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News

Programme to relocate State services out of Dublin delayed

Deaglan De Breadun

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THE GOVERNMENT is expected to announce a major rescheduling of decentralisation as part of its six-year €39.43 billion revised capital investment programme to be published today.

State spending on healthcare infrastructure is likely to be cut, but the relocation of the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) to a new campus at Grangegorman on the city's northside will go ahead.

With an initial investment between €30 million and €40 million, the Grangegorman project will involve all elements of the DIT moving to the site, and the sale of their existing premises at 10 different locations in Dublin.

The decision was approved by Cabinet at its Farmleigh meeting last Wednesday. Formerly a psychiatric hospital, the campus will also house a number of healthcare projects.

Plans to decentralise elements of the Department of Education to Mullingar and of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation to Carlow will be postponed for further re-assessment next year, as well as a similar move of Government personnel to Longford, sources said.

Metro North and the €2.5 billion Dart underground project are to proceed, but rail links from Dublin to Navan and from Tuam to Claremorris will be put on hold.

Potential for job creation was the deciding factor in choosing between different projects, according to Government sources.

Establishing the DIT campus at Grangegorman would be "a huge milestone" in terms of educational infrastructure for Dublin, Government sources said. The Bolton Street architecture and engineering faculty is expected to be the first to move.

Although €1 billion is being cut from capital expenditure, Government sources said recent reductions in costs would mean "added value" of about 30 per cent.

The programme, *Infrastructure Investment Priorities 2010-2016*, will be launched by the Taoiseach at the national convention centre in Dublin's Spencer Dock at midday today. He will be accompanied by Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan and the Green Party leader and Minister for the Environment, John Gormley.

Informed sources said that 30 per cent, or around €100 million per year, could be sliced from the Health Service Executive's budget for developing hospital and other facilities.

However, despite the new spending curbs, it is expected that the controversial new national paediatric hospital will be approved for development on a site at the Mater Hospital in Dublin.

The first major State expenditure on this project is expected to take place next year. The HSE currently has a capital budget of over €350 million.

Some of the main areas for investment will be public transport, roads, schools, health facilities, the environment, energy efficiency, broadband, Research and Development (RD) and support for jobs and enterprise.

A Government statement last night said the programme "includes in-depth analysis and reprioritisation of the capital expenditure programme".

Speaking in advance of the launch, the Taoiseach said: "This is exactly the type of stimulus that the economy needs to help rebuild confidence and accelerate economic recovery."

“It will not only greatly improve the lives of our citizens, it will help to create jobs now and to sustain jobs for the future.

“We have seen the benefits of the investment of recent years and we believe it is essential to maintain that momentum for the coming years.

“We also recognise that we are in a new situation, so have refocused our priorities. That is why, for example, there will be a doubling of investment through the enterprise agencies to help build the smart economy and to create sustainable jobs. There will also be a greater share of investment for public transport and environmental issues such as upgrading our water services.”

Mr Cowen said the programme was “ambitious, appropriate and affordable”.

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