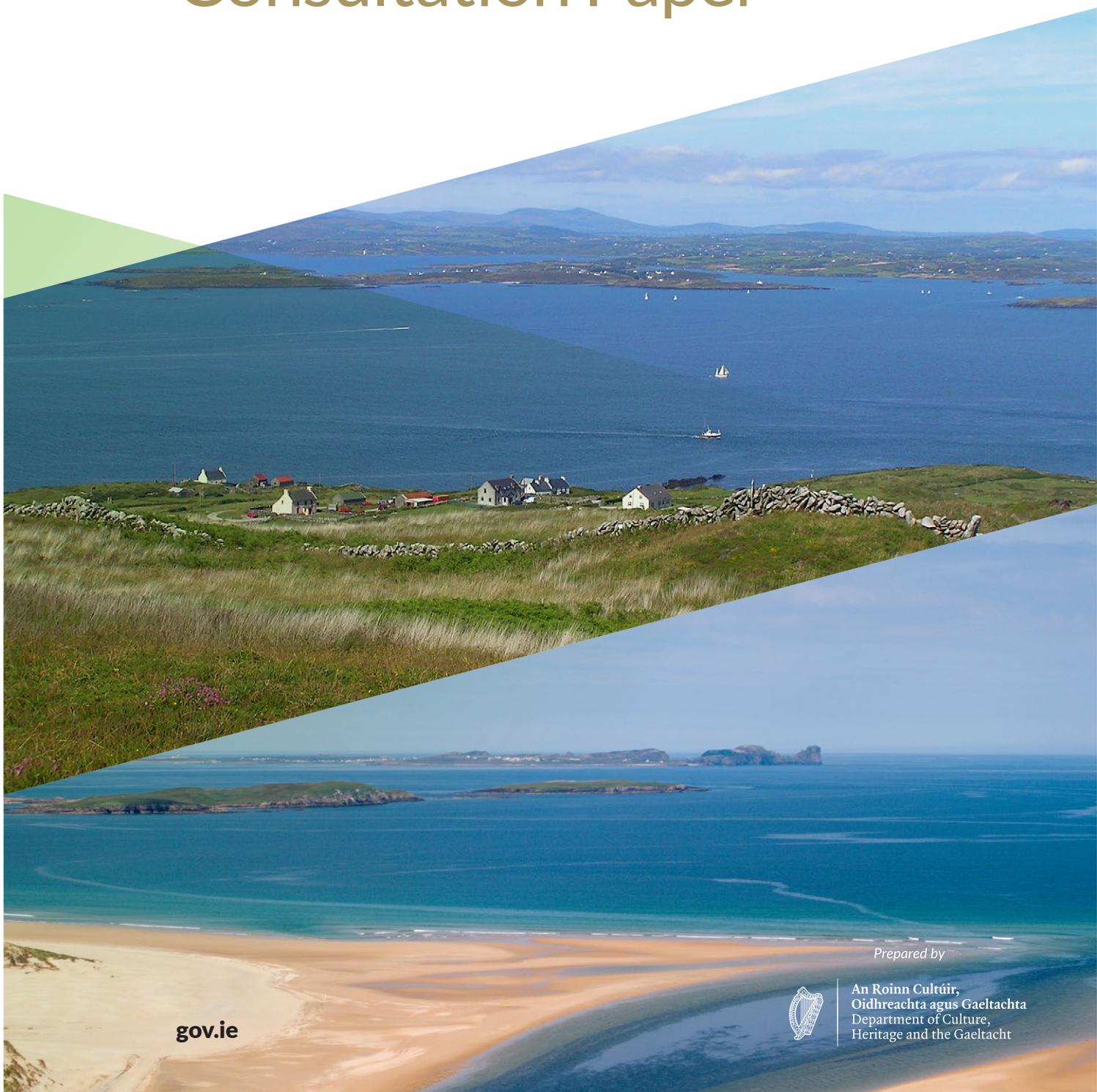




Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Islands Policy Consultation Paper



gov.ie

Prepared by



An Roinn Cultúir,
Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta
Department of Culture,
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Minister of State's Foreword



It is my great pleasure to invite you to contribute submissions, observations and comments to this important and consultation exercise. Your input and views will help us to shape the content of a new National Policy for the Future Development and Sustainability of Communities on the Offshore Islands of Ireland.

I am extremely proud to be leading on this work. Our coastal islands are an integral part of the State's heritage. Approximately 30 of these islands are inhabited and hold a wealth of cultural heritage. A central objective of the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht is to ensure that sustainable vibrant communities continue to live on the islands.

This paper has been developed to support a consultation process to aid the development of a new Islands Policy. It sets out existing Government policies, some of which are focussed on the island communities, and others that are available to all citizens, including those living on the islands. My Department will be undertaking a comprehensive consultation process, listening to the island communities with a view to establishing what more can be done to sustain and develop these communities.

For those participating in the consultation process, I would encourage openness, the raising of questions and the generation of ideas. The aim is to stimulate thinking and bring together the combined wisdom and perspectives of all stakeholders.

This process will enable the Government to set a clear direction for the future development and sustainability of our island communities, clarifying objectives and priorities, and directing decision makers, service users and stakeholders towards more strategic and efficient use of resources. It will inform decisions about the current and future development and sustainability of communities on the offshore islands, the necessary prerequisite for maintaining the island populations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Seán Kyne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

**Government Chief Whip and Minister of State for the Irish Language,
the Gaeltacht and the Islands, Seán Kyne TD**

November 2019



Contents

Minister of State's Foreword	1
1. Introduction - Objective	4
2. Island Development in the context of National Planning strategies	6
3. Interdepartmental Committee	7
4. Existing Government Policies & Initiatives in place to support Island Communities	8
5. Stakeholders – Island communities and committees	28
6. The Next Steps	29

1 | Introduction - Objective

1.1 | Background

In January 1995, Donal Carey TD was appointed Minister of State for Western Development and Rural Renewal, and was given responsibility for formulating policy and co-ordinating action in relation to the inhabited offshore islands. At the request of An Taoiseach, the Minister of State established an Interdepartmental Committee on Island Development in June 1993, with the following terms of reference:

“to review and prioritise development strategies and recommend on actions to ensure a co-ordinated approach to all aspects of island development, including the question of structural relationships.”

The Committee’s report “A strategic framework for developing the offshore islands of Ireland” was published in 1996. This aimed to set out the strategic framework within which future action in relation to the islands would be pursued. It was proposed that it would be a basis for Government action as well as a consultative document, around which discussion and debate on Government policy in relation to the islands would be centred. The main recommendations of the report centred on the provision of improved harbour infrastructure and life-line transport services. Recommendations contained in the report included:

- A socially desirable minimum standard of access service to be made available to all island communities;
- A programme of works based on the clear identification of priority needs would be drawn up and implemented immediately;
- Up to £1 million be added to the financial envelope for access services and related infrastructural works;
- Health boards be asked to identify where health care provision could be improved, particularly in respect of children, the elderly and pre/post-natal care;
- The use of information technology as an educational resource for training and development and for distance learning should also be examined.
- The ESB were to examine the feasibility of extending the grid, and in terms of telecoms the GSM service operators were to assess the feasibility of extending the GSM mobile phone service coverage to the islands.
- Other Departments and bodies were to assess the range of services they provide to the islands in particular in the areas of Agriculture, Fisheries, Tourism and Local Development.

Following on from this report, a major programme of State investment in several of these areas was embarked upon.

Many of the recommendations in the 1996 report, in particular those focussed on island transport and infrastructure, have been achieved. While progress has been made, some aspects of the 1996 proposals were not met or not fully met.

As the Department with responsibility for the islands, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is now working to update and build on what has been achieved to date and aims to re-examine the possible synergies between the various Government Departments and other agencies with a view to formulating a new Islands Policy.

In addition, society and lifestyles have changed, expectations are higher and there is a demand from island communities to facilitate their efforts and aspirations to retain the next generation of islanders, to attract people to come to live on the islands and to help overcome outstanding issues based on island separation from the mainland. The new Islands Policy will provide the State with a vision for the building of sustainable futures for island communities.

In the context of this policy, islands are defined as islands which are cut off daily by the tide, are not connected to the mainland by a bridge, have permanent populations and are not in private ownership.

In developing this proposed vision it is important to be consistently mindful of the essential reasons why sustainability of island communities is a national policy goal. These are:

1 Equality of opportunity is a fundamental principle underpinning Irish Society

2 Personal growth and mobility pay huge dividends

3 Enabling a vibrant, harmonious society

In developing a new, integrated Government islands development policy the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht aims to build on from the goals achieved in the 1996 policy document. The new island policy will be forward-looking and will focus on strengthening our rural communities and economies and resolving issues arising from separation from the mainland.

It is also proposed that the new Islands Policy, and an associated Action Plan, will include provision for ongoing review, where progress will be assessed through the achievement of agreed objectives and targets set out in the Action Plan.

The Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) will be co-ordinating the development of the policy and associated action plan. It is critical to the success of the process that the new plan reflects the input and combined expertise of all stakeholders.

1.2 | First steps

This discussion document has been designed to outline the island specific policies that are already in place across Government, and provides a proposed basis for discussions to be held with our island communities.

Workshops will be held with the island communities, seeking to identify policies or actions that should be developed in order to support, sustain and develop these communities. This process should also serve to identify synergies of policy and services between the participating Government Departments and other stakeholder bodies, thereby to better serve our island communities by addressing the particular challenges they face.

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht welcomes the views of all stakeholders and looks forward to all inputs that will contribute to providing a way forward on the next steps for further advancing the sustainability and development of the offshore islands. This consultation is concerned with stimulating thinking and obtaining the perspectives of all stakeholders as part of the policy drafting process.

The consultation process will involve engaging in meaningful consultation with islanders in the formulation of an Islands Policy followed by the development and implementation of an Action Plan, including but not limited to the areas of housing, health, energy, waste management, climate change, education, communication, employment and transport.

The consultation workshops will be organised in collaboration with local island organisations and promoted widely so that a broad spectrum of the island community can attend and participate.

The consultation process will inform the State's approach to developing public policy in relation to island communities and will be based on principles of equality, partnership and full participation of the island communities.

2 Island Development in the context of National Planning strategies

The National Development Plan (*Project Ireland 2040*)¹ places a particular emphasis on protecting and enhancing our culture, language and heritage. The development of a new policy for the future development and sustainability of communities on the offshore islands of Ireland is included within the context of National Planning Objectives as set out in *Project Ireland 2040*, as well as in the context of Ireland's broader Rural Development Policy.

Accordingly, Departments are involved in a range of cross-Government strategies and initiatives requiring close co-operation between Departments and a range of organisations and public bodies.

This includes participating in and supporting the work of Interdepartmental Groups including contributing to, but not limited to:

- The Action Plan for Jobs²
- The Action Plan for Rural Development³
- The Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness⁴
- The Policy for Gaeltacht Education⁵

The Island Development strategy will seek to consolidate and focus all these various initiatives as they refer to the islands.



1 <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/09022006-project-ireland-2040>

2 <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Business-Sectoral-Initiatives/Action-Plan-for-Jobs/>

3 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/091dba-realising-our-rural-potential-action-plan-for-rural-development/>

4 <https://rebuildingireland.ie/>

5 <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Policy-on-Gaeltacht-Education-2017-2022.pdf>

3 | Interdepartmental Committee

An Interdepartmental Committee has been established, chaired by the Government Chief Whip and Minister of State for the Irish Language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands, Seán Kyne TD. The purpose of the committee is to inform and implement the new policy for island development and subsequent associated Action Plan, which will

comprise defined measurable actions associated, with various parties with timeframes set out to ensure the roll out of those actions.

This initiative will require co-operation and input from all relevant Government Departments and agencies and their agreement in relation to both the policy and the action plan.

Terms of Reference

The Committee, in close consultation with individual island communities and Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann/the Irish Islands Federation, will:

1 In relation to island life in general

- Identify the main challenges faced by communities living on the offshore islands;

2 In relation to public policy

- identify areas of public policy which can best support the sustainable development of island communities;
- identify best practice as regards public policy affecting island communities, including public policy applying in other EU member states.

3 In relation to delivery of public services

- review the delivery of public services to the offshore islands;
- identify gaps in those public services and potential synergies between Government Departments and agencies with regard to their provision;

4 As regards the future

- develop a suite of recommendations with regard to issues coming to light as a result of the work carried out in relation to paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 above, aimed at developing a Cross-Government Policy on Island Development.
- seek Government approval to publish the Cross-Government Policy on Island Development which will include the Committee's recommendations as regards public service delivery and future policy.

5 Following approval by Government of the aforementioned policy document, develop an Action Plan for the implementation of the Committee's recommendations and oversee its implementation, while reporting to Government, at intervals to be agreed.

4 Existing Government Policies & Initiatives in place to support Island Communities

This chapter sets out many of the policies and initiatives that are already in place across Government Departments and agencies, which have either been developed specifically for island communities or which are available to them. While the list may not be exhaustive, the purpose is to inform discussion and to aid in identifying areas which need to be improved or developed.

4.1 Department of Culture, Heritage & The Gaeltacht

The Department's Statement of Strategy 2018-2020⁶ sets out high level goals, together with the strategies and outputs to be employed to deliver on these goals and the positive outcomes that it proposes to achieve.

With regards to the islands the stated goal is to "facilitate the sustainable development of island communities." To achieve this goal two strategies have been identified;

- Enhancing the viability of communities on the offshore islands by continued investment in life-line transport services and in community, enterprise and marine infrastructure;
- Supporting the sustainable development of the Gaeltacht and island communities through job creation and retention of existing employment.

In working to achieve the goals, the strategy will support the achievement of relevant National Strategic Objectives set out in the National Planning Framework and the associated National Development Plan as part of Project Ireland 2040.

The main objectives set out in the 1996 report "A strategic framework for developing the offshore islands of Ireland", namely access to the islands and improved infrastructure, have largely been met. In 1996, there were just three passenger ferry routes, in addition to one cargo and one air route, in receipt of a total of £893,910 in financial assistance from the State. By 2018, the state subsidised 13 passenger ferry routes, 9 cargo routes and 2 air services. The total cost of these services amounted to over €6.5m. Department funded ferry services carried over 500,000 passengers and 29,000 tons of cargo in 2018. The increased investment by the State in these services has supported the sustainability of the island communities by underpinning critical access for island life all year round.

Additionally, since 1996, the Department has embarked on an extensive program of pier development to facilitate safe access to islands, under which funding in excess of €100m has been provided towards completion of harbour infrastructure. With some exceptions, this investment has resulted in issues surrounding access to and from the islands largely being resolved.

6 <https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/07/statement-of-strategy-2018-2020-final.pdf>

Capital Projects

Island Projects set out in Project Ireland 2040 include three major harbour projects, namely; improvement works to piers on Inis Oírr, Inis Meáin and at Machaire Rabhartaigh serving Oileán Thoraí. The Government recognises that these projects are vital pre-requisites for maintaining island populations. Whilst the 2040 projects are at different stages in their development, it is the Department's aim that they will continue to be progressed as rapidly as resources allow.

DCHG, in conjunction with local authorities, has also provided support for annual programmes of minor capital works for over 20 years, which has enabled the development and maintenance of island infrastructure.

Culture and Language

Our islands draw visitors from around the world seeking the opportunity to experience the unique Irish language and our culture and heritage.

The Department has long recognised the particular cultural importance of the Irish Language, not least in the context of the offshore islands. Under the statutory language planning process, Gaeltacht communities are afforded the opportunity to prepare and implement language plans at a community level with ongoing State support to strengthen the use of the Irish language in those communities.

Funding of up to €100,000 per annum is being provided for each plan, and in the case of the three Aran Islands, a sum of up to €150,000 per annum will be provided in recognition of logistical difficulties. These plans are to be implemented over a seven year period.

The Department also supports Irish language colleges on the islands with funding of €438,698 being made available in 2018.

Údarás na Gaeltachta works with the Department in several areas pertinent to the Gaeltacht islands. In their policy statement for the Gaeltacht islands, Údarás states that they will assume responsibility to assist island communities in priority areas such as community development, employment and entrepreneurship, education and training, natural resources, tourism and aspects of the social economy connected to cultural projects, child care, care of the elderly and the disabled and youth matters.

In their Strategic Plan 2018 – 2020⁷, Údarás specifically states that potential development for the islands will be assessed and strategic priorities in the cultural, social and economic areas will be progressed through cooperation with the local communities. This work will be undertaken within the context of the particular opportunities and challenges that are a feature of island life.

In 2019, additional funding of €500,000 was allocated to Údarás towards linguistic, cultural and community development in the Gaeltacht. This brings the total funding allocated for this purpose to €3.85m in 2019, which will assist in funding community organisations, and cooperatives, including those on the Gaeltacht Islands.

Údarás funds the roll out of GTEIC - Gréasán Digiteach na Gaeltachta - a network of 31 innovation & digital hubs with high speed broadband in locations throughout Ireland's Gaeltacht Areas. Innovation hubs will be located along the Wild Atlantic Way in Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry and Cork. Six Gaeltacht islands will form part of this growing digital ecosystem to support the sustainability of the offshore islands.

Local Enterprise Offices & Community Employment Schemes

Further to a protocol agreed with DCHG and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Údarás na Gaeltachta also functions as a Local Enterprise Office for Gaeltacht Communities. Through its 5 regional offices, Údarás manages the Community Enterprise Scheme, whereby assistance is provided to committees or community development organisations in the Gaeltacht, to undertake community enterprises.

Under this scheme, a maximum grant amount of up to €5,000 is available at a rate of 75% of the qualifying expenditure. Applications relating to community enterprises in the following areas can be accepted:

- Development of the Committee's Planning and Management Skills;
- Development of Local Facilities and Services; and
- Development of the Irish language as a community language.

7 <http://www.udaras.ie/faoin-udaras/foilseachain/doicimeid-straiteise/>

Community Development on the Islands

Since 1996 the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, in conjunction with other state agencies, and the island development companies has facilitated the provision of new educational facilities and programmes, community development programmes, primary care centres, recreational facilities, waste collection and recycling initiatives, enterprise development programmes and tourism initiatives, all of which have impacted positively on island communities.

In 2015, responsibility for funding and supporting community development structures on the non-Gaeltacht islands transferred to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. This involved interaction with the Local Development companies to enable them to provide community services on the islands with their funding being channelled via the Comhar na n-Oileán umbrella organisation.

Community Based Projects

In recent years, through the Department's Islands division and National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Department provided co-funding to the AranLIFE project, based on the three Aran Islands. The main aims of the project were to demonstrate best management techniques to both maintain and bring specific habitats to favourable condition by addressing the threats of land abandonment, undergrazing, intensification, loss of traditional management systems and associated loss of knowledge. The Department's NPWS continues to provide support and assistance to island communities in preserving endangered habitats and wildlife species.

4.2 | The Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine

Island farmers can avail of the range of supports provided by the Department which are open to all farmers in the state.

The **Areas of Natural Constraint** scheme (ANC)⁸ provides island specific supports for island farmers under sub measure 13.3 of the Rural Development plan utilising the ANC compensation. Island farmers must nevertheless fulfil all the eligibility conditions applying to the ANC scheme with the exception that the 3 hectare minimum farm holding will not apply. Additionally the rates of ANC support per hectare for island farmers are higher than for mainland farmers.

Rural Development Plan⁹ measures are available to island farmers as they are to mainland farmers. These measures include schemes to promote knowledge transfer and information actions, advisory services, investments in physical assets, renewal in rural areas, agri-environment measures, organic farming, animal welfare, collaborative farming, and support for LEADER Community-Led local development.

Fishing Quotas - Islanders have access to quota for particular species. The government does not propose to increase those quotas, instead restrictions on larger vessels coming into effect at the start of 2020 should leave more stocks of fish for smaller island vessels.

8 <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmerschemespayments/basicpaymentschemegreeningareasofnaturalconstraints/2019areasofnaturalconstraintsancscheme/>

9 <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/ruralenvironmentsustainability/ruraldevelopmentprogrammerdp2014-2020/>

4.3 The Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI), the enterprise agencies (IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices), as well as other Government Departments and sectoral support bodies, have, overtime, built a comprehensive suite of business and advisory supports which can be broadly categorised as information/awareness, advisory, financial, and supports for regional enterprise development.

DBEI's **Enterprise 2025 Renewed**¹⁰ is Ireland's national enterprise policy and sets out an ambition for job creation, focused on quality employment that is sustainable over the longer term with job creation throughout the regions. It aims to embed resilience in our enterprises, contributing to strong economic performance over the longer term,

through a number of key policy priorities including increasing the emphasis on developing our Irish owned enterprises, embedding resilience in our enterprise base, enhancing productivity and delivering quality jobs, including supporting companies on navigating their way through Brexit.

The Future Jobs Ireland¹¹ initiative gives effect to national enterprise policy objectives and leverages a 'whole of Government' approach so that all policy levers at the national level, relevant to job creation and labour force participation, talent development, enterprise growth, innovation and competitiveness, and transition to a low carbon economy, are engaged on an agenda that will prepare for Ireland's future enterprise and economic needs. *Future Jobs Ireland*, which is led by DBEI with the Department of An Taoiseach, focuses on five pillars to prepare our enterprises and workers for the challenges ahead.

These pillars are:



1 Embracing Innovation and Technological Change



2 Improving SME Productivity



3 Enhancing Skills and Development and Attracting Talent



4 Increasing Participation in the Labour Force



5 Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy

10 <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Enterprise-2025-Renewed.pdf>

11 <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Future-Jobs-Ireland-2019.pdf>

The ambitions and deliverables in *Future Jobs Ireland* mark the beginning of the journey to achieving our medium-term objectives. Throughout the course of 2019, Government Departments have been working collaboratively with stakeholders to develop further commitments for inclusion in *Future Jobs Ireland 2020*.

The coming together of public and private sector stakeholders to set regional strategic objectives for enterprise development under refreshed **Regional Enterprise Plans**¹² has an important role to play in the realisation of *Enterprise 2025 Renewed* and the ongoing *Future Jobs* agenda. The *Regional Enterprise Plans* aim to drive sustainable and quality job creation in the regions and facilitate each region to achieve its economic potential through collaborative initiatives. These Plans are enterprise focused, based on collaboration between regional stakeholders and are about adding-value to the core work of the enterprise agencies and other development bodies at the regional level, so that they can help support the regions to realise their enterprise development potential. Stakeholders include: Local Authorities, the LEOs, the enterprise agencies, the *Regional Skills Forum*, tourism boards, private sector ‘enterprise champions’, higher and further education institutions, business representative bodies, and others.

The *Regional Enterprise Plans* facilitate structured engagement through the private sector led *Steering Committees* that are driving their implementation within each region and provide an opportunity to consider regional enterprise potential as well as vulnerabilities, including those arising for island communities. The Plans are considered to be ‘live’ documents and the *Regional Steering Committees* are encouraged to examine and take forward opportunities for new initiatives, when they arise.

The Regional Enterprise Development Fund¹³ (**REDF**) was introduced to support the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects that can sustain and add to employment at county, regional and national level. Creating added value for enterprises and addressing gaps in provision are at the core of the **REDF**, where projects integrate enterprise infrastructure developments with enterprise support elements.

Enterprise Ireland supports companies in urban and rural areas. The agency’s strategy, ‘*Build Scale, Expand Reach 2017 – 2020*’¹⁴, sets out strategic targets which are focused on:

- assisting clients to create 60,000 new jobs by 2020 while sustaining the existing record level of jobs;
- growing the annual exports of client companies in the Irish economy by €4bn to €27bn per annum by 2020; and
- inspiring more Irish owned companies to have global ambition

Enterprise Ireland’s Regional Plan 2019, ‘Powering the Regions’¹⁵ builds on this Strategy and identifies *National Initiatives* that are impactful and will develop regions of scale. The plan entails a vision that is ambitious and proposes a number of new initiatives which will have significant impact on economic development in the regions.

Enterprise Ireland is working through a network of market and sector advisers from ten offices located throughout the country. This network enables the agency to connect and collaborate at a local level with enterprise development partners to assist in driving the multiagency response required to promote regional development.

The agency can tailor a support package to a company’s growth potential. A support package focuses, where relevant, on six business pillars (*Innovation, Finance, Operations, Sales and Marketing, People and Organisational Development*).

A *Memorandum of Understanding* between *Enterprise Ireland* and *Údarás na Gaeltachta* sets out areas of cooperation and coordination between the two agencies.

There are 31 **Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)**¹⁶ across the Local Authority network in Ireland. All are operated on a partnership basis by *Enterprise Ireland* with the Local Authorities, under the auspices of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

12 <https://dbe.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Business-Sectoral-Initiatives/Regional-Enterprise-Plans/>

13 <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/funding-supports/REDF/>

14 <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Publications/Reports-Published-Strategies/Strategy-2017-to-2020.pdf>

15 <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Publications/Reports-Published-Strategies/Enterprise-Ireland-Regional-Plan.pdf>

16 <https://www.localenterprise.ie/>

The LEOs are the ‘first-stop-shop’ for providing advice and guidance, financial assistance and other supports to those wishing to start or grow their own businesses. In the first instance, the LEOs provide a ‘signposting’ service in relation to all relevant State supports for enterprise development. The LEOs also offer grant aid to microenterprises in manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors which have the potential to develop into strong export entities, in addition to ‘soft’ supports in the form of training, a mentor to work with the business proposer, or targeted programmes such as Lean for Micro (to help boost business productivity and competitiveness).

The Memorandum of Understanding between Enterprise Ireland (on behalf of the eight Local Enterprise Offices in Local Authority areas that encompass Gaeltacht areas) and Údarás na Gaeltachta aims to:

- ensure that Gaeltacht-based clients are afforded equal and comparable services and supports through Údarás na Gaeltachta that are otherwise provided in non-Gaeltacht area by the Local Enterprise Office for entrepreneurs and new or existing enterprises
- establish a structured link between the LEOs and Údarás na Gaeltachta centrally and locally regarding the provision of information, guidance and support to clients
- outline a mechanism for the provision of access to services and schemes to Údarás na Gaeltachta clients from the LEOs for eligible Gaeltacht enterprises,
- provide for an efficient customer service in response to LEO and Údarás na Gaeltachta client queries
- provide for cooperation and collaboration on awareness and promotion activities
- provide for exchanges between the parties on the uptake and operation of the measures and levels of demand for information, guidance and support by clients, and
- provide for periodic review of the operation of the protocol.

IDA Ireland’s mission is to partner with multi-national companies to win and develop foreign direct investment, providing jobs for the economic and social benefit of Ireland. The IDA’s current strategy, **‘Winning: Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019’¹⁷**, sets out ambitious targets including a focus on greater balanced regional development. A total of 50 per cent of the €5.7bn in annual capital expenditure by IDA client companies occurs outside of Dublin.

An assessment of investments delivered for regions since 2015, would confirm the importance of key criteria in actually influencing the investment decision;

- Critical mass in population
- The ability to attract and develop appropriate skills
- The presence of Third Level Institutes
- The existence of clusters of companies in specific industry sectors
- Regional Infrastructure
- Regional Place Making Strategies
- Availability of high spec standard Manufacturing & Commercial Office Properties

IDA Ireland has seen an increasing complexity in the roles being created, with technology skills becoming ubiquitous across roles, increasing demand for business professionals and a fall in the number of low-skilled jobs including back office support and basic manufacturing.

Over the course of 2019, IDA Ireland will be developing the agency’s new five-year strategy.

17 https://www.idaireland.com/docs/publications/ida_strategy_final

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) is charged with supporting outstanding research that will underpin economic development and assist international and indigenous industry to grow and flourish in Ireland. It also promotes and supports the study of, education in, and engagement with STEM.

The foundation offers several funding mechanisms, helping industry and academia build competitive advantage by enhancing their R&D capabilities; enable them to engage in projects of scale, excellence and relevant; and allow them to explore novel opportunities and priorities. Partnering with academic researchers presents several opportunities for industry.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation's publication '**Overview of Government Supports for Indigenous Business**¹⁸' outlines a range of supports and services available to the over 250,000 business enterprises in Ireland, across all sectors and activity. The document gives an overview of the following supports:

- Supports to Develop and Grow indigenous businesses
- Supports for Regional Enterprise Development
- Sector Specific Supports
- Financial Supports for Local Indigenous Businesses
- Taxation Supports for Indigenous Enterprise
- Skills, Technical Supports and Information
- Supports for Innovation
- Brexit
- Sustaining a Focus on SME Growth

The SME Online Tool¹⁹ is a cross Governmental guide to help small businesses know which of the over 80 Government supports that could fit their business.

OECD 2019 Review of Small and Medium Sized Business and Entrepreneurship²⁰

The OECD recently concluded a review of SMEs and entrepreneurship policy in Ireland. The Report shows that Ireland's SMEs and entrepreneurs operate in a broadly favourable business environment and that Ireland has a solid and comprehensive set of programmes targets at SMEs and entrepreneurs.

Resulting from the Review, the OECD has published a 'Road Map for SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Ireland'²¹ which builds on the assessment and recommendations of the Review. The Road Map is based around six themes:

- 1 SME and entrepreneurship policy framework**
- 2 Innovation and R&D**
- 3 Fostering enterprise-led networks**
- 4 SME internationalisation**
- 5 Access to finance for SMEs and entrepreneurship**
- 6 SME workforce and managerial skills**

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation will shortly develop a Strategy based around these themes. The creation of a Strategy will increase clarity regarding the SME and entrepreneurship policy components and provide a basis to consider priority areas for adjustment in the overall policy and mix.

18 <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Overview-of-Government-Supports-for-Indigenous-Business.pdf>.

19 <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Start-a-Business-in-Ireland/Information-Store-for-Start-ups/Supporting-SMEs-Online-Tool.html>

20 <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/OECD-SME-and-Entrepreneurship-Policy-in-Ireland.html>

21 <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/A-Road-Map-for-SME-and-Entrepreneurship-Policy-in-Ireland.pdf>

4.4 The Department of Children & Youth Affairs

Islands are included in all of the strategies, programmes and initiatives as part of the general programmes delivered to all the children and young people of Ireland. For instance, Tusla, The Child and Family Agency under the aegis of DCYA would treat any issue that might arise on an Island in relation to a child in the same manner as any other part of the country and attend as required.

The DCYA leads the 'First 5' strategy - Ireland's first ever strategy for early childhood (antenatal to 5 years). While this strategy does not have any specific actions for the Islands, all the supports for families and the initiatives for children in Ireland extend to children and families on the islands. DCYA's Youth Affairs Unit provides funding to Muintearas which delivers a youth service in the Gaeltacht adjacent to the islands and young people from the islands may avail of these services.

4.5 The Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment

The National Broadband Plan²² aims to deliver access to high speed broadband to every premises in Ireland, regardless of location, including offshore islands.

Pending full roll out of the NDP and in order to provide rural populations with access to broadband, National Broadband Ireland will enable connectivity to over 300 broadband connectivity points (BCP) in various public locations including BCP on some islands within the first year of their deployment. Provision of advanced communications services and innovation in smart agriculture, e-health, education, tourism, autonomous vehicles and improved supports for emergency services, all offer potential island applications.

In terms of telephony, under designated Universal Service Obligations, Eir must, amongst other obligations, satisfy any reasonable request including requests from island customers, to provide a fixed location connection to the public telephone network.

Power to most islands is supplied through the electricity grid, but there remain a few locations dependent on diesel powered generators, as on Toraigh and Inishturk.

An EU Political Declaration signed by participating countries commits Ireland to supporting the Clean Energy for EU Islands initiative and accelerate the clean energy transition on all EU islands. The Clean Energy for EU islands Secretariat was established to assist islands with preparation of transition projects.

In this regard a number of EU island initiatives have been launched. **The Renewable Energy for Self-Sustainable Island Communities**²³ (REACT) and **The Clean Energy for EU islands initiative**²⁴ aim to enable islands transition to generating their own sustainable, low-cost energy and construct both energy storage facilities and demand response systems using the latest technologies. Greater energy security islands should also boost island economic self-sufficiency.

In response to the EU initiatives, **The Árainn Mór Energy Plan 2012-2032** was developed by the Árainn Mhór Community Energy Co-Operative as a long-term vision for sustainable development on the island and is an innovative solution to address depopulation and emigration.

The Energy Master plan has been instrumental in the success of the Energy Cooperative with Horizon 2020²⁵ and Interreg research project applications including "Renewable Energy for Self-Sustainable Island Communities". The Co-operative is currently working to develop a wind power plant of 2.7 MW. Planning, grid connection and feed-in tariffs are some of the issues this poses.

22 <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Delivering%20the%20National%20Broadband%20Plan.pdf>

23 <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/218611/factsheet/en>

24 <https://euislands.eu/about-clean-islands>

25 <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en>

The Better Energy Communities²⁶ (BEC) scheme administered by Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland²⁷ (SEAI) on behalf of D/CCAIE, granted funds to the Árainn Mór project which apart from retrofitting a significant number of domestic dwellings also includes the retrofit of the community hall, and other public buildings. Private organisations are helping to fund the community projects by donating a percentage of their grant to reduce the cost to communities. The Oileán Chléire community in Cork also aims to improve the energy efficiency of the island's houses, reducing the emissions from peat and coal imported from the mainland.

The Cléire transition team hopes to reduce the ferry's carbon footprint through a possible introduction of hybrid and electric vessels that would use electricity produced on the island from wind, solar PV, or other sources.

Cléire is to take part in a pilot project that will use electric minibuses and charge them with green electricity units and the community further aims to become a Smart Island, taking advantage of the Digital technology available to advance the clean energy transition.

Other SEAI home grant programmes²⁸ for retrofitting of homes and communities include Better Energy Homes which provides a 50% additional payment on current grant measures for islanders, **Warmer Homes** which is a 100% grant funded programme irrespective of location in Ireland and **Communities grant programme** awards funding for community based energy efficiency, which favours island communities.

80% of Ireland's offshore island residents are covered by the **Sustainable Energy Communities Network²⁹**. SEAI provides SEC's with 100% grant support to develop their Energy Master Plans.

The Department's **Climate Action Plan³⁰** also covers a suite of actions to decarbonise the electricity sector and boost the quantity of renewable generation in order to meet Ireland's ambitious target of 70% of electricity demand by 2030. As part of the plan is the design and implementation of a new **Renewable Electricity Support Scheme³¹(RESS)**.

The RESS scheme will be funded through the Public Service Obligation mechanism. Island communities could consider this framework to advance sustainable energy projects.

In relation to public policy **Geological Survey Ireland (GIS)** identifies areas which can best support the sustainable development of island communities. In this regard the Geological Survey Ireland has developed the **INFOMAR Seabed mapping programme³²** to ensure safe navigation, and provide updated nautical charts and investigate wrecks and shoals vital to island fishing communities.

GIS is involved in planning for economic development of Ports/harbours, fisheries and habitats protection, aquaculture, research into storm damage and flooding and oceanographic modelling and maritime spatial planning all of which affect island communities.

A number of EU Directives relevant to Blue Economy cover such matters as community action in the field, assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, wild fauna and flora affect islands and the mainland and is administered by the Department.

Commercial Fisheries - The remit of DCCAIE is very narrowly confined to salmon for which there is limited commercial fishing and none in the seas around offshore islands.

Waste Management - There are no specific island provisions or policy for waste management. The Department has produced a document entitled "A Resource Opportunity – Waste Management Policy in Ireland³³" which provides a roadmap on how Ireland as a whole will reduce its dependency on landfill by putting in place appropriate measures and approaches to reduce waste, while at the same time making the most of opportunities to recover resources from waste.

26 <https://www.seai.ie/grants/community-grants/>

27 <https://www.seai.ie/>

28 <https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-energy-grants/>

29 <https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/sustainable-energy-communities/community-network/>

30 <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/topics/climate-action-plan/Pages/climate-action.aspx>

31 <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/energy/topics/Renewable-Energy/electricity/renewable-electricity-supports/ress/Pages/default.aspx>

32 <https://www.infomar.ie/>

33 <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/environment/topics/waste/waste-management-and-policy/Pages/default.aspx>

4.6 | The Department of Defence

The Department of Defence's current policies and engagements with the Island communities are encompassed within the Defence Policy Framework set out in the 2015 "White Paper on Defence"³⁴. The Defence organisations support other Departments and Organisations in relation to their specific remit/responsibilities to the Islands through the following roles:

- To contribute to national resilience through the provision of specified defence aid to the civil maintenance authority (ATCA), supports to lead agencies in response to major emergencies and in the of essential services;
- To aid the civil power by assisting, when requested, An Garda Síochána, who have primary responsibility for law and order, including the protection of the internal security of the State;
- To provide a range of other supports to government departments and agencies in line with MOUs and SLAs agreed by the Department of Defence e.g. search and rescue and air ambulance services. Where the Coast Guard is not in a position to provide for emergency medical evacuation from the islands, the Air Corps may be requested to provide an air ambulance / medical evacuation by the National Ambulance Service;

The Naval Service, through its patrols, undertakes a variety of functions in the maritime domain in accordance with its role in contributing to maritime security.

This encompasses a range of supports to Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, An Garda Síochána, the Revenue Commissioners and the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority in accordance with its roles in aid to the civil power and to the civil authority and as set out in the applicable Memoranda of Understanding and SLAs. All Naval Service vessels are multi-tasked and they undertake general surveillance, security, pollution monitoring, and search and rescue in support to the Irish Coast Guard, in addition to their fishery protection role, amongst other duties while on patrol.

Defence also has on occasion delivered equipment /materials to the Islands at the request of OPW. No formal agreement is in place, but the requests are supported where possible subject to operational commitments.

The Department has Military Ranges of approximately 91.05 hectares with accommodation facilities on Bere, Co. Cork. The Island provides a unique environment in support of air, land and maritime training activities and which also permits the conduct of joint training opportunities. The relationship between the Defence Forces and the local community has always remained positive and the presence of military personnel for training activities does not appear to be incompatible with Island Development policies. The development of this training area will be analysed over the coming years within the means and capabilities of the Defence Forces.

34 <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/bee90a-white-paper-on-defence/>



4.7 | The Department of Education & Skills

There are 12 island based primary, and 5 post-primary schools. Of the 12 primary schools located on 10 offshore islands, 8 are located in Gaeltacht language-planning areas. The 5 post-primary island schools, which are either under the patronage of Galway/Mayo Education and Training Board (ETB) or Donegal ETB, are all located in the Gaeltacht.

Teacher Allocation to Primary Schools on the Islands - 27 teaching posts were allocated to the 12 island primary schools with an overall total of 203 pupils enrolled in 2018/19. As part of Budget 2017, an extra teacher above the standard staffing schedule was provided to small schools, including island primary schools.

Additional support is also provided for children with special educational needs and each of the primary schools in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme has access to 5 additional teaching hours per week to strengthen educational provision through the medium of Irish.

Teacher Allocation to Post-primary Schools on the Islands - In 2018/19, approximately 44 post-primary teaching posts were allocated to 5 post-primary island schools with an overall enrolment of 220 pupils.

All 5 of the post-primary schools are located in the Gaeltacht and receiving 7 additional teaching hours per week under the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme to strengthen educational provision through the medium of Irish.

Funding provided for primary island schools on the islands in 2018/19 amounted to in the region of €400,000. This funding included grant allocation for minor works, ancillary, digital strategy, school books, DEIS school support programme³⁵, Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme³⁶, summer works and emergency works³⁷. 8 primary schools receive support from the DEIS school support programme, while 8 primary schools are also participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme.

“Funding provided for primary and post-primary island schools in 2018/19 amounted to in the region of €588,000”

35 <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools/>

36 https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0011_2019.pdf

37 <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Building-Works/Summer-Works/>

Funding provided for Post-primary Island schools on the islands are all under the Patronage of Educational Training Boards³⁸ (ETBs). The ETBs receive various grants from different sections of the Department. The funding from the Department of Education and Skills is provided directly to the ETBs.

The funding provided to post-primary island schools in 2018/19 amounted to in the region of €188,000. This included funding for the island allowance (€15,000 per school), book grant, DEIS, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), TY, Physics and Chemistry and School Services Support Fund grant.

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) is an Action Plan for Educational Inclusion to address educational disadvantage from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years). 8 island primary schools and 1 island post-primary school (Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada) are receiving support from the DEIS plan.

Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme (GSRs) 8 island primary schools and all 5 of the island post-primary schools are participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme, as part of the overall implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022.

The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme provides schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas with the option to seek recognition as Gaeltacht schools on the basis of implementing specific language-based criteria and on condition that they are participating in the language-planning processes provided for under the Gaeltacht Act, 2012. Additional Resources are available under the GSRs. The annual funding under the GSRs provided for the 8 island primary schools participating in the Scheme is in the region of €113,000.

The annual funding under the GSRs provided for 5 island post-primary schools participating in the Scheme, excluding funding provided to schools participating in the e-hub pilot, amounts to €110,000.

Digital Technology - E-hub Pilot Project³⁹ - The purpose of this three-year e-hub pilot project is to utilise online delivery to extend the subject range available through the medium of Irish to students in Gaeltacht post-primary schools, starting with higher-level Leaving Certificate Physics. Currently 3 of the 6 post-primary Gaeltacht receiver schools participating in the project are island schools. Additional resources, including funding for the purchase of ICT equipment and allocation of additional teaching hours, have been provided to the participating island schools including a once-off grant of €5,000 for each school to purchase ICT equipment and the annual cost of additional teaching hours for the e-mentors, is in the region of €49,500.

Additional Package of Supports provided to Post-Primary Island Schools - In recognition of the unique challenges faced by post-primary island schools, including the issue of recruiting and retaining post-primary teachers across a range of subject areas proficient in the Irish language, an additional package of supports has been provided for every post-primary island school since September 2018. These supports are in addition to those already being provided to schools under the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme.

4.8 | The Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection

Island residents may avail, if entitled, to the wide range of supports and services provided by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, which are open to all eligible residents in the state. These include employment supports for both employers and jobseekers available through the Department's Public Employment Intreo Services. The Department's employment support officers also work with Education and Training Boards on the provision of appropriate training supports.

In addition the Department provides the following islands-specific supports and services:

- Increase for living on a specific island;
- Flexibility in DEASP Work Programmes criteria;
- Free travel scheme supports for people living on the islands.

38 <https://www.etbi.ie/>

39 <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Policy-on-Gaeltacht-Education-2017-2022/irish-medium-e-hub-pilot-project-international-review-and-advisory-report.pdf>

Persons in receipt of one of the payments listed below and living on certain islands receive a weekly increase of €12.50 in their social welfare payment (sometimes referred to as an Island Allowance).

- ✓ State Pension (Non-Contributory)
- ✓ State Pension (Contributory)
- ✓ Blind Pension
- ✓ Invalidity Pension
- ✓ Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Contributory) Pension
- ✓ Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Non-Contributory) Pension
- ✓ Carer's Allowance
- ✓ One-Parent Family Payment
- ✓ Disability Allowance
- ✓ Incapacity Supplement under the Occupational Injuries Benefit Scheme

An island resident who is in receipt a comparable pension to those listed above from another EU State is also entitled to the increase.

The purpose of the increase is to compensate for the additional costs of living on an island.

Flexibility in DEASP Work Programmes criteria:

Community Employment⁴⁰ (CE): The aim of CE is to enhance the employability and mobility of disadvantaged and unemployed persons by providing work experience and training opportunities for them within their communities.

In general:

- The qualifying age for CE participation is 21 years and an applicant must have been in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment or 12 months.
- CE placements for new entrants aged between 21 and 55 years are for 1 year, but participants working towards a major award can seek to extend participation by up to a further two years.
- Those over 55 years of age can remain on CE for three years without the requirement that they are working towards a major award.

- An overall lifetime limit of 6 years applies to all CE participants – 7 years in the case of persons in receipt of a qualifying disability-linked social welfare payment. The base year for calculating the lifetime limit is 2007.
- Participants over age 62 are allowed to participate on a continuous basis up to the State Pension age on the CE Service Support Stream (SSS), subject to availability of places on the SSS, satisfactory performance on the scheme and to annual approval by the Department. The places allocated for these participants within each individual CE scheme are subject to limitation criteria.

In the case of inhabitants of offshore islands, the qualifying age is 18 years and a person may be eligible once they are currently in receipt of a CE-qualifying payment for 6 months or more. Islander positions are reviewed annually and are subject to demand and the number of jobseekers seeking activation. Offshore island residents are also exempt from the lifetime participation limits, subject to the availability of places on island-based CE schemes.

Rural Social Scheme⁴¹ (RSS): The Rural Social Scheme is an income support initiative to provide part-time employment opportunities in the community and voluntary organisations for farmers or fishermen in receipt of certain DEASP payments and under-employed in their primary occupation. A six-year time limit was introduced for new entrants to the RSS scheme with effect from 1 February 2017. There is no limit for RSS participants who commenced prior to that date. While the RSS operates on a number of offshore islands, there are no particular conditions applied to participants who are inhabitants of the islands.

40 <https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/CE.aspx>

41 <https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Rural-Social-Scheme-Guidelines.aspx>

4.9 | The Department of Health

The Primary Care Island Services Review⁴², published in 2018, set out a vision to build an effective and sustainable, high quality and equitable primary care service that supports collaboration between the population of the Islands, healthcare professionals, Primary Care Teams and secondary services.

The Review accords with the vision of a reformed health sector as outlined in Sláintecare⁴³ in which healthcare is delivered “...at the lowest appropriate level of complexity, through a health service that is well organised and managed, to enable comprehensive care pathways that patients can easily access and service providers can easily deliver.”

The challenge is to support individuals living on the Islands to be as healthy and resilient as possible, while providing appropriate and accessible services that reduce the risk of hospital admissions and facilitate people to remain living on the Islands. This is not a straightforward task given that the Islands, by their very nature are remote and isolated places, while the availability of services can vary and is often at the mercy of poor weather conditions and limited transport availability. It can also be difficult to attract and retain healthcare professionals to serve Island communities.

The Review highlights the importance of having the vision and leadership to think more radically and to make the transformational change that will create services for the Irish offshore islands that are fit for purpose and fit for the future. It envisages a healthcare service that will be enabled through promoting community resilience and the use of technologies to improve communication and to minimise the need for travel. Health services will be delivered by a flexible multi-disciplinary team who are supported by adequate infrastructure and resources.

The review makes 72 broad reaching recommendations to support the future provision of sustainable health services for the Island population utilising an interdepartmental and interagency approach. A HSE Islands Services Project was initiated in March 2019 to begin the process of implementation of the recommendations, and a Community Health Organisation Island Services Project Board⁴⁴ provides governance oversight and ensures a coordinated approach to implementation.

4.10 | The Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government

Housing Policy - The Department provides funding to local authorities to support the building, acquisition and leasing of properties directly or in partnership with approved housing bodies, in addition to the availability of support through the Housing Assistance Payment⁴⁵ (HAP) and Rental Accommodation Scheme⁴⁶ (RAS). There are also schemes available such as the Repair and Leasing scheme⁴⁷ (RLS) and the Buy-and-Renew scheme⁴⁸ which provide a framework and funding structure to bring vacant and derelict properties back into use for social housing. These schemes are equally available for utilisation on the islands.

Whilst there is no specific island policy on social housing, the Department will undertake to assess the situation regarding social housing needs on the islands and will consider the matter with the relevant Local Authorities.

Planning Policy - From a planning policy perspective, there is a favourable approach advocated in the Planning Rural Housing Guidelines towards planning applications for one-off housing in structurally weak areas, including islands. Accommodating demand for permanent residential development in rural locations such as islands complements the overall policy of countering population decline.

42 <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/primary/primary-care-island-services-review.pdf>

43 <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/slaintecare-implementation-strategy/>

44 <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/media/pressrel/hse-launches-primary-care-island-services-review.html>

45 <http://hap.ie/>

46 <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/rental-accommodation-scheme/rental-accomodation-scheme>

47 <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/leasing/repair-and-leasing-scheme-rls-frequently-asked-questions>

48 <https://rebuildingireland.ie/repair-and-leasing-scheme/>

Marine planning in particular has a role to play in facilitating growth in new and existing industries on the islands which bring associated socio-economic benefits. Accordingly proposals contributing to access, (such as piers, harbours, and similar infrastructure), enhanced connectivity to high quality telecommunications networks including via wireless solutions and submarine cables, high-speed broadband etc., energy self-sufficiency or sustainability proposals generally that would reduce deprivation, prevent depopulation should be supported. These assist in supporting coastal communities, and promoting more balanced regional development.

Marine planning also has a role to play in improving access to direct employment, through new or existing commercial activities (including offshore wind energy and fisheries), and indirect employment, through supporting industries such as port services.

A **Marine Planning Policy Statement (MPPS)** was published on 12 November alongside the Draft National Marine Planning Framework⁴⁹. The MPPS sets out the overarching policies and principles the Government expects marine planning bodies and other public bodies that engage with the marine planning system to observe (in terms, for example, of public engagement, transparency, governance, environmental assessment, climate action, social and economic benefit). It also sets out high-level priorities for the enhancement of the marine planning system in Ireland. It applies to all facets of marine planning and will be given a statutory basis through legislation that will be introduced in 2020. The MPPS will be reviewed on six-yearly cycles.

Island Communities in the MPPS - Proposals resulting in a net increase to marine related employment should be supported. The marine planning system will support the maintenance and sustainable development of our seafood industry, particularly in recognition of our strong fishing heritage and its contribution to vibrant, accessible sustainable coastal and island communities. Other elements of the MPPS also support the sustainability of island communities, either directly or indirectly.

The Draft National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF), was published on 12 November and is currently out for public consultation to 28 February 2020. The finalised NMPF is expected to be published and adopted before end-2020. In broad terms the main content of the NMPF

is based around (1) marine planning objectives, (2) marine planning policies, and (3) supporting actions required to achieve the implementation of (1) and (2). Preparation of the Draft NMPF has involved input from all relevant Departments and Agencies.

The NMPF will apply to a broad range of marine activities such as aquaculture, offshore renewable energy, sea fisheries and tourism. For all of these areas (and others), it provides a long-term framework for the effective management of marine activities and more sustainable use of our marine resources and is a marine parallel to the National Planning Framework. Regulation should ensure best practice in matters such as the aquaculture licensing system that promotes the efficient use of space, protects water quality and supports the future potential of marine activities while keeping costs and administrative burdens to a minimum.

The NMPF Stakeholder Advisory Group chaired by Minister of State Damien English, is the formal mechanism established to facilitate participation of a wide range of relevant stakeholders in the planning process.

Rural Water - The inhabited offshore islands depend on a mixture of public (Irish Water), group water schemes, private wells and rainwater harvesting for their domestic and commercial water supply needs. While the public supply is a matter for Irish Water, funding is available under the Rural Water Programme for the domestic water needs of the balance of users.

Funding for domestic wastewater treatment needs on the islands, mostly using septic tanks or similar, is also available under the Rural Water Programme. While the provision of the infrastructure for these services can in some cases come at higher cost on offshore islands, the funding structure under the Rural Water Programme is sufficiently flexible to allow for these possible occurrences.

Met Éireann is planning to develop in 2020 bespoke forecasts for the Islands on their new website www.met.ie.

49 <https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/maritime-spatial-planning/maritime-spatial-planning-directive/maritime-spatial-planning>

4.11 | The Department of Rural & Community Development

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) considers the social, environmental and economic dimensions of island development as a fundamental aspect of broader rural development policy. As such, it is envisaged that the successor to the Action Plan for Rural Development⁵⁰ (APRD) which is currently being developed will contain a focus on the specific circumstances of island and coastal communities.

In the process of developing the new rural development policy, DRCD held consultations with island and coastal communities including an on-site consultation on Inis Mór (Aran Islands) on 29 May 2019

Earlier this year, DRCD launched the first ever National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland⁵¹. Social Enterprises are enterprises whose objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact, rather than maximising private profit. Like other businesses, they trade in goods or services on an ongoing basis, but Social Enterprises re-invest their surpluses into achieving their social objectives.

This National Social Enterprise Policy seeks to support Social Enterprises to grow in scale and impact throughout Ireland including in rural, island and coastal communities. There is a significant opportunity for the development of social enterprises on islands, particularly in sectors such as climate and environmental action (potentially linked to sustainable tourism), micro-energy generation and the circular economy.

LEADER 2014-2020⁵² Under the current LEADER Programme, LEADER Local Action Groups in Donegal, Mayo, Connemara, and West Cork cover islands in their regions. To date, 29 Island projects have had funding to the value of €880,198.73 approved by their Local Action Groups.

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme⁵³ (SICAP) is a program of direct supports for Research & Innovation which has delivered support to Comhar na nOileán CTR, projects in the West Cork Islands, to South West Mayo Development Company projects for the Mayo Islands and to other regions (Donegal Gaeltacht, Galway County and South Kerry & Killarney).

Rural Regeneration Development Fund⁵⁴ is relevant to islands as it is to all rural areas. This is a competitive and open process and applications relating to the islands are welcome.

Town and The Village Renewal Scheme⁵⁵ is part of a range of measures to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme. The scheme is targeted at Towns/Villages with populations of less than 10,000 people. The Department can accept applications from islands through the Local Authorities who administer the scheme on behalf of the Department.

As part of the Department's **Tidy Towns Competition**⁵⁶ there is a Special Award which is specific to Island Communities. The Islands Award of €1,500 is a special competition sponsored by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The winner receives €1,000 and the runner up receives €500.

“Under the current LEADER programme, 29 Island projects have had funding approved to the value €880,198.73”

50 <https://assets.gov.ie/2715/131118093828-a9da81a7a12b4f85aad3260c4f4bd80c.pdf>

51 <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/e779c3-social-enterprise-policy/>

52 <https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/leader-programme-2014-2020/>

53 <https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/social-inclusion-and-community-activation-programme-sicap-2018-2022/>

54 <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/c5849b-rural-funding/?referrer=/about/rural/rural-regeneration-development-fund/>

55 <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/01125e-town-and-village-renewal-scheme/>

56 <https://www.tidytowns.ie/>

The **CLÁR**⁵⁷ (**Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais**) program is a targeted capital investment programme for rural areas which have experienced significant levels of depopulation and supports the development of remote rural areas through small-scale capital projects involving collaboration between Local Authorities and communities, including those on islands.

The **Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme**⁵⁸ (the maintenance and promotion of ORIS) provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure, and for existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural Ireland. It is in principle open to applications from the islands.

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to bring high-speed broadband to premises in Ireland that do not currently have access to reliable high-speed broadband.

The **Broadband Connection Point (BCP)** initiative was established in order to ensure that remote areas, particularly those that are likely to wait longest for connections, are provided with access to high-speed broadband pending the NBP roll-out to reach them.



The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) in partnership with Local Authority Broadband Officers (BBOs) and DCCAE, have identified sites around the country including islands off Donegal, Mayo & Galway, typically in public buildings, such as schools, community centres and sports clubs to act as interim Broadband Connection Points for wireless broadband.

While the **Atlantic Economic Corridor**⁵⁹ (AEC) hasn't set out any policies or schemes specifically targeted at Island Development as yet, it is relevant to regional development. The Programme for Partnership Government and the National Planning Framework commits to supporting the development of an AEC along the Western Seaboard from Kerry to Donegal. The overarching objective of the Atlantic Economic Corridor concept is to maximise the assets of the western seaboard, and connect the economic hubs, clusters and catchments of the region to attract investment, support job creation and contribute to an improved quality of life for those who live in the region.

As the majority of the inhabited coastal islands are located in the western seaboard, development of the Atlantic Economic Corridor could provide significant opportunities to develop and support the sustainability of these communities.

An **AEC Taskforce**, currently chaired by Minister of State for Natural Resources, Community Affairs and Digital Development Sean Canney TD and comprising key stakeholders from relevant government departments, development agencies, the 3rd level sector and private sector representative bodies was established in 2017 to develop the AEC initiative.

The DRCD co-fund an AEC officer in each of the 10 local authorities who are engaged in a number of projects to support the AEC including promoting the AEC as a place to live, work and invest and identifying high-potential projects 'on the ground' as well as developing funding requests to progress them. The **Western Development Commission**⁶⁰ (WDC) has also now taken on an operational management function for the Taskforce, with the development of the AEC now a flagship initiative in their published 5 year strategy.

57 <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/91ba52-clar/>

58 <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/fd0c9f-outdoor-recreation-infrastructure-scheme/>

59 <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/657322-atlantic-economic-corridor/>

60 <https://www.wdc.ie/>

The AEC Taskforce, supported by the WDC and the 10 AEC Officers are currently in the process of developing a number of key projects that will support both the AEC Initiative and the wider regional spatial and economic development ambitions of the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan.

In the context of LCDCs there is flexibility within the membership requirement for LCDCs to include Island representatives but there is no compulsion to do so. There are island reps on Donegal and Galway LCDCs.

Libraries Development and Community Policy

Cork, Donegal, Galway and Mayo County Councils provide various library services to a number of inhabited islands (Chléire, Sherkin, Árainn Mhóir, Toraigh, Inis Oírr, Inis Meáin, Inis Mór, Inishbofin, Clare and Inishturk).

4.12 | The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) supports and works in close collaboration with other Government Departments and Agencies who have a specific remit in relation to the Islands.

While public service obligation air services and other subsidised transport services are a matter for the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and public roads on the islands are the responsibility of the relevant local authority DTTAS is involved in funding, policy and legislation in some of these areas.

The Road Traffic (National Car Test) Regulations 2017 (S.I. No. 415/2017) and the Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness (Vehicle Testing) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 117 of 2018) granted road worthiness testing exemption to private and commercial vehicles operated exclusively on off-shore islands.

It should also be noted that there is a special reduced rate (€102 per annum) of Vehicle tax for island based vehicles. To avail of the island tax rate, a vehicle as an Island Vehicle owner must get an Island Vehicle certificate certified by the Garda Station nearest to the Island concerned. Island vehicles will not be used on the mainland. If they are used on the mainland at any time then the vehicle will be taxed at the appropriate private rate.

The Port of Cork, which is an commercial semi-state company, has engaged with the community on Whiddy Island, culminating with the provision of land to the local community for the building of a Community Centre. The land was provided on a long lease at a nominal rent. In addition, Bantry Harbour Commissioners have financed an upgrade of the jetty on the Island.

The **Irish Coast Guard** has participated in the Island Services Review coordinated by HSE/Dept of Health, with particular reference to the work of Emergency Services Primary care.

The Coast Guard is the sole provider of aeromedical helicopter services to the Island communities. This is a 24/7 service coordinated via the Coast Guard Rescue Coordination Centres and is provided under the auspices of Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) services. This service can be provided by any of the Coast Guard helicopters but is primarily provided by the Shannon and Sligo based teams. The Coast Guard is the tasking authority for service provided via the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). Coast Guard Helicopters on an occasional and request basis provide Helicopter Humanitarian services.

There are three island units currently with Coast Guard units which are under the auspices of Bun Beag (Toraigh), Doolin (South Árainn) and Cuan Casla (North Árainn). These units are available to enhance community resilience when responding to a community support event or emergency. This includes supporting medical transfers or coordinating Island SAR activities.

In addition, SAR cover and appropriate vehicles for use for land searching on the islands and response to 999/112 calls are provided through local volunteer Coast guard units.

Tourism:

The Government's tourism policy aims to support sustainable growth in the Irish tourism sector and drive higher revenue and job creation around Ireland. Under the Department's *Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021*⁶¹, there is a focus placed on growing tourism in the regions and outside of traditional destinations. In this context, Fáilte Ireland⁶² will continue to develop and enhance tourism experiences within the framework of *Project Ireland 2040*. The aim is to optimise key assets for the benefit of tourism and economic development through increasing regional spread, season extension and promoting sustainable growth management.

With specific regard to capital investment in tourism, funding is being provided under the *National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP)* to help support and grow tourism in rural communities in line with the further development and promotion of the regional tourism experience brands. Priority areas for tourism capital investment, as identified under the NDP, include the development and enhancement of tourist attractions and activity-based tourism to provide the type and quality of experience that visitors are seeking.

Such capital investment is further supported by Fáilte Ireland current investment in complementary programme supports – including festivals and events, business supports and training – aimed at enhancing, animating and promoting the regional tourism experience brands.

Fáilte Ireland promotes island experiences across all its marketing material and platforms and works closely with island communities – particularly those located along the Wild Atlantic Way – to develop new experiences that the tourism agencies can profile in both the domestic and overseas markets. Islands are also included on the itineraries for some of the international media visits to Ireland hosted by Fáilte Ireland in collaboration with Tourism Ireland.

In addition to marketing and promotions, other types of supports potentially available to qualifying projects/enterprises would include capital grants for attractions and other tourism infrastructure; training and business supports; and possibly also [where relevant] funding for larger-scale festivals.

Fáilte Ireland is also creating a series of long-term tourism development plans for specific geographical locations. Known as Visitor Experience Development Plans, or VEDPs, these plans aim to grow the tourism contribution by driving visitor numbers and revenue to areas with strong tourism potential.

With specific regard to off-shore islands, a VEDP for the Connemara Coast and Aran Islands⁶³ was launched in March 2018, with islanders invited to a subsequent briefing and networking event, where attendees were updated on recent developments and had the opportunity to participate in a networking session for tourism businesses to encourage cross-selling within the area. Fáilte Ireland is currently developing two further island-related VEDPs – for the West Cork islands.

Sports:

The Sports Capital Programme⁶⁴ provides capital assistance to sports clubs, community groups and schools (when they apply with a sports club) for the development of sports facilities and the purchase of sports equipment. The Programme has transformed the sporting landscape of the country with improvements to practically every village and town in the country. Island communities have also benefitted from assistance over the years including recently funded projects on Bere Island (€11,000), Inis Meáin (€20,000); Clare Island, Mayo (€43,000)

A new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund has been established for projects where the amount sought is greater than that available under the Sports Capital Programme.

Sport Ireland⁶⁵ has provided support through local sports partnerships to islands across the coast of Ireland.

61 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7c8926-tourism-action-plan-2019-2021/>

62 <http://www.failteireland.ie/>

63 http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/Key%20Projects/The-Connemara-Coast-Aran-Islands-Visitor-Experience-Development-Plan.pdf

64 <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/d13385-sports-capital-programme/>

65 <https://www.sportireland.ie/>

The West Cork Islands community sport and physical activity hub⁶⁶ was initiated in 2015 and has been funded through the Dormant Accounts Fund⁶⁷. The aim of the hub is to increase opportunities in sport and physical activity on 7 islands off West cork- Whiddy, Bere, Cléire, Long, Dursey, Heir and Sherkin. To date they have received €168,000 in Dormant Accounts Funding. There have been a number of successful events and programmes including the West Cork islands Fun Run Series, Bantry Bay Adventure Race, West Cork islands Soccer Tournament, Bere Island sailing programme, Beara TY Sailing Programmes along with a number of other local programmes.

Donegal Local Sports Partnership⁶⁸, through their Machaire Community Sports Hub, provides rock-climbing programmes to their participants in locations such as Cruit Island, Owey Island and Gola Island which are all situated on the West coast of Donegal. They also run island kayaking tours and biking tours. The hub coordinator has also linked in with on Árann Mhór to provide some training sessions on the island.

Mayo Local Sports Partnership⁶⁹ have coordinated a number of community sport programmes on Clare Island, including adventure and charity races.

Galway Local Sports Partnership⁷⁰ has worked with Inis Meáin, Inishbofin & Inis Mór in recent years. In 2016, Inis Meáin and Inishbofin came in 2nd & 3rd place in the Galway Fit Towns competition and won a cash prize to be reinvested back into the community. In 2017, Inis Meáin won the Fit Towns competition and received €3000 euro in prizes. In 2018, Galway held two 'Couch to 5k' training programmes, on Inis Mór and Inishbofin. In 2019, Galway Local Sports Partnership brought National School children from Inis Mór and Inishbofin to the Mayo Greenway as part of bike week.

66 <https://www.corksports.ie/index.cfm/page/community-sports-and-physical-activity-hub->

67 <https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/dormant-accounts-fund-daf/>

68 <http://www.activedonegal.com/>

69 www.mayosports.ie

70 <https://www.galwaycity.ie/sports-partnership-information>

5 Stakeholders – Island communities and committees

The following are the main stakeholders to be consulted as part of the Consultation Process:

- o **Island Communities**
- o **Island Coops and Development Groups**
- o **Relevant State agencies and Bodies**
- o **Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann**

Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann⁷¹ is the representative body for Ireland's offshore islands. In its 2015 submission to Government for consideration in preparing the NDP, Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann set out a range of policy documents covering issues affecting most aspects of island life.

In reviewing the various policy areas, Comhdháil set out recommendations for action by Government which at their core aim to build on island sustainability, retention of youth, halt the ongoing population decline and address issues faced by the aging population profile of many islands.

71 <http://oileain.net/>

6 | The Next Steps

The Government's Islands Policy will establish a clear direction for the future of our island communities. It will set out a series of policy objectives, which will then be underpinned by a Cross Government Action plan, designed to support, promote and empower our island communities. Implementation of the policy will improve the quality of life of island communities by developing a system of reporting and reviewing that will promote accountability.

Timeline

It is the Government's objective that the new Islands Policy will be agreed and published during 2020. The implementation plan based on the policy will then be developed.

Following publication of this consultation document, an extensive consultation process with island communities and other stakeholders will be undertaken over the next 3 months, which will inform the policy development process. Details of the schedule for the workshops will be published on the Department's website, and will be notified locally.

Bilateral meetings will subsequently be arranged between the DCHG and other Government Departments, agencies and stakeholders to develop a draft policy document, to be circulated to Island Communities, Government Departments and other stakeholders, with a view to presenting a final Islands Policy Document to Cabinet in 2020.

Engagement with Island Communities

Engagement with the island communities is central to the development of the Islands Policy. This will be coordinated by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Officials will visit the islands, engaging with the communities and their Local Development Group / Comharchumann representatives and other relevant stakeholders. Officials will engage with Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann both during the consultation phase and following each meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee in order to ensure they are apprised of all developments.

The DCHG invites the input and expertise of all stakeholders on this document with a view to developing a framework of actions that will lead to the achievement of the objectives that will be set in the new National Policy for the future development and sustainability of communities on the offshore islands.

Proposed Format for Consultation Workshops

Consideration will be given to the following questions at island workshops:

- 1 What are the positive aspects of living on the island?**
- 2 Which initiatives, projects or activities are working well?**
- 3 What policies need developing?**
- 4 What are the main barriers to sustainability on the island?**

5 Can you list in order of priority the following issues which you assess as the most pressing for the island?

- Depopulation
- Economic development
- Climate change
- Health and wellbeing
- The Irish language
- Community empowerment
- Transport
- Digital connectivity
- Fuel / Energy supply

6 Are there any other areas not covered above you feel relevant to the national islands policy?

7 What are the greatest challenges facing you living on the island?

8 What, in your opinion, would make a difference in addressing these issues?

9 What are the safety issues, including road safety issues, that are particular to the Islands?

10 What are the opportunities available to the Islands and how best can they be realised?

11 What do you see as the key priorities for inclusion in the Islands Policy?

Responses are not limited to these suggested topics and submissions can also be forwarded by email to oileain@chg.gov.ie

Freedom of Information

All submissions and comments submitted to the Department for this purpose are subject to release under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2014 and the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007- 2014. Submissions are also subject to Data Protection legislation. Personal, confidential or commercially sensitive information should not be included in your submission and it will be presumed that all information contained in your submission is releasable under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

Data Protection

Please note that if you make a submission you are agreeing for it to be published in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR EU 2016/679), the Data Protection Acts 1988- 2018, the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and the DPER Consultation Principles and Guidance.

Privacy Statement

The Department of Culture Heritage & the Gaeltacht is committed to protecting and respecting your privacy and employs appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect your information from unauthorised access. The Department will not process your personal data for any purpose other than that for which they were collected. Personal data may be exchanged with other Government Departments, local authorities, agencies under the aegis of the Department, or other public bodies, in certain circumstances where this is provided for by law.

When the business need to retain this information has expired, it will be examined with a view to destroying the personal data as soon as possible, and in line with Department policy. Further information on Data Protection can be found on our website at: <https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/11/dchg-data-protection-policy.pdf>

Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht



Rialtas na hÉireann
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