

DATE FOR ANSWER: 10 DECEMBER 1992

ORDINARY WRITTEN PQ NO: 656 FOR ANSWER BY MR HANLEY

MR WILLIAM ROSS (East Londonderry): To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what is his estimate of the number of people who (a) speak Irish and (b) are learning Irish; what amount of government funds were spent on (i) teaching the language and (ii) otherwise promoting it during the current financial year; how much this represents per capita in Northern Ireland; how much per Irish speaker and student; what were the figures 5 and 10 years ago; and what are his projections for the next 3 years.

In the 1991 Census of Population, 131,974 persons aged 3 or over were recorded as able to speak Irish. For estimates of the number of pupils learning Irish at school, I would refer the Hon Gentleman to the answer I gave to the Hon Gentleman for North Antrim on 17 November 1992 (Official Report Vol. 214 No 75 Cols 149-152), where it was estimated that, based on a 10% sample survey relating to those schools which offered Irish as a subject in the 1988-89 academic year, some 26,210 pupils were studying Irish. The numbers learning Irish in other educational institutions are not available centrally.

The total costs of teaching Irish are not separately identified.

The total of Central Government expenditure (excluding the funding of Irish medium education and of teaching Irish in English medium mainstream education) in the current financial year is estimated at £668,000. Based on information available from the 1991 Census of Population, this equates to some £0.42 per head of population, or £5.06 per Irish speaker. Since information on the costs of teaching Irish is not available, a per student figure cannot be provided.

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BACKGROUND

The equivalent figure 5 years ago was approximately £210,000. A figure for 10 years ago is not available.

Projections for expenditure on the promotion of the language for the next 3 years are also unavailable.

The 1991 Census of Population, taken on 21 April that year, contained a question on Irish language. This was the first occasion a question on Irish was included in a Northern Ireland census. Its

Answer prepared by: Pat McAlister, CCRU in question in the 1991 Census for Scotland. 0232 763011 ext 3372 relation to persons aged 3 and over whether they "can speak, read or write Irish".

Further information

available from: Keith Jagelman, CCRU October 1992 contained in Table 21 data at Northern Council level on the numbers of persons who claimed ability in the language.

In relation to those claiming to speak the language it gave a figure of 131,374 persons. This was made up as follows:-

Can speak Irish	45,333
Can speak and read Irish	6,591
Can speak and write Irish	1,012
Can speak, read and write Irish	79,012

CENTRAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS UNIT (CCRU)

In the current financial year £181,111 will be provided by CCRU for the promotion of the Irish language. This will be made up as follows:-

Organisation	Purpose of Grant
Ulster Trust	£80,000 towards core expenditure and a contribution to programme costs.

BACKGROUND

1991 CENSUS OF POPULATION

The 1991 Census of Population, taken on 21 April that year, contained a question on Irish language. This was the first occasion a question on Irish was included in a Northern Ireland census. Its wording was identical to the wording of the Gaelic question in the 1991 Census for Scotland. The question asked in relation to persons aged 3 and over whether they "can speak, read or write Irish".

The Census Summary Report which issued on 23 October 1992 contained in Table 23 data at Northern Ireland and District Council level on the numbers of persons who claimed ability in the language.

In relation to those claiming to speak the language it gave a figure of 131,974 persons. This was made up as follows:-

Can speak Irish	45,338
Can speak and read Irish	6,593
Can speak and write Irish	1,031
Can speak, read and write Irish	79,012

CENTRAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS UNIT (CCRU)

In the current financial year £381,121 will be provided by CCRU for the promotion of the Irish language. This will be made up as follows:-

Organisation

Ultach Trust

Purpose of Grant

- £80,000 towards core expenditure and a contribution to programme costs;

Organisation

Purpose of Grant

- Placenames Project - £180,000 towards core expenditure; Translation System.
- Comhaltas Uladh - £25,500 to provide scholarship to students of the Irish language;
- Gael Linn - £40,000 to develop Irish language and cultural activities; throughout the island
- Naiscoil na Rinne - £7,000 to develop an Irish Language and Cultural Development Unit in Londonderry;
- Naionra na Fuisseoige - £621 to support a post to develop Irish language on a cross-community basis in West Belfast;
- LA - £24,000 to support a daily Irish language newspaper;
- An Ceathru Poili - £6,000 for a one-year pilot project to establish an Irish Language Bookshop;
- Risteard MacGabhann - £4,000 to produce audio visual learning packages for adults in the Irish language;
- Anne Craig - £8,000 to produce Irish language audio cassettes for children;

Organisation

Purpose of Grant

Newry & Mourne District Council - £6,000 towards the purchase of an Irish Language Simultaneous Translation System.

The Ultach Trust was established in December 1989 with the following objective:

- to widen appreciation of the contribution which the Irish Language makes to the cultural heritage of Northern Ireland and to increase knowledge of the Language throughout the community.

In pursuance of this aim, the Trust has identified the following ancillary objectives:

- to act as a funding agency for the Irish Language and related activities;
- to promote the advancement of Irish traditions and cultural heritage;
- to assist in the provision of written and oral material which will help to promote wider knowledge and appreciation of the language;
- to give practical advice and assistance to groups involved in Irish Language activities about the availability of funds; and
- to assist groups in applying for funding or, where appropriate, to direct applications to other funding agencies.

In the 1991/92 financial year the Trust received £500,000 from the European Commission towards its capital endowment, which will provide long term support for Irish language projects. Government provided

a contribution of £250,000 to the endowment fund. Government also provides support for the Trust's core expenditure and a contribution to programme costs for Irish language groups, amounting to £80,000 this year.

The **Origins of Placenames Project** began on 1 October 1987 and was assigned the following task by the Department of the Environment:-

"to research the origin of all names of settlements and physical features in Northern Ireland appearing on the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale map; to indicate their meaning and to note any historical or other relevant information. The project will enable an authenticated Irish Language version to be provided for most of these names."

The project team of 5 academics is located in Queen's University as an Onomastics Unit and is directed by Professor Gerry Stockman, who is also a member of the Irish Language Advisory Group.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Irish is widely taught as a subject in schools and colleges of further education. It is also available as a subject in both universities and at St Mary's Teacher Training College. The costs of teaching it are not, however, separately identifiable.

Irish is also taught in two grant-aided Irish medium primary schools and in an Irish medium stream in one English medium primary school. However, the only costs available are for one of these schools - Bunscoil Phobal Feirste - and it would be misleading to publish these in response to Mr Ross' question since they are only a very small element in the total expenditure on Irish.

The only other education-related expenditure on Irish language activities is in the form of grants from the Arts Council. These are given in response to proposals for projects and there is no

specific budget for Irish language activities in future years. Information on funding for projects in previous years is not held centrally.

Official Report Vol 214 No 75 Cols 149-152 provides additional background information.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The Department of the Environment through the Belfast Action Teams will expend some £26,000 in this financial year on a variety of activities and projects designed to promote the Irish language within the Greater Belfast area.

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

The Training and Employment Agency's Action for Community Employment Scheme has made provision of £192,000 for the following projects aimed at promoting Irish:

Glor na nGael	-	Belfast
LA Newspaper	-	Belfast
St Brendan's Playgroup	-	Belfast
Gaelscoileanna Oirdheisceart	-	Newry
Conradh na Rinne	-	Londonderry
Naiscoil Cholmchille	-	Londonderry

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

The Northern Ireland Office estimate staffing and ancillary costs of £69,000 in the current financial year in providing educational and translation facilities for prisoners using the Irish language.

In prisons, books in Irish are provided and there are teachers of Irish in all prison establishments. Prisoners are also permitted to correspond in the language of their choice, including Irish, subject to a limit of two non-English letters per prisoner per week.

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