

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## Culture, Arts and Leisure

### LEGACY OF DCAL

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**Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** DCAL is a small Department in terms of staff numbers but has always been big in terms of ambition and more importantly delivery and outcomes. I am proud of what DCAL has achieved in harnessing the value of the culture, arts and leisure sector in making a lasting impact on society here.

Without DCAL we would be living in a very different place. Developments would not have taken place at our Stadiums, the Ulster Museum, the Grand Opera House, the Crescent Arts Centre, the Playhouse Theatre and the Culturlann Ui Chanain Centre in Derry nor would the inspiring new Public Record Office at the Titanic Quarter have been opened.

Without DCAL's support the new Lyric and MAC theatres would not have been developed. Without DCAL our Libraries would not have been protected or have improved facilities at more than a dozen locations.

The work of my Department has also shown off the best we have to offer on a global scale with major successes such as Derry City of Culture, the World Police and Fire Games and our involvement in the Olympics and Paralympics. In addition to these headline achievements, DCAL has delivered much, much more.

No one can doubt what DCAL has delivered since its creation in 1999. Over the past five years alone my Department has invested over £500 million in ensuring the cultural, arts and leisure sectors maximise their potential across a range of areas making a significant contribution to the economy and health and well-being.

Throughout my time as Minister, I have focused DCAL's resources on the Promotion of Equality and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion (PETPSE). This has been a core principle that has

underpinned all our work. Where DCAL spends public money the focus has been on how it can benefit those who are most vulnerable in society. For too long sections of the community have expressed feelings of having been shut out from participation and where people are excluded we lose the benefit of their knowledge, their experience and their diversity. I am proud of my Department's achievements across the sector and in reaching out to those who have been marginalised. I would like to give you a flavour of what has been achieved.

Libraries are at the heart of community life across the North providing spaces that can be enjoyed by everyone. Libraries deliver an extensive range of programmes, including cultural and heritage events, early childhood learning programmes, job clubs, adult reading classes, IT classes and a range of activities to support those dealing with mental health issues. We should not underestimate their importance. I have invested significant resources in enhancing libraries' services including new facilities in Kilkeel, Lisnaskea and Moira and in protecting library services in general.

The investment by DCAL in the arts and sporting sectors has also added greatly to addressing inequalities. Many people feel that they have been failed by society and they can experience exclusion. However frequently they can be engaged and supported through activities they already enjoy – creative, cultural and sporting programmes.

One example of this is the Magherafelt "My Space" project that reaches out to children in care. The programme encourages young people to work with digital animation artists and dramatists, to tell their story in a unique way, and help them address some of the difficulties they will face now and in the future.

DCAL has also worked with the Simon Community to deliver the 'Without Doors project' which gives a voice to the homeless of Belfast, using digital art and animation, and has also supported angling outreach programmes. DCAL has additionally taken forward very important work as part of the Executive's Together : Building a United Community strategy. This has included utilising the power of sport to deliver a Youth Sports Programme in the Lower Falls and Greater Village areas of Belfast as well as funding a wide range of activities making a difference to the lives of vulnerable young people, the homeless and people with disabilities. This is now being rolled out in rural areas with a pilot project in Lisnaskea.

With Belfast City Council we are investing £175,000 in supporting programmes to promote participation in sport, mental health initiatives and opportunities for the long-term unemployed to train as coaches and administrators.

The Public Record Office has been pivotal in ensuring disclosure and openness and that people directly affected by the conflict are able to obtain vital information from inquest records and court files. I know that families, victims and survivors are searching for answers so that they can understand

what happened to a loved one and I am pleased to have enabled access to records for over one hundred families over the past two years. It is important that this work continues.

PRONI has also championed digital innovation with the introduction of the electronic catalogue and other online resources widening access particularly to those who cannot visit PRONI in person. This has attracted over 13 million page views to the PRONI website each year. March 2015 also saw the completion of a Digital Repository for PRONI which ensures that records created digitally, by today's public bodies, can be preserved and widely accessed as public records for future generations.

Our Museums have also played an important role in helping to deliver positive change for people and communities. For example, the Live and Learn project worked with older people who were socially isolated and in need of support. The project supports over 4,000 people each year offering programmes to encourage engagement and improve health and well being. Inland Fisheries Group has delivered programmes with young people, vulnerable adults and individuals with disabilities in promoting the health and well being benefits to be gained from angling.

It is through this work that my Department has not only had an impact on the cultural, arts and leisure sectors, but across the whole community particularly amongst those who are marginalised. I have ensured that despite budget cuts imposed by the British government on the Executive, significant resources have continued to be made available to Arts organisations with almost £73 million invested since 2011.

Arts and Culture have an ability to bring together a wide range of people and in sharing our cultural traditions we make ourselves stronger. An important way to promote diversity is through supporting our indigenous languages and helping communities to express themselves.

I am delighted with the success of the Líofoa campaign and the uptake across the communities. When I launched Líofoa in September 2011, I set a target of encouraging one thousand people to learn Irish by 2015. To date, nearly 18,000 people have signed up, and it continues to grow daily. I am confident that the target of 20,000 sign ups by 2020 will be achieved.

In supporting the sector, I am investing £750,000 in a new Irish language community hub at Aonach Mhaca in Armagh and have committed to an Irish language academy – or GaelAcadamh – in the Gaeltacht Quarter in Belfast. I am also delighted with DCAL's investment in the new Ulster-Scots Hub and Visitor Centre at Corn Exchange Belfast and the further investment of £4M in Ulster-Scots related projects. The Ulster-Scots Agency has received funding of £9.6m since 2011 and the Ministerial Advisory Group for Ulster-Scots Academy (MAGUSA) has received nearly £4m since its creation.

I recently announced my intention to establish an Ulster- Scots Institute. I expect to see the Institute up and running by the end of this calendar year.

In moving this work forward, I have published two strategies to provide frameworks for the development of the Irish language and Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture. These languages belong to all of us and we must take this responsibility seriously ensuring both Irish and Ulster Scots flourish in the future. Also, a public consultation has confirmed huge support for an Irish Language Act and this legislation is ready to proceed as soon as the Executive gives its support.

Members will also be aware that I have launched a consultation on a Sign Language Framework with proposals for legislation. I am proud of the work that my Department has undertaken in safeguarding the rights of our Sign Language community and their families.

While the key focus of my department has been on promoting equality and tackling poverty and social exclusion, I have also made a significant investment in improving the infrastructure across the cultural and sporting sectors and in creating jobs. Over the past four years my Department has invested over £113 million in physical facilities. This has included the Kingspan Stadium, Windsor Park and the new facilities at Olympia. My commitment to the redevelopment of Casement Park has never waned and a new planning application will be submitted later this year.

My Department has also continued to lead the way in its commitment to the inclusion of social clauses in contracts, providing new opportunities for the unemployed, apprentices and student placements. The Advisory Group on Architecture and Built Environment has continued to play a key role in working with partners on neighbourhood renewal and community regeneration schemes.

My Department has invested in infrastructure to build on the success of Derry City of Culture. Almost £8 million has been provided in the North West to develop sporting, community, language and heritage facilities. This is additional to over £12 million invested in 2013.

My Department has also invested in improving other sporting facilities including the North Coast Sports Village, Lisburn Racquets, Colaiste Feirste's Handball Facility in West Belfast, and many local boxing facilities. And in the arts sector, I recently committed over £900,000 to the Seamus Heaney Centre in Bellaghy.

I am very proud of the work that my Department has delivered and that this work will continue with many exciting projects in the pipeline. In particular, I look forward to the completion of a Culture and Arts Strategy following the recent public consultation which has indicated overwhelming support for a strategy. This will be the first overarching, government-led culture and arts strategy for the North.

In developing our infrastructure, the Investment Strategy for 2016 to 2021 projects that capital investment in the cultural and sporting sectors will increase and it is expected that over £300 million will be invested. One of the largest investments will be a £36 million commitment to develop sub-

regional stadia for soccer. The next steps should be a similar programme of work for rugby and gaelic football. Initial work is also scheduled to begin on a number of flagship projects, including the second Phase of the Sub-Regional Stadia Programme; the Central Library Project in Belfast and further development of the Ebrington site in Derry.

The next few years will also provide opportunities to build excitement and involvement as major sporting events are held here. Next summer, the Women's Rugby World Cup and the Under 19 Women's European Soccer Championships will be held in the North. These will provide a great opportunity to profile women's sport and increase interest and crucially, participation, in all sports among girls and women. I will also continue to champion the IRFU's bid to bring the Rugby World Cup to Ireland in 2023.

Armagh Observatory and Planetarium has been part of our shared history for hundreds of years and I want to ensure that it has a sustainable and exciting future, building on all its good work to date. I have asked my officials to work closely with the Trustees and staff of the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium to develop a range of proposals that will lead to a multi million pound capital investment in Armagh. My vision, shared by the Trustees, is to develop a world class Planetarium excelling in education and outreach alongside a world class Research Institute that will be envied throughout the world.

This will build on the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium's unique heritage to make it a "must visit" destination for local, national and international visitors and students. I see the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium playing a leading role in scientific research and outreach, helping to develop the STEM agenda across our society, being a top visitor attraction in the North and nurturing a new generation of young people excited by the possibilities that science brings.

As Members will be aware, while funding for DCAL was reduced in the Budget I have sought to protect frontline services. I want to continue to ensure that as much of my budget as possible reaches those who are most in need, rather than being spent on needless bureaucracy.

Currently over 80% of my budget is delivered through Arms Length Bodies and the staffing and administration costs involved are estimated to be in the region of £12 million per annum. The current arrangements create layers of bureaucracy and duplication and Arm Length Bodies also replicate support functions that already exist within my Department, including Human Resources, IT, Accounting and accommodation functions. This is an issue that can be progressed further within the new Department for Communities.

Finally, the Programmes that I have described amount to an agenda for the transformation of our society both socially and economically. The culture, arts and leisure sector is in a good place,

however there is much more to be done. It is vital that the level of investment continues in building on this success and in ensuring that resources are targeted at those who are in greatest need.

We owe this to current and future generations.