

Údarás na Gaeltachta: 2018 End of Year Review

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Statement issued by Anna Ní Ghallachair, Chairperson and Mícheál Ó hÉanaigh, Chief Executive, Údarás na Gaeltachta

- **589 new jobs created in 2018**
- **Highest level of employment in client companies in 10 years**
- **7,625 full-time jobs in client companies at the end of the year**
- **A net increase of 122 full-time jobs in 2018**
- **New projects approved to create an additional 525 jobs with investment of €42m**
- **30 new businesses created in 2018**
- **Approval of 13 Gaeltacht language plans with a budget of €1.49m**
- **Development of Gréasán Digiteach na Gaeltachta (Gaeltacht Digital Network) underway**
- **‘Gaeltacht na hÉireann’ brand developed & launched**

2018 Review

589 new full-time jobs were created in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in 2018. This culminated in a net increase of 122 jobs on the previous year, which means that there were 7,625 full-time and 582 part-time jobs in companies in receipt of support from Údarás at year end. These figures show the highest level of employment in client companies since 2008. There has been a steady increase on the employment base in the Gaeltacht for six consecutive years as Gaeltacht companies become increasingly stable.

In 2018, another substantial step was taken in terms of Language Planning as the first Language Planning Officers were employed in different regions across the country and hence the commencement of implementation of the plans in those areas. At the end of the 2018, a language plans were prepared and approved for half (13) of the Language Planning Areas across the country. An investment of €1.49m has been approved for the implementation of the language plans with direct employment of 17 jobs when Language Planning Officers and Assistant Planning Officers are recruited.

Employment in the Gaeltacht

There was a measured increase in employment in Gaeltacht companies supported by Údarás na Gaeltachta for six consecutive years and an increase of 10% in the overall employment figures in that period. In the last number of years, an emphasis was placed on the recovery and stability of the

companies. As a result, the rate of employment increased in 14% of Údarás client companies and the employment rate remained stable in 75% of client companies in 2018. During the year, 30 new companies were created and there was 76 people employed in these at the end of the year. These companies were operating in the fields of traditional manufacturing and medical devices, along with the TV sector.

Counties Donegal and Galway saw the largest increases in employment in 2018. Indeed 2018 saw the lowest ever number of job losses in the Donegal Gaeltacht where there was an increase of 4% on employment in 2017. Employment in client companies in Donegal is now at its highest level in 10 years. Údarás supported employment in County Galway is now at its highest level since 2000: A total of 237 jobs were created in 2018 mainly in the healthcare product manufacturing and medical device sectors, along with the film and TV sector. It is timely that Údarás na Gaeltachta in conjunction with TG4 have launched a new educational scheme with an investment of €160,000 from both parties to boost skills in this industry.

The largest increases in employment were evident in the food and drinks, medical device manufacturing and film/TV sectors, even though these sectors did not escape some employment reductions also. Employment reductions were primarily in the traditional manufacturing sector.

Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies have a significant economic impact on the Gaeltacht and the national economy. According to ABSEI research conducted in 2018, it is estimated that client-company total sales were in the region of €862m the previous year with direct expenditure in the Irish economy of €430m. This reflects the fact that the State is getting good value for its investment in employment creation in the Gaeltacht.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Chief Executive, Mícheál Ó hÉanaigh, said, “Employment levels are increasing in our client companies and are at the highest point in ten years. That said, our client companies must be cautious about the unsettled economic forecast for the year ahead, but we are hopeful that we have the appropriate strategies in place to support them in meeting the challenges and that the resources that are available to the organisation are increasing gradually. We particularly welcome increases in our capital budget and other external funding which has been announced and which will provide us with an excellent opportunity to start 2019 on a positive note and to invigorate the implementation of our strategy.”

With year one of our Strategic Plan complete, and in evidence of the specific targets laid out in Action Plan 2018–2022 for the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030, we are very satisfied with the level of jobs created this year in the context of our current resources and the progress made in preparing and approving language plans. It is crucial for the Gaeltacht’s sustainable future, that enterprise and language development are promoted simultaneously and to that end that appropriate resources are being made available. This in itself is a considerable challenge but we remain optimistic in light of the progress we have made in recent years. It is encouraging to see the number of High Potential Start Ups that we have supported this year and the appointment of the first Language Planning Officers throughout the Gaeltacht is reassuring.”

Economic impact of Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies

Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies generate expenditure of €430 million, which flows directly into the national economy, on payroll, services and the purchase of raw materials. In 2017, client companies had a payroll of €184 million, with an average salary of €41,000 per employee in companies with ten or more employees. Figures from ABSEI research conducted in 2018 show that Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies had aggregated total sales of €862 million the previous year. A total of €522 million of sales consisted of exports, and the highest percentage of sales are attributed to the food and drinks industry.

525 new jobs approved for the Gaeltacht in 2018

The Board of Údarás na Gaeltachta approved a number of new projects which will create 525 jobs, with an estimated total investment of €42 million as the projects develop over the next few years. The majority of job approvals during 2018 were for projects in Counties Donegal, Galway and Mayo, with significant approvals for Counties Kerry, Cork and Meath also. It is worth noting that it was companies in the medical device, food, services and niche manufacturing sectors that saw the most development.

It is also significant that support of €1.51m was approved for seven High Potential Start-ups companies in 2018, located in counties Meath, Galway and Mayo. HPSUs are companies that are deemed to have development and rapid growth potential, and that will achieve 10 fulltime jobs and sales of €1m within 3 years.

Property Portfolio and upgrading of buildings

Gaeltacht areas are located in some of the most beautiful areas of the world; rural locations, many of which are remote. The private sector does not have the resources to provide the appropriate business facilities in these areas as would happen in urban areas throughout the country, therefore Údarás na Gaeltachta's business model for these regions over the last 40 years functions more effectively. Údarás na Gaeltachta owns a wide range of properties and enterprise facilities available for businesses in order to attract them to these rural locations. Many of the properties have undergone significant upgrading works over the years and employment has increased as a result. However, a portion of the portfolio is not fit for purpose and require comprehensive renovations, and the 2018 announcement of additional capital resources will allow the organisation to undertake this work gradually.

Over 1000 participants in Social Employment Schemes

Údarás na Gaeltachta administers social employment schemes (Community Employment Scheme, Rural Social Scheme & TÚS Scheme), funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection which play an important role in providing work experience and training for the Gaeltacht community. There was an increase of 45 in the number of participants on Social Employment Schemes in the Gaeltacht during 2018, with 1,093 participants and 49 supervisors employed throughout the Gaeltacht.

Brexit Challenges and International Policies

There are not many certainties regarding Brexit, except that it will have a significant effect on the economy of this country. Whatever decision is made will also have an effect on Gaeltacht companies and Údarás na Gaeltachta is working closely with our client companies to ensure that they are prepared and improving company structures and markets as much as possible. The United Kingdom is often the first step in exporting for any Gaeltacht company as it enters the export market for the first time. For this reason, and with Brexit almost upon us, Údarás na Gaeltachta agreed a reciprocal Trade Office arrangement with the Scottish Chambers of Commerce at the end of 2018. The official agreement will be signed early in the new year when the dedicated reciprocal trade offices are established to provide business support services to companies and facilitate investment and trade opportunities. The arrangement will act as a valuable resource for SMEs looking to expand their international B2B partnerships.

Figures from ABSEI research show that 28% of client companies' export sales, valued at €148 million, is to the United Kingdom. Up to 33% (€172m) is done in the European Union and 24% (€124m) in North America. With up to 60% of the client companies raw materials being imported, at a value of €233m, any customs tariffs would certainly have an effect on the bottom line. If a 'no deal' Brexit goes ahead it is possible that additional resources may be needed to support companies and to protect jobs.

An tÚdarás is working in cooperation with other State agencies on a coordinated approach to Brexit and will continue with its support scheme ‘Bí Réidh’ (Be Prepared), which Údarás is administering for its client companies. The majority of exports by Údarás client companies to the UK are from the Wood/Timber products (26%), Paper (18%), Basic and Fabricated Metal (18%) and Food/Drink (7%) sectors. The biggest exports to the European Union are products in Marine, Food/Drink, Computing Products and Medical Devices sectors.

Language Planning Activities

In terms of language planning, 2018 was an historic year from a language planning point of view with the achievement of significant milestones. At the end of the year 13 language plans had received approval and implementation of same had begun in nearly all LPA’s. In addition, another three plans have been submitted to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for language planning areas in the Tuaisceart Dhún na nGall LPA, Dún na nGall Theas LPA in Donegal and the Ceantar na nOileán LPA in Galway. It is hoped that a further 8 plans will be completed and submitted to the Department during 2019. This would mean that 24 plans will be underway in 23 LPAs and one Gaeltacht Service Town by the end of 2019.

This is an significant investment and source of encouragement for Gaeltacht communities around the country. Currently Language Planning Officers have been employed in 4 LPAs and a further 8 are being recruited. A budget of €1.49m has been approved for the implementation of the 13 language plans approved thus far, which will involve 17 jobs for Language Planning Officers and Assistant Language Planning Officers.

Údarás Chairperson, Anna Ní Ghallachair, said “The employment base of Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies has increased each year for the last six consecutive years and a significant milestone has been reached in terms of language planning also. It is due to the diligence of Gaeltacht communities in the preparation of plans for their areas that the benefits and fulfilment of their implementation can now be realised. This is now the true beginning of a campaign to preserve the language in the Gaeltacht and we welcome the resources that will be available to communities for the implementation of their plans. This is a great opportunity for Gaeltacht communities to receive direct investment and raise awareness of language issues in each area.

The development of gteic innovation centres and digital hubs throughout the Gaeltacht has created a stimulus and energy in these areas. There has been a lot of interest locally and nationally in this network and they will provide Údarás with more flexibility to support innovative companies that are either starting out or consolidating their base. The additional resources that have been granted to develop this technological ecosystem are greatly welcomed and will give us an opportunity to attract the Gaeltacht diaspora back to their communities.”

Outlook for 2019

Although the employment and job stabilisation is very important to client companies based in regional rural areas, the coming year is a crucial one for Gaeltacht companies and communities. Without any certainty thus far regarding Brexit, the year ahead could prove to be a difficult one for Gaeltacht companies who depend on UK markets, products and materials.

However, Údarás na Gaeltachta will continue to implement the objectives it has laid out in its Strategic Plan and in national strategic plans, including Action Plan 2018–2022 for the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030, the Action Plan for Rural Development, the Action Plan for Jobs, Our Ocean Wealth – Integrated Marine Plan. Údarás na Gaeltachta is confident that the relevant policies, strategies and projects are being implemented to achieve the target of 8,000 fulltime jobs by 2020.

Among the initiatives which will be emphasised in 2019 are:

gteic – The Gaeltacht Digital Network

The development of 30 innovation and digital hubs – gteic – is a central aspect of Údarás’ strategy to promote remote working and to support innovative companies in locating to the Gaeltacht. Currently, four hubs are open in Gaoth Dobhair, An Cheathrú Rua, Béal an Mhuirthead and Daingean Uí Chúis and it is expected that hubs will open in Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh, Carna, Na Forbacha, Árainn Mhór and Inis Mór shortly, which will further add to the new gigabit digital ecosystem budding in the Gaeltacht.

With the substantial support of €2.8M funding from the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund announced in 2018, it is hoped that three projects will be completed before the end of 2019, which will greatly benefit the gteic network as follows:

- €1.5m approved for the completion of the undeveloped top floor level of gteic @Gaoth Dobhair on the Gaoth Dobhair Business Park to add a further 1,725 sq.m of new workspace/offices;
- €548,000 to develop the gteic @An Spidéal Innovation and Digital Hub in Conamara;
- €795,000 to develop 8 Innovation Centres/Digital Hubs/Centres of Excellence in the Mayo Gaeltacht areas including Béal an Mhuirthead, An Eachléim, Gaoth Sáile, Acaill and Tuar Mhic Éadaigh.

Taskforces and Forums

The **Uíbh Ráthach (Iveragh) Interagency Taskforce** is a national objective of the Action Plan for Rural Development. It is directed by Údarás na Gaeltachta and aims to develop enterprise, increase employment opportunities and best use the resources available in the regions. The final report and the taskforce’s action plan will be published in early 2019. A new consultation model was implemented nationally for this taskforce and it is hoped to be replicated in other areas around the country.

The final report of the **Enterprise Forum for the Meath Gaeltacht** will be published in March 2019, which will include recommendations on how to bring a new focus to enterprise development opportunities in this area and how to benefit from its close proximity to Dublin.

On a local level, Údarás na Gaeltachta published the Implementation Report of ‘Ag Forbairt na Fiontraíochta ar Pháirc Ghnó Ghaoth Dobhair’ in May 2018 which was the final report of the Enterprise Development Forum that was established in 2014. The implementation report showed that the employment targets set out were achieved with the approval of 313 full time posts during the plan period.

The Iorras Aithneach 5 Year Action Plan has been developed by the Iorras Aithneach community in association with Údarás na Gaeltachta. The plan has been compiled to promote employment, enterprise and infrastructure in the Conamara Láir area, in which some electoral divisions were identified by the agency Pobal as disadvantaged areas.

The Gaeltacht na hÉireann Brand

The Gaeltacht na hÉireann brand, a new brand developed by Údarás na Gaeltachta, was launched in 2018. The brand was developed to promote Ireland’s Gaeltacht areas and the excellence of their products worldwide under one inclusive brand. The brand will act as a stamp of approval for everything that originates in the Gaeltacht and will be a visual representation of the vibrancy, enterprise, cultural richness, provenance and unique language of the Gaeltacht regions. We will continue the distribution and growth of the brand among companies, organisations and communities in the Gaeltacht in 2019.

Tourism

There will be a specific focus in 2019 on the strategic development of tourism in the Gaeltacht, along with the enablement and development of tourist facilities and products. Support will continue to be given to 10 tourism officers under the Tourism Management Development Scheme established in all

Gaeltacht areas in 2018. This scheme will result in an increase in skills and excellence in tourism offerings. It is vital that additional people with relevant skills are employed in this sector. A capital investment in tourist facilities will be pursued and various marketing campaigns will continue to be run to disseminate the Gaeltacht's merit as a tourist destination. It is intended to commence the development of five strategic tourism projects as a partnership between local communities, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Fáilte Éireann and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht as cited in the Action Plan 2018–2022 for the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030.

European Initiatives

The development of renewable energy initiatives, natural resources and enterprises based on natural resources are central to the organisation's strategy and a specific focus will be placed on these matters in the next few years to avail of various European initiatives. The LECO, Safer, React, RegEnergy, Digi2Market and Horizon 2020 schemes are of significant benefit to Gaeltacht areas and will support the empowerment of communities in the areas of renewable energy, climate change, seafood resources and energy resources. Údarás na Gaeltachta is involved in and is a lead organisation at present for a number of European initiatives and it is hoped that other funding applications made recently will be successful also.

Páirc na Mara

In light of the significant progress being made on the environmental assessment study on the proposed site of Páirc na Mara, a marine innovation park in Cill Chiaráin, Conamara, it is hoped that planning applications for the overall Páirc na Mara initiative will be ready in the first half of 2019. A source of encouragement for the initiative was the capital funding of €2m approved for MICD Páirc na Mara, a collaborative project involving Údarás na Gaeltachta, University of Ireland, Galway, and Galway–Mayo Institute of Technology, to develop a marine innovation and development centre in Páirc na Mara. The approval of assistance was given under the second round of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund delivered through Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta will also provide equity of €400,000 for the project.

It is envisaged that Páirc na Mara will be an important facilitator for the entire marine industry not only in Cill Chiaráin and Conamara but at a regional and national level, and even at an international level.

As has already been stated, Údarás na Gaeltachta's main aim is to preserve and strengthen the Irish language by developing the Gaeltacht, and to inspire and strengthen indigenous, confident Gaeltacht communities. Údarás na Gaeltachta has strategic responsibilities and duties to the Gaeltacht and has adopted an integrated approach with regard to the development of the Gaeltacht. An tÚdarás is in a unique position to undertake a leading role in furthering the development and expansion of the Irish language as a community language and to drive the integrated economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht, commensurate with the resources at its disposal.

REVIEW BY GAELTACHT REGION

Donegal Gaeltacht

156 new jobs were created in the Donegal Gaeltacht in 2018. When job losses are taken into consideration, there was a net increase of 85 jobs, which means that by year end there were 2,278 jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies, the highest number of jobs since 2008. This was the lowest ever number of job reductions in the Donegal Gaeltacht and indicates a particular recovery and stability in employment in the Donegal Gaeltacht. It is encouraging for the county's Gaeltacht areas that there was no fall in employment in the county for 8 consecutive years and that companies are recruiting continuously.

Among the companies across the Donegal Gaeltacht in which jobs were created were Arán Ard Teo.; Ard an Rátha; Kombucha Éireannach Teo.; Fáisc Miotail Teo., Páirc Ghnó Ghaoth Dobhair; Snáth Dhún na nGall Teo.; Oileán Glas Teo., Cill Charthaigh; Radox Teo.; Ostre' an Teo., An Clochán Liath. As is evident, job gains were across a wide range of sectors and company sizes.

New Initiatives

Last year the Board of Údarás na Gaeltachta approved a number of new projects for the Donegal Gaeltacht in 2018, which will result in 169 new jobs and a projected total investment of €8.44 million when these projects are underway. This indicates the success of Údarás efforts to foster enterprise in the county along with attracting business to the region.

A total of 5 new businesses were established in the Donegal Gaeltacht with Údarás support in 2018 employing a total of 19 by year end.

Opening of gteic@GaothDobhair

The innovation and digital hub gteic@GaothDobhair was officially opened in April 2018. The hub contains 20 hot desks and shared space facilities for remote workers and e-workers along with 26 fully-kitted office spaces and business incubation units developed for businesses which are starting up or developing. The facility is a great success and companies such as Pramerica, Meastóirí Domhanda and Optum have been established there. A remarkable growth and development is in store for gteic@GaothDobhair in 2019 during which the second floor will be developed due to €1.5m in funding approved under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. A total of 1,725 square metres in workspace/new offices will be provided by the end of 2019 as part of the development.

Enterprise Development Forum Action Plan

Údarás na Gaeltachta published the Implementation Report for 'Enterprise Development on the Gaoth Dobhair Business Park' in May 2018. This was a final report by the Enterprise Development Forum established in 2014. The implementation report illustrated the achievement of employment targets set out for the approval of 313 full-time jobs during the plan's period and also illustrated the further actions and partnerships put in place in the implementation of the Development Forum's recommendations.

Social Employment Schemes

A total of 324 people were employed on social employment schemes in the Donegal Gaeltacht at the end of the year including 140 on the Rural Social Scheme, 11 on the Tús Nua Scheme, 108 on the Community Employment Scheme and 65 on the Tús scheme. The schemes are managed by 13 supervisors, administered by Údarás na Gaeltachta and funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Cooperative- and Community-Based Organisations Schemes

Funding of €591,000 was provided for ten organisations under the Community Development Programme in 2018, and these in turn implemented an agreed community development work programme. A new co-operative called Forbairt Eachla CTR was established in An Ghaeltacht Láir in 2018 and the possible establishment of a community development organisation in the Fánaid area will be pursued in 2019.

Language Planning

In 2018, all Language Planning Areas (LPAs) in the Donegal Gaeltacht were engaged in language planning. Along with the two language plans previously approved in the county, the language plan for the Árainn Mhór LPA was approved in 2018. Language Plans for the Tuaisceart Dhún na nGall LPA and the Dún na nGall Theas LPA were also submitted to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for approval.

The Cloich Cheann Fhaola LPA had the honour of being the first lead organisation to employ a Language Planning Officer. The Gaoth Dobhair, Rann na Feirste, Anagaire and Loch an Iúir LPA have also employed a Language Planning Officer and an Assistant Language Planning officer to undertake the implementation of the plan in these areas. A recruitment process has begun in the Árainn Mhór LPA to fill a vacancy for a Language Planning Officer. An overall annual investment of €340,000 is involved in the implementation of these plans.

It is hoped that language plans for the Na Rosa LPA and the Gaeltacht Láir LPA will be ready to submit to the Department in the third quarter of this year.

The language planning process for the Gaeltacht Service Town of An Clochán Liath was begun in 2018 and a series of public meetings was held in the town during the year.

Mayo Gaeltacht

A total of 83 new jobs were created in the Mayo Gaeltacht in 2018. This amounted to a net increase of 9 jobs on the previous year and means that there were 657 full-time jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Mayo Gaeltacht at the end of the year.

With the support of Údarás na Gaeltachta 6 new companies were established in the Mayo Gaeltacht during the year and 9 people were employed in these companies at year end. New jobs were created in a number of companies such as Crannchur Cliste Teo. in Gaoth Sáile; Eachtraí Uisce Teo. and Westire Teo. in Béal an Mhuirthead; Drioglann Loch Measca in Tuar Mhic Éadaigh; Bioshell Teo. in Port Durlainne; Irish American Whiskey Supplies Ltd. in Bun an Churraigh, Achill.

During 2018 the Board of Údarás na Gaeltachta approved new projects which will result in the creation of 119 jobs in the Mayo Gaeltacht in the future, in both established companies and in companies currently being founded. These projects have a projected total investment of €5.25 million once operational. It is encouraging that the Board approved 5 initiatives involving High Potential Start-Ups (HPSU) in the Mayo Gaeltacht. This is a significant step forward in employment creation in the Mayo Gaeltacht in which High Potential Start-Ups create 10 jobs and €1m in sales within 3 years.

Funding approved for gteic initiatives in Mayo

Significant progress was made in gteic@BéalanMhuirthead in 2018 and up to 75% of the space was occupied by year end. A further resource will be developed for gteic networks in the Mayo Gaeltacht due to funding approved under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund for a series of

initiatives in Mayo. A total of €795,000 was approved for the development of 8 Innovation Units/Digital Hubs/Centres of Excellence in the Mayo Gaeltacht, namely Béal an Mhuirthead, An Eachléim, Gaoth Sáile, Acaill and Tuar Mhic Éadaigh. These initiatives will add significantly to the opportunities available for the rural communities in these areas to undertake work in their own areas or for the Gaeltacht Diaspora to return to their own areas. The approved funding will strongly impact the lives of those in these communities and it is central to our strategy to provide remote working opportunities in the Gaeltacht. The gteic gigabit digital ecosystem under development is succeeding to attract people to the Gaeltacht.

Cooperative- and Community-Based Organisations Schemes

Total funding of €210,000 was provided to four organisations under the Community Development Programme in 2018 for which agreed community development work programmes were implemented. These provide important local services, they coordinate community development activities and provide an advisory service for the voluntary sector in their functional areas. The community organisations are administering and managing community schemes and initiatives across the Gaeltacht.

Social Employment Schemes

A total of 254 people were employed on social employment schemes in the Mayo Gaeltacht at the end of the year. These schemes are managed by 12 supervisors, administered by Údarás na Gaeltachta and funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Language Planning

The language plan for the Maigh Eo Thuaidh Language Planning Area (LPA) was approved in 2018 and the recruitment process has begun to fill a vacancy for a Language Planning Officer to support the implementation of the plan. Investment of €100,000 is involved in the implementation of the plan and the Lead Organisation implementing the plan is Comharchumann Forbartha Ionad Deirbhile. The Lead Organisation Comhlacht Forbartha Áitiúil Acla Teo. is engaged in the preparation of a language plan for the Maigh Eo Thiar LPA and it is hoped the plan will be submitted to the Department in 2019. The Language Plan for the Dúiche Sheoigheach and Tuar Mhic Éadaigh LPA was approved in 2018 with a budget of €100,000 and the recruitment process for a Language Planning Officer is well underway.

Galway Gaeltacht

County Galway saw the most number of jobs created in Údarás na Gaeltachta supported client companies in 2018. A total of 237 jobs were created in the Galway Gaeltacht in 2018, or 40% of the total jobs created across the country. When the number of job losses are taken into consideration, there was a net increase of 45 jobs on the previous year in the county, which means that by year end there were 2,978 jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies. This is the highest number of jobs in the county since the year 2000.

New jobs were created during the year in companies operating in a wide range of sectors: medical devices, niche manufacturing, film/television, services and the marine sector, including Aran Biomedical, Cambus Medical Teo., Telegael Teo., Eo Teilifís Teo., Abú Media, Bradán Beo Teo. and Bia Mara Teo. There were a number of job losses in the fish processing, marine, food and drink, data processing, software, computing and manufacturing sectors.

New Initiatives

A total of 7 businesses were established during the year across the Galway Gaeltacht, and a total of 16 people were employed in these businesses at year end.

A number of projects were approved during 2018 in which more than 133 jobs will be created and in which €5.25 million will be invested when the proposed developments are operational. The main proposed developments will be in the fields of medical products, manufacturing and engineering.

Social Employment Schemes

A total of 36 people were employed on social employment schemes in the Galway Gaeltacht at the end of the year with 404 employed on various schemes. These included 187 on the Community Employment Scheme, 137 on the Rural Social Scheme, 60 on the Tús Scheme and 20 on the Tús Nua Scheme. The schemes are managed by 18 supervisors, administered by Údarás na Gaeltachta and funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Páirc na Mara

In light of the significant progress being made on the environmental assessment study on the proposed site of Páirc na Mara, a marine innovation park in Cill Chiaráin, Conamara, it is hoped that planning applications for the overall Páirc na Mara initiative will be ready in the first half of 2019. Further information was provided to An Bord Pleanála as requested as part of the decision on planning permission awarded by Galway County Council for an initial office building in 2018.

The Páirc na Mara development will be one of the main development initiatives undertaken in the next number of years. The development of the Park has been cited in national strategies such as the Rural Action Plan and Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth – An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland.

A source of encouragement for the initiative was the capital funding of €2m approved for MICD Páirc na Mara, a collaborative project involving Údarás na Gaeltachta, University of Ireland, Galway, and Galway–Mayo Institute of Technology, to develop a marine innovation and development centre in Páirc na Mara. The approval of assistance was given under the second round of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund delivered through Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta will also provide equity of €400,000 for the project.

It is envisaged that Páirc na Mara will be an important facilitator for the entire marine industry not only in Cill Chiaráin and Conamara but at a regional and national level, and even at an international level.

gteic - Gaeltacht Digital Network in Conamara

Significant progress was made on the development of gteic facilities in the Galway Gaeltacht in 2018. The gteic@AnCheathrúRua facility was opened in 2018 and will be a vibrant and live resource in the locality of An Cheathrú Rua. Hotdesk spaces and private offices are provided in the facility administered by Comharchumann Mhic Dara on behalf of Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Refurbishment works were begun in gteic@Carna and gteic@NaForbacha during the year and it is expected that these two facilities will be opened in early 2019. An tÚdarás have already received inquiries regarding these two facilities and alternative arrangements are being made until the facilities are opened.

Inis Mór will likely lead the race to become the first Gaeltacht island on which a gteic innovation centre will be opened in 2019.

The most significant boost seen by the gteic network during 2018 was the announcement of the approval of €548,000 in funding under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund for gteic@AnSpidéal and this is expected to open in early autumn as a priority initiative.

The Gaeltacht Digital Network is central to the organisation's strategy and will provide 30 innovation units with high-speed broadband access to give the Gaeltacht community an opportunity to return home and stay at home through remote working opportunities at offices or hot desks in these hubs.

Language Planning

In 2018, three Language Plans were approved for County Galway for the Language Planning Areas (LPA) of An Cheathrú Rua, Conamara Láir and for the LPA of Dúiche Sheoigheach and Tuar Mhic Éadaigh. Along with the Language Plan for the Cois Fharráige LPA, these plans involve the approval of 6 language planning jobs and approved funding of €500,000 for language planning in these LPAs in 2019. It is estimated that this figure will rise in 2019 when approval is given for the Language Plans for the LPAs of Ceantar na nOileán, Oileáin Árann and Maigh Cuilinn.

The preparation of language plans for the remaining three LPAs has begun energetically: Bearna and Cnoc na Cathrach, Oirthear Chathair na Gaillimhe and An tEachríd and it is expected that these will be submitted to the Department in 2020.

The Galway Gaeltacht is comprised of 10 Language Planning Areas.

Cooperative- and Community-Based Organisations Schemes

Total funding of €670,000 was provided to 11 organisations under the Community Development Programme in 2018 for which agreed community development work programmes were implemented. These provide important local services, they coordinate community development activities and provide an advisory service for the voluntary sector in their functional areas. The community organisations are administering and managing community schemes and initiatives across the Gaeltacht.

Meath Gaeltacht

There were 178 full time jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Meath Gaeltacht at the end of the year. This represented a reduction of 41 jobs on the previous year due to job reductions in a client company during the year. Due to building rearrangement and product redesign which were implemented in the Faughan Foods factory in Ráth Chairn during the year there was a reduction of 44 jobs in the company in 2018. It is hoped that the employment will increase again when the current restructuring project has been completed by the company.

It is a source of encouragement for the Meath Gaeltacht that the Údarás na Gaeltachta Board approved support for projects which will result in 27 jobs and investment of €2.52m when they are underway. Most of the approved posts pertain to Novelplast who will commence a project in Baile Ghib in 2019.

In addition significant external investment of €4m was made in Turmec Teo. in Ráth Chairn during the year. Private investors assisted a management buyout in the company. Turmec Teo. are experts in recycling who have completed a number of successful trading years and have sourced new international markets for their large scale engineering products. It is estimated that the company now has a global opportunity due to the quality of their products and the focus on environmental and waste issues.

Enterprise Forum for the Meath Gaeltacht

The Enterprise Forum for the Meath Gaeltacht was established as an enterprise action group to attract greater attention to Ráth Chairn / Baile Ghib, a Gaeltacht area close to Dublin, as an excellent location for employment creation.

The Enterprise Forum consists of a broad range of participants including Meath County Council, SOLAS, the Regional Skills Forum, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Maynooth University, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht as well as business and community representatives.

The forum hopes to be in a position to publish their report and recommendations before the end of March 2019.

Language Planning

The language plan for the Ráth Chairn agus Baile Ghib LPA was approved during 2018.

Comharchumann Ráth Chairn Teo. is the Lead Organisation responsible for the implementation of the plan and a Language Planning Officer has been appointed to support them in undertaking this work. An annual budget of €100,000 has been approved for the implementation of the language plan.

Cooperative- and Community- Based Organisations Scheme

Total funding of €59,000 was made available to one organisation under the Community Development Programme in 2018 who implemented an agreed community development work programme. These organisations provide important local services, coordinate community development activities and provide consultancy services for the voluntary sector in their functional area.

Kerry Gaeltacht

In 2018 a total of 56 new jobs were created in the Kerry Gaeltacht. These new jobs were created in companies which are operating in the food & drink sector primarily. There were some employment reductions in fish processing companies and in some small companies in the crafts and food & drink sector also during the year. These employment reductions resulted in a net increase of one job in total in 2018. There were 688 full-time positions in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Kerry Gaeltacht at the end of the year.

It is encouraging that the approval of a number of projects during the year will see 47 new jobs created and a total investment of €2.5 million when the projects are brought to fruition. The majority of projects will be in the food and drinks, tourism and information technology sectors. 6 new businesses were created in the Kerry Gaeltacht during 2018 and 23 people were working in them by the end of the year.

The Uíbh Ráthach (Iveragh) Interagency Taskforce

The Uíbh Ráthach (Iveragh) Interagency Taskforce is a national objective of the Action Plan for Rural Development. It is directed by Údarás na Gaeltachta and aims to develop enterprise, increase employment opportunities and best use the resources available in the regions. The final report and the taskforce's action plan will be published in early 2019. A new consultation model was implemented nationally for this taskforce and it is hoped to be replicated in other areas around the country.

The aim of the Interagency Taskforce is to develop a cross-sectoral action plan for the Uíbh Ráthach Gaeltacht and for the Uíbh Ráthach peninsula in general. The taskforce is made up of various Government agencies, which include Údarás na Gaeltachta, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Department of Rural and Community Development, Kerry County Council, Fáilte Ireland, the Department of Social Protection, Enterprise Ireland, Kerry Local Enterprise Office, Kerry Education and Training Board and South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd. Local businesses and community development groups are strongly represented on the taskforce also.

Social Employment Schemes

There were 78 people employed on social employment schemes in the Kerry Gaeltacht at the end of the year. The schemes are administered by Údarás na Gaeltachta and funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Language Planning

Two language plans with a total budget of €250,000 were approved for County Kerry during 2018. Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne Teo. is the Lead Organisation who will be implementing the language plan for Ciarraí Thiar LPA. The recruitment process for two posts to support the implementation of the plan was commenced in 2018.

Comhchoiste Ghaeltachtaí Chiarraí Theas Teo. are the Lead Organisation responsible for the language plan for Ciarraí Theas LPA with a budget of €100,000 and steps were being taken to recruit a Language Planning Officer at the end of 2018.

An Lab Teo. was selected to prepare a language plan for the Daingean Uí Chúis LPA and the organisation is currently preparing a language plan in conjunction with the community, which it hopes to submit to the Department in the spring of 2019.

Cooperative- and Community- Based Organisations Scheme

Total funding of €244,000 was made available to four organisations under the Community Development Programme in 2018 who implemented an agreed community development work programme. These organisations provide important local services, coordinate community development activities and provide consultancy services for the voluntary sector in their functional area.

Cork Gaeltacht

45 new jobs were created in the Cork Gaeltacht in 2018. When the number of job losses is taken into account there was a net increase of 15 jobs. There were 699 full time positions in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Cork Gaeltacht at the end of the year. These are the highest employment figures on record for Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Múscraí Gaeltacht. The previous record number of full time posts in the Múscraí Gaeltacht was 690 in 2008.

A number of projects were approved in 2018 which will see the creation of 28 jobs and an investment of €2 million, when those proposed developments are operational. The main developments are projected to take place in the food and engineering sectors.

gteic - Gréasán Digiteach na Gaeltachta (Gaeltacht Digital Network) in Cork

The first innovation and digital hub of the gteic network to be opened in the Cork Gaeltacht will be in Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh. It is hoped that this new high-speed broadband facility will be opened in the coming months when the final renovation works and kit out have been completed. Customers will be able to avail of Gigabit enabled high-speed broadband in gteic@Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh with hot desk spaces and private offices available in the facility.

Folláin Teo.

As reported in recent years the food and drinks sector in the Múscraí Gaeltacht has been very successful in the past few years with companies such as 9 Fia Bán, Folláin, De Róiste Foods and Táirgí Cáise Buabhall Mhaigh Chromtha winning prestigious national and international awards as well being available in some of the largest supermarket chains in the country.

Folláin Teo. has been established in the Múscraí Gaeltacht since 1985 and is producing jams and other products since. The company, established by Peadar & Máire Uí Lionaird, has made significant developments and investments in the intervening period and the company is one of the largest employers in the food industry in the Munster Gaeltacht areas. The company is located in a new state of the art building on Baile Bhuirne Business Park in County Cork since 2016. A tourism centre opened on the site in July 2017. The company have now compiled a new development plan and hope to double their sales by 2023 and in doing do to create a further 20 jobs in the company by 2023 also.

Social Employment Schemes

There were 20 people employed on social employment schemes in the Múscraí Gaeltacht by the end of the year. These schemes are being managed and administered by Údarás and are funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Language Planning

Comharchumann Forbartha Mhúscraí Teo. were the lead organisation involved in the preparation of the language plan for the Múscraí LPA which was approved during 2018. A Language Planning Officer has been recruited and the implementation of the language plan has commenced. An annual budget of €100,000 has been approved for the Múscraí LPA.

Comharchumann Chléire Teo. are the lead organisation undertaking the preparation of a language plan for Cléire LPA and it is hoped that the language plan will be ready for submission to the Department by mid-2019 and being implemented before year end.

Cooperative and Community Based Organisation Scheme

Total funding of €140,000 was made available to two organisations under the Community Development Programme in 2018 who implemented an agreed community development work programme. These organisations provide important local services, coordinate community development activities and provide consultancy services for the voluntary sector in their functional area.

Waterford Gaeltacht

9 new jobs were created in the Waterford Gaeltacht during the year and when the number of job losses is taken into account, there was a net increase of 8 jobs. There were 146 full-time jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Waterford Gaeltacht at the end of the year. The majority of job increases were in the film and manufacturing sectors.

4 new companies were created in the Waterford Gaeltacht during 2018 and there were six people working in them before year end.

Feasibility Study on Cultural/Tourism Centre

Support was approved for Comhlacht Forbartha na nDéise Teo. during 2018 to undertake a feasibility study regarding the development of a Multipurpose Centre on lands at Baile na nGall Béag in An Rinn. The proposed centre would house tourism, enterprise and cultural and community services and a comprehensive public consultation has been completed in regards to the project. Údarás na Gaeltachta have a 4 acre site at the proposed location on which a new playground has been developed on a portion of the site with support from a partnership between the Playground group, Waterford County Council and Údarás na Gaeltachta.

The gteic network in the Déise

Work is underway at the moment to source an appropriate location in which to house a gteic innovation and digital hub for the Waterford Gaeltacht. The development of 30 gteic innovation and digital hubs is a central strand of Údarás' strategy to promote remote working and to support innovative companies to locate in the Gaeltacht.

Language Planning

Comhlucht Forbartha na nDéise Teo. is the lead agency that prepared the language plan for Na Déise LPA which was approved during 2018 and for which a Language Planning Officer has been recruited. Plan implementation has commenced and an annual budget of €100,000 per year has been approved for this plan.

Cooperative and Community Based Organisations Scheme

Total funding of €54,000 was made available to one organisation under the Community Development Programme in 2018 who implemented an agreed community development work programme. These organisations provide important local services, coordinate community development activities and provide consultancy services for the voluntary sector in their functional area.

Ends

Further Information/Media Queries:

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