

DECENTRALISATION

General Notes

A wide range of factors have been taken into account and balanced against each other in selecting Departments/agencies for decentralisation and locations for the new decentralised offices. These factors include:

(a) in selecting Departments and agencies for decentralisation:

- the imperative that customer service standards are not adversely affected by decentralisation;
- the core business and nature of the relevant Departments/agencies;
- the location of their customer base;
- the need to ensure that the units involved are large enough to provide career opportunities for staff either within their own Department or in another Department within a reasonable distance;

and

(b) in selecting locations for decentralised offices:

- the need to achieve a fit with the National Spatial Strategy, in terms of the Gateways, Hubs and their respective catchments;
- the location of existing decentralised offices;
- the desirability of clustering a Department's decentralised units within a region;
- the importance of respecting the scale and character of locations in terms of their capacity to absorb the number of new jobs involved;
- the existence of good transport links – by road, rail and/or air – and the general infrastructural capacity in the areas selected.

By way of illustration:

Department of Agriculture & Food: The headquarters of the Department will move to Portlaoise where it already has a Regional Office.

Department of Education & Science: The headquarters of the Department will transfer to Mullingar, reflecting the Athlone/Mullingar/Tullamore Gateway in the National Spatial Strategy and the fact that the Department already has substantial staff in Athlone and Tullamore.

Defence: The Defence Forces Headquarters will move to the Curragh and the headquarters of the Department of Defence will be located in nearby Newbridge.

Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government: The headquarters of the Department will move to Wexford, a designated Hub in the National Spatial Strategy, complementing the existing location of the Environmental Protection Agency in Wexford.

Office of Public Works: The OPW is charged with the management of civil service property. It is considered that, in the light of the decentralisation programme, it should have regional bases. Its new headquarters will be in Trim, and it will have regional offices in Kanturk (S&E Region) and Claremorris (BMW Region).

Land Registry: The Land Registry already has an office in Waterford (S&E Region). It will retain a Dublin office and will now have another regional office in Roscommon (BMW Region).

Implementation

An Implementation Committee is being established to drive the process forward, with the Chair of the Committee reporting to a special Cabinet sub-committee.

A joint Department of Finance/OPW unit will be established to support the Implementation Committee and to liaise with Departments.

Each Minister will establish a decentralisation unit in his/her Department which will report to the Management Advisory Committee and the Minister, and each Department will report on a regular basis to the special Cabinet sub-committee.

The overall objective will be to ensure that property being acquired at regional level is matched as closely as possible, both in time and in cost terms, by disposal of property currently held in the Dublin region, whether held on lease or otherwise. The Implementation Committee will oversee the production of a plan by the OPW by March 2004 to give effect to this objective.

An extra allocation of €20m capital is being included in the Department of Finance Vote for 2004 to meet any up-front capital investment that may be required.

Industrial Relations

The programme will be implemented on a voluntary basis. There will be no redundancies and, as on previous occasions, the payment of removal or relocation expenses will not arise.

The existing partnership structures within each Department/agency will deal with any implementation related issues which are specific to that Department/agency. Any public service-wide issues will be addressed under the auspices of the Public Service Monitoring Group provided for in Sustaining Progress.