Hammond Lane:

Project Ireland 2040 funding will provide for a new Family Law Court complex at Hammond Lane in central Dublin.

The Hammond Lane Court complex will be built with the specific needs of Family law users in mind and will provide a modern purpose built facility where family law cases can be held in a dignified, secure and non-threatening environment with a range of support services at hand. On completion it will replace a number of inadequate and fragmented facilities for family law in central Dublin.

Throughout 2022 the Courts Service worked with the Department of Justice, the OPW and the NDFA to advance this critical much needed project and significant progress was made in this regard.

A detailed business case, as required by the Public Spending Code, was submitted to the Department of Justice and in June the Department of Justice gave approval in principle in June 2022 for the project to proceed as part of a Justice sector PPP project bundle that will also see the delivery of two new Garda facilities at Macroom and Clonmel.

In May 2023, following consultations at Ministerial level involving An Taoiseach, the Minister for Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform and the

Minister for Justice, it was decided to decouple the Macroom and Clonmel Garda Station projects from the Justice PPP and deliver these projects by traditional means outside of the PPP with a view to reducing the complexity and shortening the delivery time of these projects.

The detailed design of the Hammond Lane family court building was developed by the OPW during the year. Plans provide for a 5 storey over basement building providing 19 courtrooms, meeting/consultation rooms, and a family law court office, accommodation for Judges and Courts Service staff as well as space for the Legal Aid Board, legal practitioners and a range of services that operate in the area of family law including mediation services and domestic violence support services. The building will have a variety of public waiting areas including child and family friendly waiting areas and will be fully accessible. The design was informed by legislative changes such as the Family Courts Bill and the Courts Service family law modernisation programme.

Work on the planning application was well advanced by year end and will be completed in 2023.

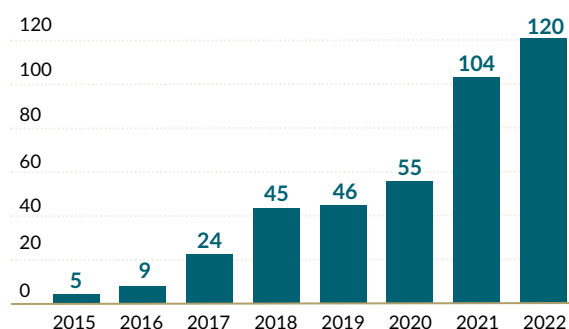
2022 also saw the completion of a PPP suitability assessment in respect of the Justice PPP project bundle comprising Hammond Lane and the above mentioned Garda facilities. Governance structures to manage and monitor the delivery of the Justice PPP project bundle were established during the year and

were operational up to May 2023 when the Macroom and Clonmel Garda Station projects were decoupled from the Justice PPP.

City and County town courthouse projects:

The provision of further new or refurbished courthouses in a number of cities and county towns where facilities remain sub-standard including Galway city, Wicklow town, Portlaoise, Tralee, Roscommon, Naas, Bray, Navan, Swords, Tallaght and Dun Laoghaire are key Courts Service projects in the NDP. Preparatory work in respect of these projects in 2022 focused on the acquisition of sites to enable a development/refurbishment project proceed once funding becomes available. During 2022 the Courts Service completed the purchase of a site at Naas and agreed the purchase of a site at Tralee; it continued to seek a suitable site in Galway. Pending refurbishment of the historic courthouse in Roscommon, a leased facility was acquired and fit out as a temporary courthouse by year end.

Technology Enabled Courtrooms



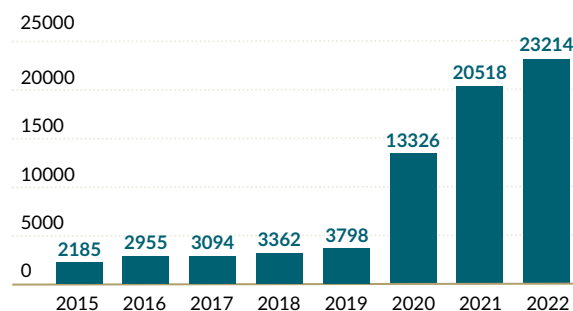
Digital, Data and Technology

The Courts Service Modernisation Programme, underpinned by significant multi-year capital investment, consists of a series of initiatives to advance the courts in the area of digital, data and technology. The overarching aim is to enable online interaction with the Courts across all areas of work, increasing access to justice, transparency, and efficiency – supported by modern technology, with robust data management processes. Further information on some current initiatives is included below.

Video Courtroom Expansion

The Court Service provides a series of services to the judiciary and court users to allow for the administration of justice in Ireland. Court technology is key to enabling the function of the Courts Service

IPS Courtrooms Video Appearances



offering. Physical courtrooms are the primary example of a Courts Service offering where a physical courtroom is made available with facilities to support judicial proceedings. During Covid-19, a new offering of “remote courts” was introduced to allow for the operation of judicial proceedings during the pandemic, where large gatherings of people were not permitted.

Along with remote hearings and physical hearings, a hybrid model is available whereby physical hearings use courtroom technology to dial-in parties (e.g. professional witnesses). This three-layered offering – physical, remote and hybrid courts – allows for more flexibility to be made available to the judiciary and court users, enabling a choice of how to conduct business for each particular type of case.

In line with its ICT Strategy, the Courts Service continues to invest in the expansion of video technology within courtrooms to increase the consistency of modern service offerings available to the judiciary and court users across the country.

Early in 2022 the Modernisation Program Board approved an additional investment of €3.6 million to provide for further expansion of the video courtroom technology estate through the installation of 54 more courtrooms over a three-year period, 2022 - 2024. 16 extra courtrooms were delivered in the 1st year of the program.

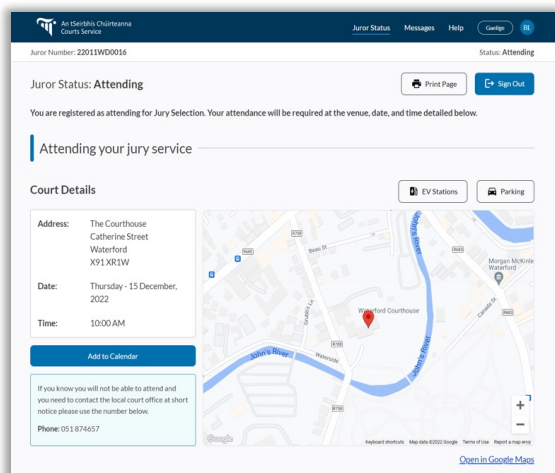
Alongside the expansion of courtroom video since 2020, overall usage of courtroom technology has continued to increase. Usage metrics for courtroom video appearances from Irish Prison Service locations, as an example, are included.

Unified Case Management Platform

Under the Courts Service Modernisation Programme, significant capital investment is supporting a multi-year initiative to re-imagine and migrate all case related activity to be underpinned by a modern unified and coherent case management platform for the Courts. The vision is to enable user-centric end

to end digital journeys for case work, improving the administration of justice, increasing transparency, and significantly improving access to quality data. End 2023 is targeted to pilot the initial case types being supported via an online portal.

Digital Jury System – This new system, the first to be launched on the above platform, allows citizens who receive jury summons to respond with acceptance / excusals electronically. It supports the provision of practical information to jurors on where to go and what to expect. It also provides support for electronic notifications to jurors in the case of changes. A non-digital channel will continue and run in parallel for those who cannot or choose not to use the digital channel. Initial feedback from users has reported satisfaction with the ease of use and convenience. Following successful completion of a pilot towards the end of the year, the full nationwide rollout commenced in January 2023, with 42 per cent of summons responses coming through the portal so far.



An Garda Síochána

In 2022 a number of key projects and programmes came to a successful conclusion. Key amongst these was the delivery of the Decant of Harcourt Square programme.

Decant of Harcourt Square

The decant of Harcourt Square comprised 12 different projects which resulted in the successful surrender of the lease to the four blocks on 31 December 2022. Almost 10 per cent of An Garda Síochána (AGS) were impacted by the move, and in the case of four national bureaus, temporary accommodation had to be sourced and fitted out in a very short timeframe. These staff will be relocated to their permanent homes in 2023.

The clear out of Harcourt Square became a project in of itself, with Garda Estate Management and Garda ICT collaborating with the OPW and a host of contractors to clear out the site fully, following the decant of the bureaus to their new locations. This work was completed on 21 December with the cleared buildings handed over to Hibernia REIT on 31 December 2022.



Assistant Commissioner Willis handing keys of Harcourt Square to Hibernia REIT, accompanied by Stephen Byrne, Head of Estate Management, Ciaran Fagan, Head of ICT Operations and Chief Superintendent O'Donnell, DMR South Central.

Walter Scott House, Military Road, Dublin 8

The new home for most of the Organised and Serious Crime Region, as well as the AGS Special Detective Unit was handed over to An Garda Síochána (AGS) by the Office of Public Works on 1 November 2022. This wonderfully designed building provides a high quality working environment for AGS personnel, and a state of the art facility which will accommodate key national bureaus as they continue to develop and grow.





Interior and Exterior pictures of new Garda Security and Crime and Operations Centre, Walter Scott House, Dublin 8

National Train Control Centre, Heuston Station, Dublin 8

The development of the AGS new Command and Control Centre at Heuston Station was completed and handed over in Q3 2022. The DMR Regional Control Room commenced day to day operations in November 2022.

Phoenix House, Conyngham Road, Dublin

The provision of new office accommodation for Garda ICT was completed and handed over in 2021, being the first element of the Decant programme. 220 Desks have been provided and allowed ICT to decant from Block J, Garda Headquarters.

ICT Datacentre, Finglas Garda Station

The second element of the Decant programme to be completed was the provision of a new Data Centre in Finglas Garda Station to replace the existing Data Centre in Block J, Garda Headquarters. This was completed in Q2 2022.

Block J, Garda Headquarters, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8

The redevelopment of Block J commenced in Q3 2022, and is due to take in the order of 12 months to complete. This redeveloped facility in Garda Headquarters will provide accommodation for over 100 staff from Community Engagement, Roads Policing and Youth Diversion Bureaus.

Clyde House, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15

The fit-out of Clyde House will be completed in Q2 2023, and will provide modern bespoke office accommodation for the Economic Crime and Protective Services Bureaus. The fit-out will provide best in class facilities, including over 300 desks, for these two National Bureaus.

Both Clyde House and Block J are behind the original timeframes proposed for their completion, which resulted in temporary accommodation being required.

Navan Road Former Intreo Office - Temporary

The fit-out of the former Interop Office on the Navan Road was identified as a solution late in Q3 2022, and delivered at the beginning of December 2022. This office is providing accommodation for the Protective Services Bureau.

6 Ely Place (rear of 51 St. Stephens Green) - Temporary

The former home of the Office of Public Works was also identified late in Q3, 2022 as an accommodation solution for the Community Engagement Region and the Economic Crime Bureau. The temporary fit-out of this building was delivered in early December 2022.

Dublin Castle, Dublin 2

The National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau vacated their former accommodation in Dublin Castle and moved into Walter Scott House in November 2022, and the Office of Assistant Commissioner Dublin Metropolitan Region, together with a number of regional resources, moved into to this vacated accommodation. Some small works will be carried out in 2023 to improve this facility. Locating the Assistant Commissioner in charge of Policing in the Capital in Dublin Castle has a historical significance and continues the long association of AGS with the Castle.

New Fleet Management and ICT Distribution Centre, Fingal's, Dublin 11.

In 2022, AGS secured new accommodation for its Fleet Management team and for an ICT Distribution Centre. The warehouse was initially utilised as a storage area for the clearance of furniture and equipment from Harcourt Square, and will be developed as a headquarters for Fleet Management and the ICT Distribution Centre over the course of 2023.

Garage, Garda Headquarters, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8

A portion of the existing Garage was caged to provide storage facilities for files from the Bureaus decanting from Harcourt Square. This was completed in November 2022.

Other Projects

Athlone Garda Station

The redevelopment of the station was completed in December 2021, and the building fully occupied in January 2022

Block N, Garda Headquarters

The redevelopment of Block N, to bring an 1840's building up to modern office accommodation standards and provide accommodation for the new Garda Anti-Corruption Unit was completed in Q2 2022

Longford Garda Station

Project to provide enhanced custody facilities and additional office accommodation completed in Q3 2022.

Navan Garda Station

Project to provide enhanced custody facilities and additional office accommodation completed in Q4 2022.

Bailieborough Garda Station

Development of new Garda Station commenced on site in January 2022. Building due to be completed in Q4 2023.

Newcastle West Garda Station

Planning lodged for new Garda Station in Limerick in Q4 2022. OPW proceeding with procurement phase of the project.

Cell Refurbishment Programme

Cell Refurbishments were completed in the following Garda Stations in 2022:

- Sundrive Road Garda Station, Dublin 12
- Enniscorthy Garda Station, Co Wexford
- Thomastown Garda Station, Co. Kilkenny

Irish Prison Service

The Irish Prison Service have completed the Limerick Prison redevelopment project Q4 2022. This project delivered a new male prisoner cell accommodation (B wing) with ancillary services, staff facilities and a new kitchen / laundries facilities. A new accommodation facility for female prisoners was also completed, with new visits, reception area, new gate lock and operational support services. Additional related recreational and other support facilities were provided to assist prisoners to reintegrate back into society on release from custody.



Overall view of the Limerick Prison development



View of the New B Wing.



View of the Internal Courtyard of the Female Prison



The first of two Airbus C295 Maritime Patrol Aircraft ordered by the Department of Defence preparing for its first test flight in September 2022, at the Airbus Defence and Space facility in Seville, Spain.

Defence

The principal demand drivers of Defence capital funding are the ongoing acquisition, renewal, and retention of military equipment along with the development of military infrastructure and information and communication technologies, as highlighted in the updated White Paper on Defence.

The Defence Equipment Development Plan and the Defence Infrastructural Development Plan provide the basis for the Defence Organisation to identify, plan, prioritise and manage its ongoing and future equipment and infrastructural programmes/projects, to include any necessary climate actions required. Defence equipment projects are often by their nature complex, atypical, multi-annual with long lead-in times.

Defence capital expenditure was over €143 million in 2022 and facilitated progress across a broad range of areas such as:

- The maintenance and upgrade programme of the Defence Forces Armoured Personnel Carrier fleet;
- The continued upgrade of the Defence Forces Transport Fleet through the replacement of the Army's fleet of ¾ tonne 4*4 vehicles along with the acquisition of new 4*4 Troop carrying vehicles;
- The acquisition of two Airbus C295 Maritime Patrol Aircraft;
- The acquisition of a new Fixed Wing Military Transport Aircraft, Airbus C295W;
- The mid-life refit of the P50 class vessels, LÉ Róisín and LÉ Niamh;

- The purchase and refit of two second user Naval Inshore Patrol Vessels;
- Ongoing investment in essential Information and Communication Technology upgrades;

The progression of a large number of Defence Forces Built Infrastructure Projects in military installations and barracks throughout the country. These projects are diverse and encompass accommodation, training, storage and health and safety upgrades.

Defence capital investment facilitates the retention of necessary military capabilities and provide the means by which the Defence Forces contribute to national and international peace and security and fulfil all other roles assigned by Government. These sectoral benefits will ultimately deliver wider societal benefits, as evidenced by the Government's commitment, in 2022, to gradually increase Defence funding to the levels required to deliver the level of organisational transformation recommended in the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces.



Inshore Patrol Vessels – The former Royal New Zealand Navy vessels (in photo) are the latest addition to the Naval Service Fleet'

Section 3

The Spatial Dimension

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out an overarching strategy for the sustainable development of our country to 2040. The National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP) provides the necessary investment to underpin the realisation of this strategy.

Together, the NPF and NDP comprise Project Ireland 2040, setting out a shared vision to create and promote opportunities for our people and to protect and enhance our environment during this period of plan-led growth.

National Planning Framework - Summary of Key Achievements/Highlights in 2022

Very significant progress was made by local authorities in 2022 to align their respective city and county development plans with the National Planning Framework, as transposed into regional planning policy through the three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies. In total 17 new city and county development plans came into effect during 2022, accounting for over half of all local authorities in the country. This builds on the six county development plans that were adopted in 2021 and will help to ensure that the NPF strategy to achieve sequential and compact growth, supported by sufficient land zoned to meet national housing supply targets, is delivered. This will contribute to ensuring that the benefits of National Strategic Outcomes 1 are felt by communities all across Ireland.

Housing for All, the Government's national plan on housing to 2030, was launched in September 2021. The multi-annual, multi-billion euro plan will improve Ireland's housing system and deliver more homes. It sets out four pathways to a sustainable housing system. A key objective is that everyone should have access to a home to purchase or rent at an affordable price, built to a high standard and in the right place, offering a high quality of life. Housing for All is strongly aligned to the objectives of the NPF and complements objectives for compact growth and for the delivery of vibrant and liveable urban areas. The first annual update to Housing for All was published on 2nd November 2022.

The Residential Zoned Land Tax was introduced in the Finance Act 2021 as a land activation measure. The Zoned Land Tax will incentivise the activation of land which is zoned and serviced for residential development but which remains undeveloped. It is primarily intended to encourage and provide greater certainty in relation to the development of housing on zoned and serviced lands rather than to raise revenue. The tax is intended to replace the Vacant Site Levy and will come into effect from February 2024. On 1st November 2022 Local Authorities published Draft Residential Zoned Land Tax Maps showing the lands that will fall within the scope of the tax. Landowners and other interested parties had an opportunity to make submissions to the local authorities regarding the inclusion / exclusion of lands on the draft maps between 1st of November 2022 and 1st January 2023. The final RZLT maps will be published in December 2023. RZLT is an important component of the pathway to increasing new housing supply, contained in the Government's Housing for All plan. The tax is to be administered by the Revenue Commissioners from February 2024.

The Planning and Development (Amendment) (Large-scale Residential Development) Act 2021 was signed into law in December 2021. The Act restores the two-stage planning process, with decision making for Large-scale Residential Development (LRD) type applications returning to the relevant local planning authority in the first instance, and with subsequent right of appeal to An Bord Pleanála. The Act provides for timely decision making through the introduction of clear timelines at each stage in the process. By restoring the two-stage process and returning public consultation to local level, an enhanced planning process can be delivered for all stakeholders.

2022 was the first year of the LRD process. Given the number of Strategic Housing Development applications working their way through the system in 2022, it is expected that the number of LRD applications will increase in the coming year as the LRD arrangements become embedded. The Department intends to collect LRD statistics in respect of 2022 and on a regular basis moving forward.

The Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities were issued in draft form for public consultation in August 2021. As the principal planning strategy document for the development of a local authority area, the development plan gives spatial expression to the physical, economic, social and environmental needs of the community, in order to support and regulate new development, enhance amenities and protect the environment. The guidelines were issued as Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines in July 2022. The guidelines will assist local authorities in delivering the national policy objectives of the NPF in their local plans.

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, announced funding of approximately €1.3 billion for 45 proposals approved under Call 2 of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund in March 2021. The Department's focus in 2022 was to engage with local authorities to ensure the advancement of the current programme of 132 URDF-supported regeneration and development projects.

The Land Development Agency Act 2021 was signed into law in July 2021. Following the commencement of relevant provisions of the LDA Act and the dissolution of the interim entity, the LDA was established as a wholly commercial Designated Activity Company (DAC) in April 2022. The remainder of the Act was commenced in full on 1 January 2023. The LDA will work with State bodies and local authorities to make more effective use of State lands, providing a stable, sustainable supply of land for housing."

The Government approved the publication of a revised general scheme regarding Land Value Sharing and Urban Development Zones in December 2022 which provides for:

- (a) local authorities to secure a reasonable proportion of the increase in land values arising from public decisions and investment related to planning and development from the point of zoning or designation of all land that is zoned for housing in a development plan. The LVS will act as a statutory charge on the land and
- (b) Designation of Urban Development Zones which have potential for significant development for housing and other purposes, and ensuring that the infrastructural investment required to facilitate development of strategic lands are determined at an early stage, while also enabling local authorities and other stakeholders to engage to enable cohesive development of identified lands

Draft Planning and Development Bill 2022

The draft Planning and Development Bill 2022 is the culmination of the Review and Consolidation of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) which was led by the Attorney General's Office. The Government approved the publication of the draft Bill was published in January 2023.

Increased Clarity in Plan Making

A key policy aim of the review was to ensure that the major debate, is focused on the plan-making rather than the planning application stage. By putting greater emphasis on the plan making stage, particularly on the scale of housing requirements to meet needs, in line with objectives of compact urban growth and environmental sustainability, it is hoped that the draft Bill can improve clarity and long-term visibility in planning outcomes. This requires a delicate balancing of consideration of public policy, public participation and environmental issues when taking decisions. The alignment of strategic planning at national, regional and local level over longer cycles will bring greater clarity as will the streamlining of guidance through the introduction of mandatory National Planning Policy Statements, approved by Government. The proposed introduction of extended 10-year Development Plans will provide a clear spatial planning framework for decision making and will be reviewed and amended after 5 years through the preparation of an Interim Report on Implementation, assessing progress against delivery and against any wider changes to the legal and policy landscape.

Greater Certainty of timelines

Users of the planning system will benefit from greater certainty through the introduction of a range of mandatory timelines across the various consenting processes including for An Bord Pleanála. An Bord Pleanála will be renamed An Coimisiún Pleanála and will have a significantly revised organisational structure. Penalties will apply for non-compliance with statutory timelines, which will be introduced on a phased basis, starting with Strategic Infrastructure Developments, including energy projects. These changes will significantly increase certainty for all parties involved in both application for development and any appeals or objections against such proposals.

Consistency in decision making

All provisions contained in the draft Bill are aligned with the relevant EU Directives and reflect the wording and intent of relevant EU Environmental Directives. The Appropriate Assessment process (particularly AA in enforcement cases and processes for projects of Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest) has been reviewed to better reflect the intent of the Habitats Directive. The ability of local authorities or An Coimisiún Pleanála to make decisions that materially contravene a development plan will be limited and more generally, lower order plans will be required to be aligned to higher order plans.

NPF implementation - overview

Implementation of the National Planning Framework is overseen by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, assisted by the Office of the Planning Regulator, the three regional assemblies and 31 local authorities. Four years on from its publication, the NPF policy has been successfully transposed at regional level through the adoption of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies. At a City and County level the review of all 31 City and County Development Plans is ongoing and will be largely completed in 2023. There is clear evidence in the emerging City and County Development Plans that the planning system is being reoriented at a local level to support the plan-led and compact growth objectives of the NPF. This revised policy context will support transition on the ground to compact growth. In 2021 the Department published draft Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities and advanced work on a review of the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines for Planning Authorities, published in 2009 and the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities published in 2005. The Department will continue to work with the OPR, LDA, regional assemblies and local authorities to drive implementation of the NPF at local and regional level.

Housing Supply

A total of 29,822 new homes were delivered in 2022. In addition, 34,117 Planning Permissions were granted, while 26,957 Commencement Notices were received. While Planning Permissions and Commencement Notices were down by 10 per cent and 12 per cent respectively year-on-year, there was a significant uptake in the commencements in Q4 2022 relative to previous years and the recent substantial uplift in supply compared 2020 and 2021 is expected to continue in 2023.

Planning permissions for apartments decreased by 36 per cent in 2022 (16,723) when compared to the 2021 (26,272). That said, while apartment viability is a continuing challenge, more apartments were delivered in 2022 (9,166) than 2020 and 2021 combined, with Dublin City, Fingal, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and South Dublin County Councils responsible for some 53 per cent of all apartments delivered, underlining the continuing shift in development patterns towards compact growth as envisaged by the National Planning Framework.



Ireland's Three Regions

Targeting a level of growth in the country's Northern and Western and Southern Regions combined, to at least match that projected in the Eastern and Midland Region.



Compact Growth

Targeting a greater proportion (40%) of future housing development to be within and close to the existing 'footprint' of built-up areas.



Ireland's Rural Fabric

Reversing town/village and rural population decline, by encouraging new roles and functions for buildings, streets and sites.



Ireland's Cities

Supporting ambitious growth targets to enable the four cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford to each grow by at least 50% to 2040 and to enhance their significant potential to become cities of scale.



Ireland's Capital

Supporting the future growth and success of Dublin as Ireland's leading global city of scale, by better managing Dublin's growth to ensure that more of it can be accommodated within and close to the City.

Section 4

Reforming, Monitoring and Implementation

The National Development Plan set out a range of new mechanisms designed to ensure smooth implementation of the range of major projects and programmes that make up Project Ireland 2040. Structures and programmes of reform were ongoing in 2022 to drive improved value for money, cost certainty and timely completion of major public investment programmes.

Monitoring and Implementation of Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040, which encompasses both the National Development Plan (NDP) and the National Planning Framework (NPF), seeks to reform how public investment is planned and delivered to achieve long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability. The strategy ensures the alignment of investment plans with the stated National Strategic Objectives for 2040 in a considered, cohesive and defined manner. The alignment of the NDP and NPF under Project Ireland 2040 (PI2040) creates a unified and coherent plan for the country by ensuring our investment strategy supports spatial planning behind a shared set of strategic objectives for rural, regional and urban development and will strengthen the link with the new Climate Action Plan and other sectoral policies.

To support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040, the following outputs were advanced in 2022:

- Publication of the fourth **Annual Project Ireland 2040 Report** and three **Regional Reports** setting out progress to date in delivery as well as policy developments across the system;
- Publication of the **Build Report** outlining a number of key findings in the area of costs, skills, productivity, sustainability, investment, and output. The report highlighted the challenges and risks facing the construction sector, including a number of initiatives being taken by the private and the public sector in order to increase skills, productivity and sustainability;
- The **Prospects 2022** report highlighted 50 of the largest individual projects that are currently at planning and appraisal stage, to projects which are nearing completion;
- Publication of the updated **MyProjectIreland mapping tool**, alongside an updated and expanded **Capital Investment Tracker**;
- The delivery of **Project Ireland 2040** and the NDP is overseen by the Project Ireland 2040 **Delivery Board**. This consists of key Secretaries General from capital spending Departments. The Delivery Board sought to enhance the expertise and discussion during meetings in 2022 by appointing up to five new external experts in infrastructure project and programme delivery to the Board. These external experts joined the Board in February 2022 and have brought a different viewpoint on the delivery of the NDP, the governance structures in place, and consideration of risks to successful major project implementation;
- The **Construction Sector Group (CSG) and the CSG Innovation and Digital Adoption Sub-Group** continued to progress their work on seven priority actions and two cross-cutting priority areas. These actions aim to increase output, productivity and innovation in the construction sector and built environment which will help facilitate the delivery of projects under the NDP. In terms of Action 3, 'Modern Methods of Construction', the MMC Leadership and Integration Group was established in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. In addition, a project management team and a design team were appointed to deliver the MMC Demonstration Park in Mount Lucas. The park is expected to be operational by the end of 2023;
- Action 4 of the CSG Sub-Group is the Construct Innovate Technology Centre which was officially launched on 9 December, 2022 in the University of Galway. Construct Innovate will help Irish construction companies to develop competitive advantage, using cutting edge products and services that are more efficient, more environmentally sustainable, and more effective for their customers;
- Action 7 of the CSG Sub-Group is the Build Digital Project which was launched in April at the TU Dublin Grangegorman site. The inaugural Build Digital annual conference took place on 26 October. The Build Digital Project will increase digital adoption across the construction sector, and thereby increase productivity and innovation;
- The **Major Projects Advisory Group** have scrutinised and reviewed a number of major project proposals, such as BusConnects, Metrolink, Clonburris URDF and the Cork and Galway elective hospitals, and have published their findings;
- The Major Project Advisory Group also carried out an end-year 2022 review highlighting key learnings from their project reviews and proposing process improvements. This review was published in Q1 2023; and
- The National Investment Office in DPENDR carried out technical reviews of Strategic Assessment Reports and Final Business Cases for nine major project proposals.



Public Spending Code Reforms

In Q4 2021, DPENDR introduced the External Assurance Process (EAP) and the Major Projects Advisory Group (MPAG) to update the PSC guidance. The EAP involves independent expert reviews of major projects at two key stages in the project lifecycle, under the Public Spending Code (before approval in principle and pre-tender). The MPAG, which consists of four experts, provides further assurance in the areas of planning, managing, and delivering major public investment projects. These reforms were fully implemented into the capital appraisal process for major public capital projects in 2022, bringing Ireland in line with leading international performers and meeting a recommendation of the IMF's Public Investment Management Assessment of Ireland.

The Public Spending Code (PSC) was reviewed in 2022, with recommendations as to how the PSC could operate in a more streamlined manner and take account of the appropriate legal responsibilities of Accounting Officers. The recommendations of the review were addressed as part of the package of measures agreed in terms of the implementation of DPENDR's new mandate in respect of NDP delivery, which also included:

- The Public Spending Code will be replaced by a set of Infrastructure Guidelines. The level of cost at which a new proposal is considered a major project is also raised from €100 million to €200 million, and major projects will be subject to review by the Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform and Major Projects Advisory Group (MPAG) at the Preliminary Business Case stage only. It will be a requirement that major projects will go to Cabinet for approval at this and the Final Business Case stage. Prior to project implementation, the number of stages in the approval process will reduce from five stages to three stages. This applies to all projects and will help to significantly speed up the appraisal and approval process. These changes have already been implemented through Government circular 06/2023. Further appraisal guidance will be published in 2023, known as the Infrastructure Guidelines, as part of capital project development, which will supersede the existing Public Spending Code.

Mandate for the delivery of the NDP

The significant investment as we are seeing under the NDP does not come without delivery challenges and delivery of some NDP projects has been adversely impacted over the past three years as a result of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The renaming and reconstitution of the Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDR) in December 2022, to specifically include NDP Delivery, brought about a greater emphasis and mandate for the delivery of the NDP. In light of this new role, a review of the support structures and levers available across Government to maximise delivery of projects was undertaken. As a result, a series of actions and reforms were identified as priorities to improve delivery of NDP projects, including reforms of the Public Spending Code which are set out in more detail below.

- The Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF) will continue to work on rebalancing risk in the Public Works Contract while maintaining expenditure control. The focus on lifecycle costs in tender documentation as opposed to construction costs will allow public clients to focus on quality over cheapest bid. The reforms are also targeted at rebalancing some of the risks borne by the contractors/consultants on public works projects through capping the liability and amending indemnity insurance requirements;
- The Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board will be reconstituted and will now be chaired by the Minister for Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform, and comprise the existing independent members and key Secretaries General;
- Review of capacity in major departments and agencies to deliver on NDP priorities with particular focus on significant capital projects to ensure appropriate resourcing to assist delivery;
- An independent mid-term evaluation of investment priorities and capacity of the NDP, focussing on the capacity to deliver current government priorities, to utilise sectoral capital allocations and to estimate the impact of the NDP on key economic indicators; and
- Reporting to the government on NDP delivery throughout 2023 and 2024 will take place on a quarterly basis.

Managing Risks to NDP Delivery

Impact of Inflation

In January 2022 the OGP published substantial amendments to the public works contracts to reflect the inflation pressures that arose on construction materials throughout 2021. These changes reduced the fixed price period in the contracts, introduced a provision to permit contractors recover material price inflation in excess of 15% within the fixed price period and allowed for the tender price to be adjusted to reflect for an increase above the defined background inflation level in the Central Statistics Office 'All Materials' category of the Wholesale Price Index between the tender submission date and the award of contract. These amendments applied to those contracts whose tenders were received after 18 January 2022.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine the rate of inflation for construction materials and energy increased at exceptional levels. Through extensive engagement with industry and public sector stakeholders involved in the delivery of the National Development Plan, it was clear that the delivery of many critical public capital projects was being put at risk. For contractors who tendered for projects prior to the onset of these inflationary pressures, this issue was particularly acute.

In May 2022 Minister McGrath introduced an "Inflation/Supply Chain Delay Co-operation Framework" for those parties engaged under a public works contract in the interest of safeguarding public projects that were already under construction and to mitigate the risks of significant losses being sustained by contractors.

The Framework facilitates both parties to engage with one another for the purpose of addressing the impacts of exceptional inflation and supply chain disruption and operates on an ex gratia basis. It sets down the approaches and the parameters within which parties to a public works contract calculate additional costs attributable to material and fuel price fluctuations using specified price indices published by the Central Statistics Office. Additional inflation costs are apportioned between the parties, with, subject to budgetary constraints, the State bearing up to 70%.

Departments have reported that in the majority of cases parties are engaging and that agreements have been entered into. This has facilitated the progression of works and has avoided substantial delays to completion by bringing a greater level of certainty to contractors as to the extent of their exposure to inflation in material and energy costs. The process is ongoing as the movement in the specified indices are monitored at each monthly interim payment cycle and will continue until the project is completed or the level of inflation recedes to a point where it is no longer required.

In Q2 of 2023 it is proposed to introduce further amendments to the public works contract to include recovery for fuel and energy price increases where the Proven Cost method of price variation is chosen by the contracting authority; a new price variation clause for the short public works contract; and rationalizing aspects of the existing price variation provisions in forms PW-CF1 – PW-CF5 inclusive.

Tightened Market for Indemnity Insurance

Since 2018, the global Personal Indemnity Insurance (PII) market's cycle has been in a hardening phase triggered by two events. Firstly, a thematic review undertaken by Lloyd's in 2018 identified non-US PII as one of the worst performing sub-classes of insurance leading to a withdrawal of insurers and capital from this insurance line. The Hackitt Report and the inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire has also caused insurers to focus on the liabilities taken on by contractors and consultants in the construction sector.

As a result of a tightening of the insurance market for PII, policies for construction professionals and contractors became increasingly expensive throughout 2020, 2021 and 2022, providing a reduced level of cover, with a greater number of exclusions and increased levels of excess. This resulted in many otherwise capable and competent firms being excluded from procurement competitions because they were no longer in a position to obtain insurance at levels that was readily available up to 2019.

The OGP has introduced a number of measures throughout 2022 that has served to ease the pressure on what continues to be a challenging area. Guidance was published in February 2022 setting out levels of professional indemnity insurance that are appropriate to the current market. That guidance also included measures to be taken by contracting authorities aimed at reducing the level of liability typically imposed on consultants and contractors in the manner in which contracts are structured. The guidance and changes to template procurement documents has been welcomed by industry stakeholders.

In October 2022, following consultation with members of the Government Contracts Committee for Construction, a position paper was issued to external stakeholders on liability caps. Submissions were received from a number of stakeholders and have been considered and the position amended where appropriate. The Minister for Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform has approved the proposals and the amended Standard Conditions of Engagement incorporating liability caps were published on 31 March 2023 with the suite of public works contracts to follow in Q2 of 2023.

Progress on the review of the Capital Works Management Framework

The review has been delayed due to the impact of the pandemic, its aftermath and the ongoing war in Ukraine. Available resources have been focused on addressing the issues that have arisen. Nonetheless work progressed in the background on a number of fronts. The work of the review is centred on changing the focus in the procurement of public buildings and infrastructure away from decisions made on the basis solely of the capital cost of the asset to the total cost of ownership.

To enable this, the quality of information on all aspects of a project must be improved but in a manner that is appropriate to the scale of the project. This enables better budget definition and decisions based on the long term durability and serviceability of the asset as well as a better overview on risk. This also provides the means to improve the measurement of the performance of a project and its key actors during the course of its delivery and beyond into its operation and maintenance.

As part of the work underway on the review there are three aspects in particular that are focussed on improving the quality of information that is available at key decision points in a project's development. There are explored in more detail below:

Consultancy Engagement

The manner in which consultancy services are engaged is a key part of the review and encompasses a range of reforms aimed at driving better project definition, which in turn provides greater certainty for all those engaged in the construction stage. Overall improvement in project definition is enabled through establishing minimum standards for information at the different stages of a project's development.

In 2022, work on developing guidance that explains the process that should be used to define precisely the output requirements of a project in the Project Brief has been progressed. Engagement with external stakeholders commenced in Q1 of 2023 to obtain feedback on the draft guidance. The meetings also covered how the definition of the scope of service could be improved to enable more accurate fee proposals that are reflective of the service required.

Building Information Modelling

Building Information Modelling (BIM) has the potential to transform the processes surrounding project and data management on construction projects and can drive significant efficiencies in the construction and operation phases. Establishing consistent requirements starting with client bodies is key to maximising industry participation in the transition to digital delivery methods.

Work is currently underway with the Build Digital Project in developing supports for client bodies in anticipation of the announcement of an implementation plan for BIM adoption on public works projects in 2023. This will culminate in a range of templates and guidance that will support client bodies – both public and private sector – in defining their information requirements in accordance with the ISO 19650 series of standards.

In order to prepare the ground for public sector clients in anticipation of the implementation plan a series of masterclasses were developed and commenced in Q1 of 2022. The plan will set out timelines for a phased adoption of BIM across the NDP. External advisers have been engaged to draft contract amendments to incorporate BIM into the CWMF and to prepare template procurement documents for publication.

covers both capital and whole life costing while providing a way of presenting costs in a consistent format. In 2022, the Office of Government Procurement, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and the Office of Public Works completed work on mapping ICMS to existing classifications. This has undergone internal peer-review in Q1 2023. The revised cost reporting templates will be published under Pillar 3 of the CWMF in late Q2/early Q3 of 2023.

Together these reform processes will lead to meaningful policy change and will assist in delivering better value for money for the taxpayer in the implementation of Project Ireland 2040.

Life Cycle Costing

Engagement is ongoing in developing standard metrics for life cycle costing and life cycle analysis that can be applied to the evaluation of projects' cost of use in service and full life cycle analysis, including the carbon impact of individual projects. The OGP is liaising with the Government Contracts Committee for Construction and the Irish Green Building Council in developing these metrics.

Developing consistent approaches to evaluating life cycle costs and life cycle analysis ensures that contracting authorities' decisions are taking into account whole life costs rather than solely on the capital costs.

The Cost Control Templates published under the CWMF are undergoing review to incorporate the International Construction Measurement Standard (ICMS). ICMS is a global standard for benchmarking and reporting of construction project cost, and

