



DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DÁIL ÉIREANN

TUAIRISC OIFIGIÚIL—*Neamhcheartaithe*
(OFFICIAL REPORT—*Unrevised*)

Tuesday, 11 May 2010.

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DÁIL ÉIREANN

Dé Máirt, 11 Bealtaine 2010.
Tuesday, 11 May 2010.

Chuaigh an Ceann Comhairle i gceannas ar 14.30 p.m.

Paidir.

Prayer.

Ceisteanna — Questions.

Tribunals of Inquiry

1. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the costs which accrued to his Department in February 2010 in respect of the Moriarty tribunal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12954/10]

2. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the projected additional costs that will accrue to his Department arising from the decision of the Moriarty tribunal to hold additional public sittings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12955/10]

3. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach the costs accruing to his Department arising from the Moriarty tribunal up to the latest date for which figures are available; if any estimate is available of the likely final cost to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13687/10]

4. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Taoiseach the breakdown of overall costs for the Moriarty tribunal for the months of January, February and March in 2010. [17826/10]

5. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Taoiseach the estimated cost to his Department of the additional public sittings of the Moriarty tribunal and the projected final cost of the tribunal to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18791/10]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 1 to 5, inclusive, together.

Total expenditure by my Department from the establishment of the Moriarty tribunal to the end of April 2010 was €39.36 million. Expenditure in January, February and March of this year was €414,962, €259,321 and €200,302, respectively. The sole member of the tribunal, Mr. Justice Moriarty, has not yet addressed third party costs. Until this is done, we cannot estimate the overall cost of the tribunal with any accuracy. The tribunal secretariat has on many occasions over the years told my Department that any attempt by the tribunal to quantify third party costs would lead to conclusions being drawn and suppositions being made, which could infringe on the rights of witnesses and impinge on the independence of the tribunal. As Deputies will

[The Taoiseach.]

be aware, the Comptroller and Auditor General's special report on tribunals of inquiry, in attempting to establish some estimate of the overall cost of the Moriarty tribunal, gave various ranges for third party costs but stressed that the figures were subject to many caveats and contingencies. It is not possible at this point to estimate with any accuracy the likely cost to my Department of any additional public sittings.

Deputy Enda Kenny: This tribunal has been going on for many years. According to the figures produced by the Taoiseach, it has cost almost €40 million. As he said, we are not yet in a position to know what the third party costs might be. Some of the legal people employed by the tribunal have cost in excess of €1,000 a day. Given the significant increase in costs because witnesses have had to be called as a result of two errors that were made arising from the work of the tribunal, does the Taoiseach believe that the sole chairman of the tribunal is now in a position to produce a credible and impartial report? What area of Exchequer funds will have to be diverted to pay for the additional costs that will arise from these mistakes? Given that no report has been produced so far, does the Taoiseach consider that the €40 million spent to date — we do not know the figure for third party costs — represents good value for money?

The Taoiseach: An earlier report, on another aspect of the tribunal's work, was produced in December 2006. That was the first report of the tribunal. We are awaiting its second and final report. The tribunal has lasted much longer than was expected at the time of its establishment. In addition to the length and complexity of the tribunal's terms of reference, factors which have contributed to its duration include litigation against the tribunal instituted by individuals connected with its work, the illness of certain witnesses and material that came to light in the course of the Ansbacher investigation which had to be considered by the tribunal. This necessitated almost a year's work by way of private investigation.

The tribunal has been in existence for over 12 years. There must be a focus on its completing its work as soon as possible. It is obvious that the recent attendance of additional witnesses from the Office of the Attorney General and the possible attendance of Mr. Michael Andersen, whose firm was a consultant in the GSM evaluation process, will further delay the completion of the report. We are waiting for all such witnesses to come before the tribunal to be cross-examined and to deal with any issues that arise in respect of which they can be helpful.

This tribunal, like other tribunals, is a creation of the Oireachtas and carries out its functions independently. It emphasises and adopts a certain methodology for the carrying out of its work. I do not believe I should make any comment in that regard, other than to mention that I have been inquiring about when the report may be completed. The correspondence has indicated it is not possible to state exactly when that will happen. There is correspondence with Mr. Andersen's solicitor with a view to clarifying matters. While the chairman is not in a position yet to be categorical about the impact of this development on the completion of his work, he wishes to make it clear that he is determined that the delay will be as of a short duration and consistent with the discharge of his remit and the safeguarding of the constitutional rights of those persons affected by the inquiries. He does not anticipate that any such delay will protract his work beyond a short number of months, which is his best estimate.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Some of the young students in the Visitors Gallery were only small children when this tribunal began. It is clear from the figures the Taoiseach has given today and in the past that members of the tribunal and its legal team are exceptionally well rewarded for the work in which they have been engaged, yet two serious errors occurred, both of which were admitted by the tribunal chairman and both of which should not have happened.

Fees are €1,500, €1,600 and €1,900 a day. The tribunal has gone on for more than 12 years, two serious mistakes have occurred and the expert consultant, Michael Andersen, has agreed to go back and give evidence. We are aware from reports what will be his evidence. This requires further public sittings and may require further legal objection. Has the Taoiseach been informed of the proposed number of sittings or the length of time for which the tribunal may have to sit again? One report suggests it will sit until 2012. Has he considered that legal people paid at these extraordinary rates presided over a situation where two serious and grievous errors occurred? Has he been informed of the likelihood of a number of further public sittings? Is there any truth in the rumour that this will go on to 2012 or possibly beyond?

The Taoiseach: I just explained to the Deputy that this tribunal was a creation of the Oireachtas and, therefore, it is a matter for the Oireachtas to consider all these points.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I know that.

The Taoiseach: I cannot deal with rumours and the Deputy should not deal with them. I have just explained that the latest information I have from the sole member of the tribunal is that while he cannot be categorical about the impact of recent developments on the completion of his work, for example, the availability of Mr. Andersen, he is in correspondence with Mr. Andersen's solicitor to clarify that matter, and he wishes to make it clear that he is determined that the delay will be as of a short duration and consistent with the discharge of his remit and the safeguarding of the constitutional rights of those persons affected by the inquiries. He further informs me that he does not anticipate that any such delay will protract his work beyond a short number of months. Recent Supreme Court judgments will have to be taken into account by this and other tribunals in respect of third party cost implications.

Deputy Enda Kenny: What is another year?

The Taoiseach: The correspondence is from the Sole Member, who is the person dealing with the tribunal proceedings. It is not a case of "what is another year?" He stated, "he does not anticipate that any such delay will protract his work beyond a short number of months". It should be acknowledged that is the latest information I have from the sole member.

Deputy Enda Kenny: We have had this before. Who knows what evidence Mr. Andersen will give when he gets in there or what will be the reaction to that from others?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is treading a thin line on this matter. He knows the difficulties we have with this House and tribunals sitting simultaneously. I understand the difficulty Members have asking supplementary questions.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Will the Ceann Comhairle advise me what is the thin line?

An Ceann Comhairle: We are not going to run a parallel tribunal.

Deputy Enda Kenny: The questions are about the costs of the tribunal, for which the Taoiseach's Department is responsible. It was set up by the Oireachtas and is paid for by the Ceann Comhairle and every other taxpayer.

An Ceann Comhairle: I accept that.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Serious fees are being paid to legal personnel. My understanding is that the Attorney General advised the tribunal of the legality of the change of ownership in respect of the consortium bidding for the licence. It has come to light only recently that this

[Deputy Enda Kenny.]

was a fact. How could legal personnel paid at premium rates on a daily basis make a fundamental error such as that, and the legal adviser to the State and to the Government advise on the legality of the change of ownership yet that did not emerge until quite recently?

The tribunal was set up by the Government and this House. It was a decision of the Dáil. Does the Taoiseach have a view on when the Dáil should consider that the tribunal should be wound up? It has now drifted for 12 years and has cost €40 million to date plus unknown figures for third party costs. Now, the expert consultant, Mr. Andersen, wants to give evidence to the tribunal in accordance with what has been already said by the legal adviser and the Department. Does the Taoiseach, on behalf of the Government, have a view on when the Moriarty tribunal should be wound up? If it is allowed to drift interminably people will call it a charade, and a costly one at that.

I respect the right of the sole member of the tribunal to find and determine the facts but two grievous errors have occurred along the way and they will cost the taxpayer more money. Does the Taoiseach have a view on when the Government will consider a recommendation for the winding up of the Moriarty tribunal or is he prepared to let it drift for a number of months or possibly even longer?

The Taoiseach: As I said to the Deputy on a number of occasions, it is a matter for the Oireachtas to table a substantive motion for consideration on tribunals of inquiry. The matter will require careful consideration. At this stage the focus must be on the completion of the report and to arrange for its publication. A witness has indicated that they may be available to attend. Correspondence is ongoing between the tribunal and the solicitor for the individual concerned, who is in another country, to see whether that can be facilitated. The latest information I have from the sole member, without being categorical — because as Deputy Kenny indicated, he cannot anticipate what will be the impact of all of that — is that he suggested a short number of months is required. The working of the tribunal is a matter for the tribunal. It is not a matter for me to comment on.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Taoiseach reminded us that the tribunal was established by the Oireachtas and that therefore how it is addressed is a matter for the Oireachtas. The Taoiseach will recall that when the tribunal was established in September 1997 its terms of reference included a paragraph which stated that it is the desire of the House that the inquiry be completed in as economical a manner as possible and at the earliest date consistent with a fair examination of the matters referred to it. It is probably fair to say that nobody anticipated in 1997 that 13 years later the tribunal would be still going on, that there would be no final report and no clear indication as to when a final report might be presented.

The Taoiseach referred to the possibility that the House might wish to consider a substantive motion on the issue. Would he consider it a good idea for there to be an agreed motion in the House directing the Clerk of the Dáil to write to the sole member to request from him a progress report on the tribunal and a clear indication as to when a final report might be presented to the House?

I wish to ask about the appearance of Mr. Andersen at the tribunal. Last week *The Irish Times* carried a report, which was apparently based on a reply prepared by the Taoiseach for delivery in the Dáil if the question had been reached here. It stated that the Taoiseach had written to the sole member to inquire about a timescale for the completion of the tribunal's report. In his reply the sole member had stated that Mr. Andersen had not yet signalled to the tribunal that he was agreeable to attend as a witness, and that it was trying to ascertain the position.

That reply and the reportage of it prompted the solicitors for Mr. Andersen to state that, in fact, he had replied to the tribunal indicating that he was prepared to attend as a witness and that there was not any doubt about his attendance. Will the Taoiseach please clarify the position? I presume that the report of what the Taoiseach had intended to say was based on the correspondence from the sole member. How did it arise that the Taoiseach believed last week there was some doubt about Mr. Andersen's availability to attend as a witness when his solicitors state that, in fact, he had agreed to attend?

The Taoiseach: The reply that was given last week on this matter was in line with the correspondence I had received on 23 April from the sole member of the tribunal, when he stated in a letter to me of that date:

The Tribunal has always considered that Mr. Andersen would be a valuable witness. It is a matter of enormous regret to me that the prospect of his attendance should have arisen so belatedly in the Tribunal's proceedings. Although he has not yet signified to the Tribunal that he is agreeable to attending as a witness, the Tribunal is endeavouring to ascertain the position through correspondence with his solicitors.

This is the position as it was conveyed to me. I have also received correspondence, dated 10 May from the sole member of the tribunal, referring to his letter of 23 April in response to my letter, the previous day, in which the sole member indicated to me that because of the uncertainty surrounding the prospective attendance of Mr. Michael Andersen as a witness to the tribunal it was not possible for him to be definite about the impact which that development could have on the timescale for completion of his work. The sole member goes on to say in this letter, dated 10 May:

In the course of that letter, I informed you that Mr. Anderson had not yet signified to the Tribunal that he was, in fact, agreeable to attending as a witness, and that I was endeavouring to ascertain the position through correspondence with his solicitor.

In the light of an article published in today's editions of *The Irish Times*, which suggest that the information which I furnished to you in that regard was incorrect, I wish to state that the information which I provided to you on that occasion was not incorrect in any respect.

The sole member goes on to say:

You will appreciate that it would otherwise be wholly inappropriate for me to comment on the content on any media report, or on the content of confidential correspondence between my solicitor and that of any prospective witness.

He goes on to say:

I wish to confirm that the solicitor of the sole member is continuing in correspondence with Mr. Andersen's Danish solicitor, with a view to clarifying matters.

While not in a position to be categorical about the impact of this development on the conclusion of his work, he goes on to state that he wished to make it clear that he is determined the delay would be of as short a duration as possible, consistent with the discharge of his remit and the safeguarding of the constitutional rights of those persons affected by his inquiries. That having been said, the sole member goes on to say:

I do not anticipate that any such delay will protract my work beyond a short number of months.

[The Taoiseach.]

That is the position of the sole member.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The idea that the tribunal was to be completed in a short number of months has arisen before. When the Taoiseach was answering questions in the House about the tribunal in October 2008, he said he expected the final report to be completed by the end of that year. On 4 November last, again when answering questions, the Taoiseach told us it was the intention of the sole member that the report would be ready for publication in early January, a reply that was subsequently described by a source with knowledge of the tribunal's affairs as being totally unrealistic. I have no doubt the Taoiseach gave those replies based on what he had been informed by the tribunal, but we have been told numerous times that the end is nigh for the tribunal report, and this has turned out not to be the case. Now we have the same response with regard to the appearance of Mr. Anderson.

I note there is an exchange of correspondence between the sole member and the Taoiseach, and I have no difficulty with that. However, given that the tribunal is a creature of the Oireachtas rather than of the Government, does the Taoiseach not think the correspondence, from which he has quoted extensively, should be communicated to the House? Does he intend to make it available or lay it before the House?

I will return to my first question, which is based on the shared concern at the length of time the tribunal has taken. We know the costs that have been incurred by the tribunal itself, but we have no idea, other than the estimates of the Comptroller and Auditor General, of what the third party costs might be. Given the original mandate of the tribunal, which was to conduct the inquiry and produce a report as quickly and economically as possible, and the fact that 13 years have now passed, how would the Taoiseach feel about the idea of an agreed motion in the House directing the Clerk of the Dáil to communicate with the sole member, asking him to return a progress report? The House established this tribunal and we have a responsibility, as the Taoiseach has said, to know where it is going. Perhaps the time has come for the House, rather than the Taoiseach, to communicate with the sole member and ask for a progress report and an indication of when the tribunal will come to an end and when we will see a final report.

The Taoiseach: Although I quoted extensively from the letter, it is marked "Private and confidential" and "Strictly addressee only". The reason I conduct this correspondence is to communicate queries raised by the House. All of my replies simply reflect the contents of the correspondence.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: I accept that.

The Taoiseach: It is a matter for the sole member to inform me of certain issues; I am not involved in the workings of the tribunal, nor in the completion of its report.

The Deputy asked about the possibility of a progress report. However, such a report would state that the sole member is in the process of completing the final report, which is the case. A couple of developments have arisen, as the Deputy knows; there is the question of a particular witness being available to give evidence which he states would be valuable to the tribunal and which opportunity he would like to have had before now. It is a matter of regret to him that the prospect of attendance has arisen so belatedly in the proceedings. In the interest of protecting the constitutional rights of everyone concerned, if the person is available to give evidence, that evidence should be given. Obviously the sole member would not feel it proper or appropriate to proceed with the finalisation of a report in the absence of that evidence on the basis that the witness is indicating his availability to attend.

It is in the interest of bringing forward a report that will reflect the full participation of everyone concerned that he has indicated — without being categorical — that it will take a few more months to complete the report. We are awaiting a completed report. As the Deputy said, it was hoped we would have it before now, but a number of developments since the previous indications have meant further witness hearings and now we have the current development also. The progress report would simply state what I am stating, which is the case in the body of the correspondence I have received. That is the situation.

We are all concerned with the longevity of proceedings, not only in respect of this tribunal but of others and have brought forward legislation which provides us with a more modern means or more up-to-date way of dealing with matters such as these commissions of investigation or the Tribunals of Inquiry Bill which is currently before the Oireachtas. That is the substantive position. It is a matter for the Oireachtas at any time to consider these matters, but that is the position as I understand it to be.

Deputy Michael Lowry: I have a few questions on the issue of costs. I can speak with some experience on this issue as I have been the subject of the tribunal for 13 years. I remind the Taoiseach that the Moriarty tribunal is supposed to be an inquiry chaired by an independent chairman, which is what was established by the Oireachtas. However, from my experience of the tribunal, Mr. Justice Moriarty conceded control a long time ago to his legal team.

An Ceann Comhairle: We are getting into deep water here.

Deputy Michael Lowry: I am making the point with regard to costs, that the legal team for the Moriarty tribunal has taken control and because it has become both accuser and prosecutor, we have prolonged proceedings. Senior counsel for the tribunal are being paid an average of €2,350 per day. The figures and records we have received through the Freedom of Information Act show that senior counsel for the tribunal, mysteriously, work an average of six days a week. This equates to approximately €14,000 per week. Therefore, each senior counsel for the tribunal — at a time of economic crisis — is guaranteed a cheque in the post every month for a minimum of €55,000. Who in the Taoiseach's Department or in the Department of Finance signs off on this work? For example, does Mr. Justice Moriarty sign off on the bills that come through his tribunal? When these bills get to the Taoiseach's office, who is accountable for signing off on these funds to senior counsel on the tribunal? What has happened the promise by Government to reduce the level of costs incurred by the legal teams for tribunals?

I was in the House years ago when the then Minister, Charlie McCreevy, guaranteed the figures would be reduced and brought into line with what would be considered a norm. What is happening with regard to the costs of this tribunal is outrageous. At a time when costs are being reduced generally and impositions are being placed on people, particularly the vulnerable in society, I cannot understand how the issue of tribunal costs is not being tackled. There is an issue of accountability with regard to these costs. A rich gravy train runs daily on a continuous track between the Department of Finance, the Taoiseach's office and Dublin Castle. It is time somebody in the Department of the Taoiseach took control of the issue. The Taoiseach said the sole member of the tribunal said the report would be complete in a few months.

This tribunal will continue to accrue exorbitant costs and continue to be legally challenged for as long as tribunals insist on making findings to suit their theories, rather than basing a report on solid facts substantiated by evidence. That is the problem with this tribunal and the reason it has been running for so long. I have been speaking to legal practitioners in the community. As a result of my involvement with the tribunal I am regularly approached by

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senior legal practitioners who are seriously concerned that the tribunal system is bringing the legal profession into disrepute due to the existence of this bonanza or gravy train.

An Ceann Comhairle: With regard to the adverse comment on the tribunal, the tribunal was established by this House.

Deputy Michael Lowry: I have a final comment on the cost of the tribunal. It is a great pity that this legal jamboree has not been televised for the last 13 years. If it had been, there would have been public outrage at what people saw on their televisions and the Oireachtas would have been forced to act long ago to bring this legal monster under control.

The Taoiseach: The question of legal fees was settled in 2002. A particular issue arose with this tribunal regarding an inadvertent rate of €2,500 per day agreed with senior counsel, which should have been fixed at €2,250 per day. I have replied extensively on that to various questions in the House. A reduction of 8% was imposed last year and a further 15% reduction was imposed this year. I understand and acknowledge the point that the legal costs of proceedings of this duration mount up considerably. On that basis the House has been prepared, for the purposes of ensuring that the tribunal would complete its work in a short period of time, to have this matter finalised by now or imminently. I understand there is only one other witness available to give evidence. Assuming that does not have an impact in terms of calling other people as a result, the finalisation of the report could proceed.

I am at a disadvantage in that I am not in a position to comment on the work of the tribunal in so far as I do not wish anything I say to interfere with the independence of the tribunal and its independent functioning. It was established by the Oireachtas and it is ultimately a matter for the Oireachtas to finalise its judgments in all these matters in so far as finality is not achieved at the earliest possible date.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: If the Moriarty tribunal continues into the coming year, it will be entering its 14th year in session. Given the long period for which it has sat and the exorbitant fees that have been paid to legal representatives, which has sadly been accommodated by the Government's failure to implement the signalled reduction in fees which were announced by the Taoiseach's predecessor in the Dáil, and given the absence of any report, does the Taoiseach not believe this has led to a serious undermining of public confidence not only in this tribunal but in the tribunal process itself? Does the Taoiseach not believe it is time for the Houses of the Oireachtas to take the matter in hand and try to restore some credibility to the Moriarty tribunal and to the tribunal process? Would he consider asking the Houses of the Oireachtas, which initiated the tribunal, to set a date for a final report or would he consider insisting on an interim report or a report based on particular modules of the tribunal process over the years? Surely it is time to seriously consider making an intervention to try and rescue some credibility from this long and very unsatisfactory process.

The Taoiseach: I again emphasise it is a matter for the Oireachtas, not the Government, to decide on any change of policy on the tribunal or anything to do with it. Were the Government, as Government, at any time to have indicated or, in view of the correspondence that it was in receipt of, to proceed with a proposal which meant the replacement of counsel, counsel resigning or the sole member resigning, or were anything to happen in that sphere as a result of any proactive step by Government, I can only imagine what the response of the Opposition would have been or certainly what the political charges would have been in respect of that. The Government is in a somewhat invidious position here in the absence of an agreed position by everyone in the Oireachtas as to what should happen in any given set of circumstances.

I do not have the correspondence before me now and I do not wish to go into that aspect of the matter. The point I am making is that the Government was anxious not to do anything that would be portrayed in any way as some sort of political interference by Government, as Government, into a tribunal of inquiry that was established by the Oireachtas, and that is something that would be understood by everybody.

It is a matter for the Oireachtas at any time to decide how matters should go. I am merely indicating here that my understanding of the situation from correspondence from the sole member is that the tribunal is in a position to finalise the second report, upon which the Oireachtas awaits and in respect of some matters that were entered into.

I agree the duration of the tribunal has been something which, as a matter of policy, the Oireachtas has sought to address for the future in terms of different methods other than the Act of the 1920s under which tribunals of inquiry are established as means by which we can investigate matters of public interest or urgent public importance but I am not in a position to state anything further about the workings of the tribunal. It has been a costly exercise.

I would also make the point that in 2006 the Comptroller and Auditor General's report pointed out that the tribunal drew attention to the downstream gains to the Exchequer arising from its establishment and the conduct of its proceedings and noted from evidence to it in 2006 from the Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners that as well as specific sums of some €8.5 million recovered from individuals directly connected with the tribunals' proceedings, the work had contributed to the cultivation of a climate or culture of disclosure in financial and fiscal areas.

That being said, we do not know what the third party costs will be. That is a matter that must be adjudged now in the light of recent Supreme Court judgments and must be taken into account as well. It is not possible for me to be any more specific than that other than to state that these are matters for the Oireachtas to consider at any time.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: In his reply——

An Ceann Comhairle: Briefly, we are coming to the end of Taoiseach's questions.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: ——the Taoiseach put the onus on the Houses of the Oireachtas to take any decision but the proposition in the first place came from his predecessor. The proposition was put to the Houses of the Oireachtas by the then Taoiseach and such a decision must be triggered by a proposition which, logically, should come from the same seat. It is not a situation of it being up to the Houses of the Oireachtas. It must have a genesis. Something must give rise to a decision being taken.

I would put it to the Taoiseach that the onus and responsibility rests with him in conjunction with his colleagues to look at what can be done at this point in time to, as I indicated already, rescue some credibility from what has been a most unsatisfactory process. I do not for a moment believe that there are Members in this House who would take a contrary view if the proposition that he would put was clearly intended to address the serious deficiencies.

An Ceann Comhairle: We are moving to the end of Taoiseach's questions.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: As a questioner I am just as entitled as every other Member.

An Ceann Comhairle: I know but we have to keep within certain time limits.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I will conclude with this. I think it is the responsibility of the Taoiseach in the first instance to take the initiative and I believe this would be a very

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welcome development. The Taoiseach has not explained again in the course of his answers today why it was that Government failed to implement the signalled reduced fees that should have been imposed on those who were legally involved in the process over all these years.

The Taoiseach: I have answered that specific question on a number of occasions when the Deputy was present in the House. It is not right to say that this has not been addressed.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Not today.

The Taoiseach: No, not today because if the whole purpose of Question Time is to answer the same question I answered on a previous occasion there is not much point in dealing with today's issue. Today's issue is whether this report is near its finalisation and what is the information that I, as Taoiseach, have received from the chairman of the tribunal. I have indicated this to the Dáil, the Dáil has raised certain questions about it and I have answered them to the best of my ability. The strong advice is I cannot speak about the workings of the tribunal so that I do not interfere in any way with the independence of the tribunal. I am prepared to talk about the costs of the tribunal and any other factual information Deputies may request. In respect of whether we have any idea when it might be completed, I have given that information. However, there are matters before the tribunal which are not before the House. The tribunal was set up so that those matters would not be dealt with in the House but rather they would be dealt with somewhere else. I can only give the information that is consistent with all of these constraints.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Taoiseach has given the impression that the Government is unable to do anything about the legal fees because it fears the Opposition would take issue with such action and if, as a consequence of doing something on the legal fees, legal personnel were to walk away from the tribunal. I wish to make the Labour Party view quite clear. We have never raised any objection and will not raise any objection to the reduction in the legal fees. Indeed, we expected this would have taken place some time ago, as was promised. We were told that Mr. McCreevy was going to reduce them. We were told that legal team fees would not be paid once public hearings had concluded. Indeed, given the recent reductions in the legal fees paid by the State for other purposes, I am surprised that some initiative has not been taken in this regard.

The Taoiseach says he cannot put the correspondence from the sole member on the record of the House. Again I invite him to respond to the suggestion that the House should now communicate with the sole member and that a way should be found to agree a communication with the sole member, drawing his attention to the initial desire of this House that this tribunal should be conducted economically and as quickly as possible and seeking at least an interim or a progress report from the sole member which the House could then consider.

The Taoiseach: There has been a reduction of 23% in the legal fees as a result of decisions taken in recent months, to take account of that situation. I do not hold a brief for that; I am just trying to see that this matter would be brought to finality as quickly as possible. It is a matter for the Oireachtas how it wishes to proceed——

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: Would the Taoiseach like to take the lead on it?

The Taoiseach: I took the lead in that both prior to last week and since last week I have written about the matter. We have received the views of the sole member of the tribunal on that matter. I do not think anything can be added to that by way of a further letter because we

now know the current position. We are all agreed we would like to see this matter brought to a conclusion as soon as possible.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Last week a woman who is the mother of two intellectually challenged children called to see me. Her husband did not make a full declaration in respect of social welfare and now the Department wants €8,000 back from him immediately.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is really going off on a tangent.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I will make my point. I refer to the time of the previous Attorney General. There was what is known as an error of transcription in respect of legal fees paid to senior counsel. These were determined at €2,250 but the error of transcription stated €2,500. There was no pay back because it was deemed it would be appropriate, as an exceptional measure, to leave it the way it was. I raised this matter before. One of the tribunal's senior counsel was paid more than €1 million. None of it was paid back. The Government is in charge of that element of what happened. How can the Taoiseach justify a failure to pursue overpayments, due to errors of transcription or whatever when, at the other end of the scale, people will be hounded for relatively minor amounts? At the other end of the scale——

An Ceann Comhairle: We are way over time.

Deputy Enda Kenny: ——we have no problem signing cheques of whatever description for banks. In the case of this tribunal, in respect of the matter I raised before with him whereby there was an overpayment of more than €1 million, is it intended that will be followed and paid back?

The Taoiseach: I have dealt with this matter. It is on the record of the House, as Deputy Kenny knows. It has also been dealt with by the Committee of Public Accounts and in a whole range of ways. Based on the advice of the Attorney General——

Deputy Pat Rabbitte: The “Viper”.

The Taoiseach: Sorry?

Deputy Pat Rabbitte: Send in the “Viper”. He will collect it for you.

The Taoiseach: The point I am making is that issue was dealt with at that time in the way it was, based on the advice we received. As I said, I do not hold any brief for what the legal fees are, but my focus is on trying to bring this matter to finality quickly.

Priority Questions.

Job Creation

45. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if he will indicate the initiatives that have been introduced to prevent unemployment and stimulate job creation in Gaeltacht areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19058/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): It is a primary aim of Údarás na Gaeltachta to reverse the downward employment trend in the Gaeltacht and to effect the transition from a declining manufacturing sector to employment in services, including Irish language-centred employment. The organisation also provides supports for com-

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munity-based projects in the areas of language development, child care, youth services and rural development. A total of €30 million has been allocated to *Údarás na Gaeltachta* from my Department's Vote for the year 2010. It is worth noting also that extra funding of €2 million was provided as an additional support to the organisation at the end of 2009, bringing the overall allocation for 2009 to €37.6 million. Thus, over the two year period, 2009-10, an *tÚdarás* will have received €67.6 million from my Department's Vote in order to allow it to pursue its objectives.

In addition to Exchequer voted funding, an *tÚdarás* also has access to other sources of income that enable it to promote and stimulate employment creating initiatives, for example, income generated from schemes such as the community employment scheme and the rural social scheme, and income from dividends, fees and the sale and lease of assets. Funding is also made available to an *tÚdarás* by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment through the employment subsidy scheme and the enterprise stabilisation fund. These supports are important to businesses in the Gaeltacht and help them to continue trading and to protect jobs. Last year, for example, these two schemes safeguarded 605 jobs.

I am acutely aware of the challenges and the obstacles facing an *tÚdarás* in the difficult economic environment currently being experienced at both the national and international level. In this context, it is encouraging to note that 710 new jobs were created in *Údarás* client companies in the Gaeltacht in 2009. I would also like to draw Deputy Ring's attention to the fact that the rural development programme, RDP, 2007-13 is being delivered by *Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta, MFG*, in Gaeltacht areas. While the key RDP measure providing direct support for investment and job creation is the support for business creation and development measure, other RDP measures also have job creation targets and aim to support opportunities for job creation in rural areas. Under the RDP, MFG has an overall programme allocation of almost €17.3 million, including a specific allocation of €1.68 million for business creation and development.

Comhar na nOileán, the Leader partnership company for the island communities, most of which are in the Gaeltacht, has been allocated a total budget of €4.6 million under the RDP. Finally, a further allocation in my Department's Vote in 2010 for Gaeltacht and islands development amounts to €33 million. This expenditure on various schemes, including infrastructural improvements, cultural and social schemes and island transport services, is an important stimulus for the Gaeltacht economy.

Deputy Michael Ring: I wish to ask the Minister a number of questions. The first concerns jobs losses in the Gaeltacht. He said some 710 jobs were created but forgot to say that we lost 721. We had a gain of ten or 11 jobs in the Gaeltacht areas. Since then we have had major jobs losses in Erris in Belmullet, Donegal and Glenties.

Was the decision to grant a bonus of €3,900 to the head of *Údarás na Gaeltachta* correct, given the situation the country is in and the job losses it has suffered? Was it approved by the Department of Finance?

I have a very important question. Has the Minister had any bilateral meetings with his colleague, the Minister, Deputy Ryan, on wave and wind energy, in particular in Gaeltacht areas? People are prepared to spend millions of euro. They want to come into Gaeltacht areas and rural Ireland, but the major problem is that we have no national grid.

Has the Minister, Deputy Carey, had meetings with the Minister, Deputy Ryan, to discuss how we will get a national grid and companies into rural Ireland, in particular, and Gaeltacht areas? If he had not had such meetings, will he have them to see how we can create jobs in Gaeltacht areas? It is one way we can do it.

Deputy Pat Carey: On the Deputy's final question, as he knows, I was in Mayo on Saturday, with the Minister, Deputy Ryan, and the Minister, Deputy Ó Cuív. In the context of discussions with the north-west Mayo forum, the issue of job creation was fairly central to the debate. The issues of job creation, sustainable jobs and using new technologies was part of that discussion. In the lead-up to the meeting on Saturday I had three, if not more, meetings with the Minister, Deputy Ryan, at which we discussed a wide range of issues and initiatives which will be required to support jobs, not just in the north-west Mayo area but in the Gaeltacht generally. It is proposed that we continue with those.

On the bonus paid to the príomh fheidmeannach of Údarás na Gaeltachta, I have explained the situation. The figure, as I recall, applied to a portion of, I understand, 2009. The board had taken a decision that no bonus would be paid for the rest of 2009 and it took a decision, as a board, not to pay bonuses before the Department of Finance issued its directive in March or April 2009.

On job losses and job creation, it is acknowledged that——

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: We are under time pressure.

Deputy Michael Ring: Would the Minister publish copies of the minutes of the meeting he held with the Minister because I am very anxious that the Minister, Deputy Carey, would have bilateral meetings with the Minister, Deputy Ryan? The only hope we have of creating jobs will have to involve wind energy and wave power. If these jobs could be created in Dublin city the Minister would not be coming to rural Ireland. We are lucky to have the water and sea at our backs because if the jobs could be created in Dublin, the Minister would have them there. I want the Minister, Deputy Carey, to put pressure on the Minister, Deputy Ryan, regarding the national grid because an American company is prepared to spend millions to create jobs in wind and wave energy.

Deputy Pat Carey: I will certainly continue my discussions with the Minister, Deputy Ryan. Further to meetings I have had with him, I had a meeting with the príomh fheidmeannach and the cathaoirleach of Údarás na Gaeltachta. I was very encouraged to hear that the pipeline for high-end jobs was quite positive and Údarás na Gaeltachta is confident that, with the introduction of high-speed broadband and other technologies, it will be possible in the Gaeltacht to roll out a number of new technology jobs. These will replace the lower level jobs that had been traditional in the Gaeltacht over a relatively short period as part of the employment creation strategy.

Community Development

46. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs his plans for a review of the community development programmes in view of the concerns expressed during recent budgetary changes that affected the groups involved; if he has or proposes any review of areas in which funding for CDP's was withdrawn in the recent change of funding for such groups; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19057/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: As Deputy Wall is aware, the local development social inclusion programme and the community development programme were my Department's two main social inclusion and community development programmes. My Department had seen the need, however, to re-design these programmes, drawing on good international practice and in a way that would support ongoing programme evaluation. Both programmes had a community development element and were delivered through separate local delivery structures. These

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came to an end on 31 December last and have been superseded by a new integrated programme, the local and community development programme, LCDP.

The aim of the LCDP, which preserves elements of good practice from the CDP and LDSIP programmes, is to tackle poverty and social exclusion through partnership and constructive engagement between Government and its agencies and people in disadvantaged communities.

An implementation strategy involving the stakeholders is underway for LCDP roll-out over the course of 2010. Integrated workplans have now been developed by the local development companies and the CDPs, covering all local development company areas. These were submitted to Pobal for analysis at the end of March and I am awaiting the submission of proposals for approval of these area workplans. The next phase to the end of June will cover the development of local integration plans for reduced structures post-2011.

A key difference between the new LCDP and its predecessor programmes is the fact that, when fully implemented, it will be delivered nationally on an integrated basis by a reduced number of companies. My Department has set out a model for integrated service delivery and structures at a local level, which would involve, among other things, the re-constitution of the voluntary CDP boards from the end of 2010. Each board would then form an advisory committee to the local development company and act as the voluntary management committee for the local project. This approach will preserve the community development ethos in areas and will not detract from the key essential services and supports being provided through the CDP. In addition, the new programme will enable groups to more objectively demonstrate the positive impacts and outcomes they are securing to meet the needs of local communities.

Additional information not given on the floor of the House.

My Department has clearly indicated to CDPs and local development companies that it is open to them to bring forward other models, as long as the proposed alternatives can achieve integrated and cost effective service delivery. However, it is not possible to maintain the status quo and any alternative model has to show that it will result in less structures; it holds the potential for integrated delivery; it has the potential for introducing efficiencies; and it will reduce the burden on company directors in CDPs.

It remains my primary concern to make every effort to ensure the front-line services provided by, or supported through, my Department are protected, especially those providing tangible benefits for the most disadvantaged communities. Under the new programme, local development companies will be able to identify and meet the needs of communities and the Department will pay particular attention to RAPID areas and to those areas where a CDP is no longer operating. My Department and Pobal will provide a range of supports to ensure the process is successful.

Deputy Jack Wall: I thank the Minister for his reply. Deputy Carey was not the Minister *in situ* when the decision to change the CDPs was implemented. I am sure there was great disappointment in his area, as in my area, in respect of the changes that took place. We received many visits from the committee and individuals from the various CDPs expressing concern that, for the want of a better way of putting it, the boards of management were to be sidelined from the new initiatives. Does the Minister understand the concerns expressed by the boards? Such concerns remain because we are still receiving calls about the loss of employment and initiatives and the loss of support funding and mechanisms in the various areas. Several CDPs have been refused funding. Has any research been done in these areas as on the original initiatives and how they will be underpinned in respect of the projects in hand?

Deputy Pat Carey: Like Deputy Wall, I have been familiar with the CDPs for a long time. As the Deputy is aware, a review of the CDPs was carried out some time back. The majority of community development projects were found to be performing an excellent function and providing a wide range of programmes. A small number were found to be performing below the expectations required. An appeals process was put in place. Several of these projects were appealed and were successful. A small number were not successful and offers have been made to these to ensure there is an orderly wind down of the activities and that support is provided to the CDP company directors to discharge their responsibilities as company directors and to ensure that whatever assistance possible within reason is provided to protect all those involved. I refer to how they will develop from here and the local development structures. It is fair to say there are several areas throughout the country where there are difficulties. It has been put in writing and elsewhere by my officials that where a better proposal is deemed available at local level, it will be examined by the officials in my Department and myself.

Deputy Jack Wall: I appreciate the last point made by the Minister because he referred to what is important. It is important that a door is left open for the various groups and they are not cut off from discussion and debate on the matter. I call on the Minister to make this known. I realise the matter is under discussion today but there is a need to make known in general that the door is open for a better way and where there are such possibilities, let them be discussed. I realise that ultimately a decision must be made. However, I would appreciate if the Minister would make the matter known. Let the debate take place and then the decisions can be made.

Deputy Pat Carey: As I have stated here previously when asked about community development matters, a one size fits all approach does not always suit. While maintaining the integrity of the process underway, I am keen that we proceed with it and allow sufficient room for groups to make proposals. Several groups have come forward to me and these cases are under examination at present to establish whether what is being proposed provides a better service more efficiently and with a greater series of outcomes for the community. The door is not closed but I do not wish to raise expectations unrealistically. It is an issue only in a small number of areas. Groups have some time remaining to dove-tail their plans with the local development group and then ease into moving to the next phase of cohesion towards the end of the year.

Regulation of Charities

47. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if he will indicate the consultation that has taken place with the charities sector to date regarding the implementation of a new regulatory framework for the sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19059/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: An inclusive, consultative approach has been adopted by my Department from the outset of the initiative to introduce a regulatory framework for charities in Ireland. In fact, the original Charities Bill was published only after an extensive public consultation process. As Deputy Ring is aware, this consultative approach continued during the passage of the Bill through the Houses of the Oireachtas when many amendments were made to the Bill on the basis of views expressed by Members of both Houses and by the charities sector. I have no doubt that this open, consultative approach taken at all stages of the development of the legislation and its passage through the Oireachtas helped to improve the Bill substantially and contributed to the fact that the Act was broadly welcomed.

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Now that the legislation has been enacted, I am committed to further consultation with the charities sector, especially in respect of the financial and activity-related information charities will be required to provide to the proposed charities regulatory authority on an annual basis, a matter of considerable interest to the sector.

This process has already started in the framework of a wider consultation process being conducted by the Accountancy Standards Board, ASB, for the UK and Ireland relating to the future of UK and Ireland generally agreed accounting principles. The outcome of the Accountancy Standards Board process is likely to inform the approach taken to financial reporting for charities in Ireland as well as the UK. To ensure that Irish charities could have an input into the process, my Department co-hosted a conference in Dublin Castle in January 2010 with expert speakers from throughout the UK and Ireland. It was attended by more than 150 delegates from throughout the Irish charity sector and I understand it was regarded by the speakers as one of the most successful conferences of the entire ASB series.

It is intended to continue this work with the sector, especially in respect of future financial and activity reporting by charities under the Charities Act, through a targeted consultation process that will commence later this year.

Separately, and parallel to the statutory framework provided for in the Charities Act, my Department has committed funding to the charities sector to implement and monitor codes of practice on charitable fundraising. There has been extensive engagement with the sector since my Department first provided support for this project. An implementation group comprising representatives from the sector, persons with a public and donor perspective and professional support from the legal and accountancy professions has been established. Two national briefing sessions were held this year in Dublin and Cork to disseminate and promote the materials relating to the codes among the charities sector. I understand that both these sessions were well attended. These are just two examples of my Department's positive disposition towards consultation. Officials in my Department also interact with charities on an ongoing basis in respect of the Act.

Deputy Michael Ring: The Minister, Deputy Pat Carey, was responsible, as Minister of State, for bringing the Charities Act through the House and will recall that I, as Fine Gael spokesman, and Deputy Wall, as spokesman for the Labour Party, put significant work into the legislation. We had many briefings and met many groups throughout the State whose concerns we conveyed to the Minister. Deputy Wall and I were grateful that he dealt with many of our amendments on Committee Stage. It is now time to develop the process further. We read regularly in the national newspapers about the uncertainty surrounding some of those apparently collecting money and goods for charity. In some cases it has been discovered that money and goods collected are used for other purposes. Irish people are very generous and will always subscribe to worthy causes. We must all be confident that money and other types of donations to charity are used for the purpose indicated.

How many departmental officials are working to progress this legislation? Of the approximately 7,500 charities in operation, how many have thus far been included on the register? Does the Minister have the necessary funding to ensure the provisions of the Act are implemented so we can be sure that people collecting money or other items on behalf of charities are genuine? We do not want any more situations such as those with mass cards and clothing collections where donations were found not to be going to charity.

Deputy Pat Carey: I thank Deputy Ring for his comments. The departmental unit has always been small, comprising a principal officer and two additional officials. As I pointed out when

the legislation was being debated, it took four years in the United Kingdom, for example, for a framework to be developed. Consultations are ongoing in this regard together with the development, for instance, of the guidelines for best practice and the Guide Star project. It will probably take some time before we are ready for the commencement orders for the various sections of the Act. However, the resources required will not be extensive and it is expected that they will be accommodated within existing departmental resources.

Deputy Michael Ring: When does the Minister expect the consultation process to be completed and the regulator to be in place? I accept it took time in other jurisdictions for similar frameworks to be established and that there is a significant amount of law to be dealt with. Is funding available within the Department to allow charities to access the register on-line?

Deputy Pat Carey: We expect to provide an on-line facility. Among the jobs currently under way are the gathering of key data for the 7,500 holders of a charity number prior to establishment day, the dissolution of the Office of the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests for Ireland, the preparation of up to 25 sets of regulations, the appointment of the board and staff of the charity appeals tribunal, development of information technology systems, development of protocols for dealing with other statutory bodies likely to engage with the authority, development of the authority's website, and the preparation of forms and documentation required for the establishment day. Taking all of that into account, we are aiming for the end of next year for the establishment of the new authority.

Sale of Dangerous Substances

48. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if he is satisfied that everything possible is being done to prevent dangerous substances being sold for human consumption; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19056/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: I assure the Deputy that the Government is fully cognisant of the dangers posed by head shops and the psychoactive substances they sell. I have been working closely with my Cabinet colleagues on an interdepartmental basis to develop effective responses to the threats involved. The Minister for Health and Children is introducing controls under the Misuse of Drugs Acts on a broad range of psychoactive substances, commonly referred to as "legal highs", which are sold in head shops and through the Internet. These regulations will be introduced with immediate effect, following on from approval by the relevant European Union authorities. The regulations will make the possession and sale of the substances involved illegal and subject to criminal sanctions.

Following cross-departmental consideration of the issues involved, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform brought legislative proposals to Government today to make it a criminal offence to sell or supply substances that are not prohibited under the Misuse of Drugs Acts but that have psychoactive effects on humans. These proposals were accepted by Government and it is hoped to have legislation drafted before the summer recess. In addition, the Government is responding to the problem of head shops on several fronts. For example, as part of the current interdepartmental and inter-agency response to the issue, relevant Departments and Government agencies are reviewing existing legislative provisions to establish whether head shops are in compliance with the legislative provisions applying. The Garda Síochána and Revenue's customs service are closely monitoring the activities of head shops on an ongoing basis with a view to ensuring no substances currently illegal are being sold. The Health Service Executive, in association with partner agencies under the national drugs strategy, is finalising a national drugs awareness campaign that will focus on the dangers of psychoactive substances available through head shops and the Internet. In addition, the

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national advisory committee on drugs has been asked to carry out some targeted research in this area.

I assure the Deputy that I will continue to work closely with my ministerial colleagues in vigorously pursuing all viable approaches to counter the threats posed by head shops and psychoactive substances.

Deputy Catherine Byrne: I thank the Minister for his reply. We must do everything possible to prevent the sale of some of the products found in head shops throughout the State. My question as tabled referred to SI 62 of 2004 of the European Union, which governs the packaging and labelling of dangerous products. Unfortunately, that part of the question was not accepted. I am interested to discover whether this provision can be used to outlaw the sale of dangerous products in head shops. I welcome today's announcement by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform of the banning of certain chemical products. My colleagues and I have repeatedly queried the delay in taking such initiatives. It is obvious now that action can be taken quickly if it is pursued vigorously enough. Members of all parties have been asking for six months that this issue be taken seriously and dealt with in legislation without delay.

Deputy Pat Carey: I may be able to assist the Deputy if the Leas-Cheann Comhairle will allow me to expand.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Minister may do so as long as he does not answer a question that was not accepted.

Deputy Pat Carey: I will bear in mind that danger. Section 2 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 allows the Government to make an order declaring any substance or product to be a controlled drug for the purposes of that Act. By order of today, the Government has banned a list of substances including methadone, methylene, synthetic cannabinoids, BZP and piperazine derivatives. All such substances are now controlled drugs for the purposes of the State's drugs legislation. Possession of a controlled drug is illegal and attracts criminal penalties. It can be prosecuted in either the District Court or the Circuit Court depending on the direction of the DPP as to the seriousness of the offence. The courts have power to impose either a fine or imprisonment for possession of a controlled drug and have other powers designed to assist drug users to overcome an addiction. Possession of a controlled drug for sale or supply attracts significant penalties. The 1977 Act provides that a court will look to the quantity of drugs possessed to determine whether it is for sale or supply. Where the value of the drug is more than €13,000, a sentence of life imprisonment may be imposed. These provisions potentially have significant implications for the operators of head shops. However, I cannot prejudice any actions the Garda or the DPP may take in the future.

In regard to the labelling directive, SI 64 of 2004, I understand from my colleague, the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, who has responsibility in this area, that the regulations transpose into Irish law directive 1999/45/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the approximation of laws, regulations and administrative provisions of member states in regard to the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous preparations. The regulations require persons placing a dangerous preparation on the market to classify and label it according to its inherent hazards. In the context of the current inter-agency and inter-departmental response to the question of regulating the activities of so-called head shops, the scope for using the provisions of this statutory instrument is being examined.

Deputy Catherine Byrne: The Minister has spoken about the drugs awareness campaign in the past couple of weeks. Is there any progress on that? I may have missed what the Minister said about it just now.

Deputy Pat Carey: When I spoke to the HSE last week, it was virtually ready to roll out the campaign. I am anxious for it to begin, if possible, before the first primary schools go on holiday at the end of the month.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

49. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dinny McGinley** den Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé ar intinn aige bualadh le Bord Údarás na Gaeltachta; an dtuigeann sé an ghéarchéim airgid atá san Údarás faoi láthair agus na deacrachtaí maidir le fostaíocht a chruthú sna Gaeltachtaí; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [19358/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: Tá áthas orm a chur in iúl don Teachta gur thapaigh mé an deis castáil le cathaoirleach agus príomhfheidhmeannach Údarás na Gaeltachta nuair a bhí mé ar chuairt chuig oifigí mo Roinne sna Forbacha le déanaí. Tá mé ag súil le castáil le comhaltaí eile an bhoird nuair a bheidh deis fheiliúnach ann chuige sin.

Maidir le cúrsaí airgeadais an údaráis, tá soláthar iomlán de bheagnach €30 milliún curtha ar fáil don eagraíocht ón Státchiste trí Vóta mo Roinne don bhliain 2010. Cé gur laghdú é seo ar an soláthar iomlán de €37.6 milliún a cuireadh ar fáil in 2009, creidim nach gciallaíonn sé seo go mbeidh ciorrú substaintiúil á dhéanamh ar ghníomhaíochtaí an údaráis nó go mbeidh leas phobal na Gaeltachta ag fulaingt dá bharr. Ar an gcéad dul síos, ní mór a chur san áireamh gur ag deireadh 2009 a cuireadh méadú de €2 mhilliún leis an mbunsoláthar de €35.6 milliún a bhí i Meastacháin 2009, mar thacaíocht bhreise don eagraíocht. Ciallaíonn sé sin go mbeidh soláthar iomlán de €67.6 milliún curtha ar fáil don Údarás sa tréimhse dhá bhliain, 2009–2010, chun a spriocanna maidir le forbairt na Gaeltachta a chur i gcrích.

Ní mór a chur san áireamh freisin go mbíonn teacht ag an údarás ar fhoinsí ioncaim eile, ar a n-áirítear ioncam a ghintear ó scéimeanna a fheidhmiú ar nós scéimeanna fostaíochta pobail agus scéimeanna sóisialta tuaithe agus ioncam a fhaightear ó dhíol agus léasáil socmhainní, ó dhíbhinní agus ó tháillí. Chomh maith leis seo, cuirtear maoiniú ar fáil don údarás tríd an Roinn Fiontar, Trádála agus Fostaíochta chun an scéim fóirdheontas fostaíochta agus an ciste cobhsaíochta fiontar a fheidhmiú. Tá tábhacht ar leith ag na tacaíochtaí seo do chomhlachtaí sa Ghaeltacht chun cuidiú leo leanúint ag trádáil agus poist a choinneáil slán. Anuraidh, mar shampla, thacaigh an dá scéim seo le caomhnú 605 post Gaeltachta.

Is eol dom go maith na dúshláin agus na constaicí a gcaithfidh an t-údarás dul i ngleic leo sa timpeallacht dheacair gnó atá i bhfeidhm faoi láthair. Níl amhras ar bith ach go bhfuil an ghéarchéim eacnamaíoch náisiúnta agus domhanda ag cruthú deacrachtaí do chomhlachtaí sa Ghaeltacht agus tá impleachtaí dá réir ann do chúrsaí fostaíochta. É sin ráite, áfach, is údar misnigh é gur cruthaíodh 710 post nua i gcliant-chomhlachtaí de chuid an údaráis in 2009.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Ba mhaith liom buíochas a thabhairt don Aire as an fhreagra a thug sé, ach sílim go gceileann sé níos mó san fhreagra ná an méid eolais a thugann sé. Nuair a bhí an cruinniú ag an Aire le príomhfheidhmeannach agus cathaoirleach an údaráis, ar phlé siad na deacrachtaí airgid? Ar chuir siad in iúl don Aire go bhfuil deacrachtaí acu gníomhú go héifeachtach maidir le fostaíocht a chur ar bun sna ceantair Gaeltachta? An aontaíonn an Aire leis, nuair a bhíonn cruinnithe ag comhaltaí an bhoird anois, gur beag tionscnaimh a ceadáítear mar nach bhfuil na hacmhainní ag an údarás chun é sin a dhéanamh? Dá bharr sin, an aontódh an Aire go bhfuil na Gaeltachtaí go léir, go speisialta na mion Gaeltachtaí, ag fulaingt go mór mar nach bhfuil sé ar chumas an údaráis tionscail a mhealladh isteach agus fostaíocht a chur ar fáil sna ceantair, fostaíocht atá an-tábhachtach i gceantair Gaeltachta má táimid chun an teanga a choinneáil beo agus fostaíocht a chur ar fáil do na daoine sin ina gceantair féin?

Deputy Pat Carey: Mar adúirt mé, nuair a bhuaill mé leis an príomhfheidhmeannach agus le cathaoirleach an údaráis, pléamar ceisteanna go ginearálta. Beidh mé ag bualadh leis an mbord i gceann tamaill chun cruinniú níos faide a bheith againn. Ansin, beidh seans againn na ceisteanna atá luaite ag an Teachta a phlé. Idir 2004 agus 2010, díródh ioncam ón Státchiste de €263.5 milliún chuig an údarás. I 2004 tugadh €33 milliún agus i 2010 íocfar €29 milliún chuig an údarás. Maidir le ioncam ó díol maoinne, i 2004 bhí teacht isteach de €7 mhilliún agus meastar go mbeidh teacht isteach de €3 mhilliún ann i mbliana.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Tuigim nach bhfuil an Aire sa Roinn ach le mí nó níos lú ná sin, ach an bhfuil sé ar intinn aige aon reachtaíocht a thabhairt isteach i mbliana maidir le Údarás na Gaeltachta? Tá Bille geallta le fada — Bille Údarás na Gaeltachta. An bhfuil sé ar intinn aige é a thabhairt isteach i mbliana. Má tá sé chun fad a chur le tréimhse chomhaltaí Údarás na Gaeltachta, is gá reachtaíocht a thabhairt isteach roimh dheireadh na bliana. An bhfuil sin ar intinn ag an Aire agus an Rialtas ag an bpointe seo?

Deputy Pat Carey: Tá sé ar intinn agam é sin a dhéanamh ceart go leor. Mar is eol don Teachta, tá síneadh trí bliana, go dtí 18 Aibreán 2013 curtha agam le tréimhse triúr comhalta den údaráis, an cathaoirleach agus beirt eile. Tá sé ar intinn agam Bille gearr a thabhairt roimh an Dáil go luath, roimh deireadh na bliana.

Other Questions.

Community Development

50. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Community; Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of applications received in respect of the community support for older people scheme since August 2009; the number of applications that have been processed; the funding in place for this scheme; and if there is sufficient funding to match the applications which have been received to date [18957/10]

59. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Minister for Community; Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs his views on the provision of a house alarm under the community support for older people; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19000/10]

67. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Community; Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the changes to the community support for older people grants as recently announced; his views on the outcomes of the changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18999/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: I propose to take Questions Nos. 50, 59 and 67 together.

In the period from 4 August 2009 to 5 May 2010, my Department received 648 applications for support under the scheme of community support for older people, CSOP. Of these, 511 have been processed in full and paid, while a further 37 are being processed and are expected to be paid in the coming week. Of the remaining 100 applications received, 85 have unresolved queries with the applicants, while the receipt in recent days of information on the other 15 will allow my officials to begin processing them shortly.

In general, where the documentation received with an application is in order, my Department can process and pay the grant within ten to 12 working days. Funding of €3.1 million has been provided in my Department's vote for the CSOP in 2010. Expenditure to the end of April amounts to some €580,000 and I am confident that sufficient funds will be available to meet the likely demand over the coming months.

The Deputies will be aware that my Department reviewed the operation of the CSOP last year. A copy of the review, which I published last week, is available on my Department's website, *www.pobail.ie*. A revised grant scheme was recommended on foot of the review and this will become operational on 24 May next. Further information on the revised scheme, which will be known as Seniors Alert, will be made available over the coming weeks. Details will also be made available on my Department's website. In the meantime, my Department will be processing all grant applications received up to 21 May under the existing scheme.

Deputies will be aware that the CSOP focuses on the provision of monitored personal alert equipment. Consultations undertaken with community and voluntary groups as part of the review process confirmed the value of personal monitored alert systems and did not identify a demand to extend the scheme to cover house alarms. Personal alarms can bring greater ease of mind to the user as they allow for direct two-way interaction with a monitoring station in the event of any concerns being raised. These systems can also be used to monitor other features such as the presence of smoke and carbon monoxide in the home. The provision of these services would not be possible with standard home alarm systems. Accordingly, it is not proposed to extend the provisions of the revised Seniors Alert scheme to cover house alarms.

I look forward to briefing Deputies in more detail over the coming weeks on the provisions of the revised scheme. I am happy to do that on a cross-party basis.

Deputy Michael Ring: This is the second time this year that the scheme has been suspended.

The Department's website confirms that no further applications are to be taken until 21 May. I believed the budget for the year was €2.9 million but the Minister stated it was €3.1 million. Is there enough funding available in the Department to deal with the 648 applications? Will the new scheme be up and running this year or will it be next year? How long will it take to introduce the new scheme? It is important that we send out a strong message that we are concerned about the elderly and that the scheme will be in operation.

This is the second time this year that the Department has suspended the taking of applications. It did so some months ago, reopened the scheme and then closed it again until 21 May. Will the Minister confirm to the House and those involved in the scheme that the applications already received will be dealt with, that the new scheme will be up and running before the end of the year and that the money will be in place?

Deputy Pat Carey: I can confirm that the applications under the current scheme will continue to be taken and processed up to 21 May. The new scheme will become operational on 24 May. Much work has been already done. Existing groups will be able almost as a matter of course to register for the new scheme. The scheme is quite streamlined and the funding available is €3.1 million. My Department officials tell me it is expected there is enough funding to meet the demand for the current year. It is anticipated the scheme will continue into next year.

Deputy Jack Wall: Why is the Minister still using the title "Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs" considering that the other Department titles have been changed? Perhaps the Minister will change it in his own good time.

This is a wonderful scheme and should be continued. With regard to my question, houses with alarms have a sign on the outside stating there is an alarm installed therein. This, in itself, deters intruders, who see immediately that there is a link between the house and a Garda station. Is it possible that each senior citizen with a personal alarm could be given a sign to be put on the side of his or her house to show it is guarded by a personal alarm system. It is certainly preventive and should be considered.

[Deputy Jack Wall.]

The Minister stated all the existing co-ordinators will be in the new system. Since many of them are based in urban areas, I am concerned about coverage in rural areas such as my own. Is there a mechanism to address this? Perhaps there is in the Minister's new proposal.

Deputy Pat Carey: As it turns out, I was in Athlone last Friday and met representatives of Helplink South, which installs and monitors alarms for many people in the midlands. Among the people I met were people from Deputy Wall's county who said they were very happy to have a personal pendant alarm that did not draw attention to the fact they were elderly or living on their own. I asked their views on traditional alarms and they replied they were happier with pendant alarms because, in many cases, house alarms can be very complicated to operate. Those of us with house alarms probably ask ourselves whether we can remember the code. The system in place has been found to be trustworthy. It gives assurance to older people and, most important, they are satisfied with it.

With regard to rural areas, the new scheme will have a greater reach than its predecessor. We certainly will be able to roll it out on a more streamlined basis once the initial registration takes place. It will be very seamless.

Deputy Michael Ring: The scheme has worked. Some of the Minister's proposals refer to a reduction of between 15% and 25% in regard to voluntary groups. The Minister is correct to review the scheme. A review is very wise and it is wise to correct any abuses of the scheme if they exist. The scheme is working and it should not be restricted by the Minister in such a way as to prevent it from working. This would cancel its benefits. I hope that whatever new proposals the Minister makes will be for the people rather than to save moneys for the Department.

Deputy Pat Carey: I assure the House that the redesigned scheme will respond more effectively to the needs identified regarding older people. It will be easier to access and will simplify and modernise the administrative processes, address the need for better information to support volunteers, improve the targeting of limited resources and make the grant available throughout the country. It will work with other agencies such as the Garda and health services which work with all the people in remote and isolated communities.

Deputy Jack Wall: Will the Minister arrange a briefing for me and Deputy Ring in his own good time?

Deputy Pat Carey: I will be happy to do so. The transfer orders have not been completed yet but are virtually completed. When this is achieved, the order for the delegation of functions to the Minister of State, Deputy White, will be also completed. It is anticipated this will be done in the next couple of weeks.

Deputy Jack Wall: I was referring to a briefing on the new scheme.

Deputy Pat Carey: We will do that for the Deputy.

Irish Language

51. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the achievements by Foras na Gaeilge since its inception [19017/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: As the Deputy is aware, Foras na Gaeilge is one of the two agencies comprising An Foras Teanga, the North-South Language Body, the other being the Ulster-Scots Agency. The establishment of An Foras Teanga and other North-South Implementation

Bodies represents an historic event in itself, arising from the Good Friday Agreement. Since their inception, both agencies of the language body have placed considerable emphasis on joint work to increase mutual understanding and appreciation of both cultural traditions in Northern Ireland and throughout the island. This area of activity remains a priority.

With regard to the role of Foras na Gaeilge in promoting the Irish language, let me refer to a number of its key achievements in recent years. They include the development of an accreditation system for translators, which ensures a high standard and consistency of translation for both the public and private sectors. There are currently 145 accredited translators and their details are available on the Foras na Gaeilge website, www.gaeilge.ie. Foras na Gaeilge is now rolling out a similar accreditation system for editors, the first examination for which will be held in the autumn.

Further key achievements are the provision of a memory-assisted translation tool, which will enable translations to be completed more cheaply and on a more consistent basis; provision of the terminology database www.focal.ie, which contains more than 290,000 terms that have been approved by Foras na Gaeilge's terminology committee and is searchable in both English and Irish; and work in the education sector, North and South, including funding the development of an agreed syllabus for Irish at third level. The first-year syllabus is currently in use in third level institutions throughout the island and the second-year syllabus is now in preparation.

Further achievements of Foras na Gaeilge include the organisation of the scheme Gaeilge Labhartha san Earnáil Oideachais, GLEO, which recognises and rewards best practice in the teaching of oral Irish throughout the island; the operation of youth schemes annually to promote the use of Irish outside school, including youth activities and summer camps outside the Gaeltacht, which promote the use of Irish in everyday life; and the publication, through its An Gúm division, of more than 250 resources, including textbooks, electronic materials, dictionaries and reading material for the education sector. An Gúm is working with the Department of Education and Skills to provide Séideán Sí, the first project geared towards native speakers and primary students in Gaelscoileanna. Other key points are the development of the new Irish-English dictionary, scheduled for publication in late 2012 in both electronic and hard copies, and the operation of the successful Irish in the community scheme since 2005. Currently, this scheme employs 17 development officers to promote Irish within their communities throughout the island and to encourage the use of Irish in business and marketing with a view to assisting in the normalisation of Irish in everyday life.

I will be happy to provide additional information on any specific issues that are of interest to the House.

Deputy Brian O'Shea: I thank the Minister for his comprehensive reply. The list sounds impressive but I must ask whether there is evidence to confirm the efforts of Foras na Gaeilge have increased the use of the Irish language, particularly its oral use. It was recently brought to my notice that Foras na Gaeilge does not come within the remit of the Freedom of Information Act because a cross-Border body is involved. The Minister's predecessor took questions regarding Foras na Gaeilge. I am glad the Minister is continuing in that way. Given that it is a cross-Border body, are there restrictions on the information about it which can be provided to the House? To what extent is there an obligation on Foras na Gaeilge to answer correspondence from citizens?

Deputy Pat Carey: The Deputy has answered the question about the application of the Freedom of Information Act to Foras na Gaeilge. I am anxious, as was my predecessor, to make as much information as possible available. The Deputy asked how we can respond to requests for information that are made on behalf of citizens, for example. I am prepared to

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explore that with Members of the House, if that would be of help. In response to the Deputy's original question, I have read comments in newspapers on the question of whether an evaluation of the work of Foras na Gaeilge, for example in respect of Irish language teaching, has been carried out. As I understand it, a great deal of research about the standard of Irish was conducted prior to the launch of the straitéis 20 bliain. Some of the findings of that research are in the public domain. The findings relating to those who have experienced the learning of Irish and the confidence of some teachers in their capacity to teach Irish do not make pleasant reading. I expect that the straitéis, which is before an Oireachtas sub-committee at the moment, will explore how we can improve that. We all have views on the things that need to be done to improve the learning and teaching of Irish. Such matters are integral to the 20-year strategy, as well as to the *pleananna Gaeilge* which it will be necessary to introduce and implement as soon as the strategy is in place.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Will the Minister agree that one of the objectives which Foras na Gaeilge has dismally failed to achieve in recent years is the transfer of jobs in the organisation to the Gaeltacht, specifically to my own area of Gaoth Dobhair, which was promised when the now discredited decentralisation scheme was announced in this House six or seven years ago and should have been a *fait accompli* by now? To be honest and to be fair to Foras na Gaeilge, that is more the fault of the Government than the fault of the foras. Does the Minister have any idea of the Government's aims in this regard? Is it still its objective to transfer some of these jobs to Gaoth Dobhair, as promised by the former Minister for Finance, Charlie McCreevy? Is it just another in a long line of broken promises from the other side of House over recent years?

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy is extending the scope of the question somewhat.

Deputy Pat Carey: I will have an opportunity to discuss some of these matters and other matters with my Northern Ireland counterpart, Nelson McCausland, later this week. I am anxious to ensure we facilitate the Deputy's wishes as much as we can and as soon as we can.

Deputy Brian O'Shea: I welcome the Minister's support for the idea of giving citizens as much information as possible about the operation of Foras na Gaeilge. Can Foras na Gaeilge choose to ignore correspondence from citizens?

Deputy Pat Carey: I would hope not. If the Deputy has a particular case in mind, I will investigate why the correspondence in question has not been responded to.

Written Answers follow Adjournment Debate.

Adjournment Debate Matters

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I wish to advise the House of the following matters in respect of which notice has been given under Standing Order 21 and the name of the Member in each case: (1) Deputy John Browne — the need to promote indigenous crops, such as malting barley, for use in domestic manufacturing; (2) Deputy Ulick Burke — the rehabilitation of the Tynagh Mines site in Loughrea, County Galway; (3) Deputy Timmy Dooley — the roll out of BreastCheck in County Clare; (4) Deputy Michael McGrath — the need for the HSE to reconsider the cuts recently imposed under the medical card dental scheme; (5) Deputy James Bannon — the need for the Minister for Education and Skills to provide a new community college at Kilbeggan, County Westmeath, or to facilitate the operation of a public private partnership for this project; (6) Deputy Leo Varadkar — the need for the Minister for Health and Children to report to the Dail on the HSE's plans to establish a methadone clinic in the

Coolmine industrial estate, next door to a workshop for people with intellectual disabilities, to explain why there was no consultation with local public representatives or interested parties and to state when the HSE intends to apply for planning permission to proceed with this plan; (7) Deputy Deirdre Clune — the need to review changes to dental care provisions for medical card holders; (8) Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin — the need for the Minister for Finance, in light of the now signalled loss of 900 jobs at Quinn Insurance and the devastating consequences thereof, to explain why the Financial Regulator decided to ban Quinn Insurance Limited from trading in the Six Counties and in Britain hours before he sought the appointment of provisional administrators, to explain why it has taken so many weeks to restore partial access to these markets and to outline the methods the Government has employed to ensure that all the Financial Regulator's decisions have been justified given the serious consequences for this company's reputation and viability in all markets and the serious loss of jobs as a consequence of those actions; (9) Deputy Joe Costello — the need for the Minister for Transport to ensure that the Luas lines connecting Broadstone and Grangegorman to the city centre and to Broombridge are constructed without delay; (10) Deputy Dan Neville — the need to regulate the professions of psychotherapy and counselling; (11) Deputy Simon Coveney — the commencement of the western relief road in Carrigaline, County Cork; (12) Deputy Trevor Sargent — the provision of a new sports hall at Balbriggan community college, County Dublin; (13) Deputy Pádraic McCormack — the HSE's proposals for the future of St. Francis' nursing home, Newcastle, Galway city; and (14) Deputy Tom Sheahan — the need for the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to set out the legal framework under which lands in County Kerry are being dezoned by Kerry County Council, to state whether councillors are indemnified from legal action, to explain whether a local area plan can be extended if not agreed by councillors and to make a statement on the matter.

The matters raised by Deputies Dooley, Neville, Coveney and Sargent have been selected for discussion.

Leaders' Questions

Deputy Enda Kenny: Last weekend, the EU finance ministers put together a package of €750 billion for the relief of distressed eurozone economies. I am disappointed that the Dáil did not have an opportunity to discuss the matter, as allowed under the Lisbon treaty, in advance of its being considered by the EU ministers. While the new mechanism is necessary, it is insufficient in so far as it will not deal with the structural deficiencies in the economies of vulnerable eurozone countries, including Ireland. Although it will deal with debt liquidity for a period of time, it will not deal with the financing pressures that will arise in the future in the absence of a serious and determined programme of competitiveness, growth and investment. Ireland is no different — we cannot plan for a jobless recovery.

It is worth mentioning, in that context, that 433,000 people are on the live register at the moment. They yearn to have a job, to enjoy the privilege of going to work and to contribute to the economy and the good of society. In his Budget Statement of April 2009, the Minister for Finance set aside €100 million enterprise stabilisation fund, designed specifically to protect vulnerable employers and businesses, to allow them to continue to trade internationally, to enable them to maintain their workforces and to help them to get through this crisis. Can he explain why a fund that was supposed to protect jobs, in the first instance, was cut by €22 million at a time when 433,000 people are on the live register?

The Taoiseach: The decisions taken by the European Council and ECOFIN over the weekend were taken as a rapid response to what the European Central Bank regarded as the prospect of a systemic risk to the euro currency, beyond the Greek situation alone. The original

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purpose of last Friday's meeting was to finalise the arrangements relating to Greece. It was not a question of not giving prior notice of issues that were coming up. This issue had to be dealt with as a matter of urgency. It was dealt with quite well by the European Council and ECOFIN over the weekend. Rather than running down the prospects of the euro and the country, it is far better to acknowledge that the market has reacted positively.

The statement also referred to the structural issues that have to be dealt with, in terms of deficit reduction, by all countries with such issues. There has been an acknowledgment that the Irish Government and the Irish economy started that structural adjustment in 2009. There was an adjustment of 5% in 2009 and an adjustment of 2.5% in 2010. While we have to remain vigilant, further adjustments which will lead to a reduction in the deficit have to be made. The international markets have shown an acknowledgement and an acceptance of the credibility of the Irish position.

The European Commission, the European Council and ECOFIN are clearly emphasising the need to have a more effective surveillance and monitoring mechanism, in respect of the stability of the euro, in the future. The task force that is working under the Presidency of Herman Van Rompuy will have to accelerate its work. The proposals to be made by the Commission this week will make an input into that. When people are commenting on these matters, I ask them to acknowledge the commendations that have been given to the Irish so far. While we should not be self-congratulatory in any way, that which is acknowledged externally might be acknowledged at home as well.

In response to Deputy Kenny's point about support for the jobs strategy, the fundamental aspect of everything we do is to try to protect and create jobs now and in the future. We have taken a very hard hit throughout this recession, particularly last year when we experienced a contraction of 10.5% of GNP.

There has been an increase in unemployment up to 13.4%. We have taken action in improving the position of our public finances, which provides greater confidence externally and internally. Thankfully, this will result in an improvement in consumer sentiment and an increase in consumer spend for the first time in two years. We have also seen an improvement in competitiveness, which has been remarked upon not only by the President of the European Central Bank but by colleagues throughout Europe. We are also trying to maintain and create jobs by repairing the banking system and we are in the throes of doing that.

In addition to the stabilisation fund referred to by the Deputy, we are providing an employment subsidy scheme. Both initiatives are protecting in the region of 90,000 jobs. The semi-State sector will provide €2 billion in investment this year and when this is added to the capital investment programme of €6.5 billion, that makes a total investment of €8.4 billion. That will also provide jobs for up to 60,000 people. Therefore, it is not correct to say the Government is not in any way trying to assist people. We are assisting people in every way we can and the €100 million programme referred to by the Minister for Finance in 2009 related to a two to three-year programme.

Deputy Enda Kenny: The Taoiseach can add the €20 billion he put into the banks to all the figures he mentioned. I asked why the €100 million enterprise stabilisation fund was cut by €22 million when it was designed specifically to get employers and businesses that were trading over this economic crisis. In both 2008 and 2009 Deputies Bruton and Varadkar, on behalf of the Fine Gael Party, put forward a series of measures to protect employment, to give incentives to employers and to give encouragement to employees. A number of them related to PRSI. In his Budget Statement last December, the Minister for Finance committed to leaving aside €36 million for a PRSI holiday for employers that take on new employees who have been six

months on the dole in full-time jobs, which would give hope, confidence and the opportunity to contribute to our society and our economy to those involved.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs at the time issued a statement that the scheme would be implemented in a few weeks and it set out the conditions that would apply such as no substitute jobs, which I accept, and so on. However, the central issue, about which I am sure the Taoiseach is acutely aware, is the right to have a job. I support this fund because it was proposed initially by the Fine Gael Party in both 2008 and 2009.

An Ceann Comhairle: Can we have a question?

Deputy Enda Kenny: In the interests of taking some of the 430,000 people on the live register off the dole and encouraging employers to avail of this fund, which the Minister for Finance announced in this Budget Statement last December, will the Taoiseach give a commitment that inside one month he will stand by the Government's word and ensure the €36 million PRSI holiday for employers who take on new employees will be up and running? I support the Taoiseach on this and I would like the scheme to be realised and to be up and running halfway through the year. Will he see to it that the Government will implement this budget proposal?

The Taoiseach: That decision is in the process of being implemented. We have agreed the heads of a social welfare Bill, which will be announced shortly. Full details of the employer job incentive scheme relating to PRSI, including the application procedure, will be administered by the Department of Social Protection. The scheme will run for the calendar year and any qualifying employment created this year will be eligible for the scheme, which will be structured in order that employment created prior to its launch can participate for 12 months from the time of launch and employment created later in the year can participate for 12 months to the corresponding date the following year. For example, in the case of qualifying employment created prior to the launch of the scheme, standard employee and employer PRSI will be paid but, following approval for the scheme, the employer will benefit from a PRSI exemption for 12 months from the date of approval. PRSI rebates will not be a feature of the scheme. Account will be given for the creation of employment in 2010, as promised.

Deputy Enda Kenny: When will it be launched? Will it be inside a month?

The Taoiseach: The Government has made that decision. I expect the social welfare Bill to be published imminently.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: I welcome the agreement reached at the weekend by EU Finance Ministers to established a €750 billion stabilisation fund for the euro and EU economies. It is important that EU governments are prepared to act collectively to face down financial speculation against the euro and individual economics, which has caused great worry across Europe to people about their jobs, savings and prospects. I sincerely hope the agreement works.

However, I have a number of questions about it. The first relates to its implications and consequences for our national budgeting. The Taoiseach is reported as saying there will not be an early budget this year and that it is the Government's intention to have the budget as expected in December. Will he confirm that is the position? I would like him to comment on the belief that the decision at the weekend will result in greater oversight, supervision and EU involvement in national budgeting. Will the decision made at the weekend require the Government to seek approval, at least in general terms, in advance from the European Commission before introducing the next budget?

I would also like to ask about the other element of the package. The establishment of the fund is a positive development, which I welcome, but there is also the issue of the regulation of

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financial markets and financial activity in Europe about which the statement issued by Ministers afterwards appeared to be much more aspirational than the agreement on the fund. For example, what action will be taken against financial speculators and what action will be taken to reform the markets for government debt? The statement refers to the possibility of regulation of rating agencies. What action is envisaged on that?

Where do we stand on the regulation of hedge funds, something the Labour Party and its sister parties in Europe have sought for some time? In that context, I draw the Taoiseach's attention to reports in March, which suggested that the resistance to the regulation of hedge funds in Europe was coming in the main from London and Dublin. Where does the Government stand on the regulation of hedge funds? Where does it stand on the proposal to have a Robin Hood tax on financial transactions? I agree the establishment of the fund is a positive and welcome development. Where does the Government stand on the strengthening of regulation of financial markets in Europe?

The Taoiseach: I welcome the support the Deputy indicated for the developments over the weekend, which were necessary. A situation had arisen which, as far as the European Central Bank was concerned acting independently, was of such a nature that decisions were taken both on Friday evening and Sunday night that have had the impact required in terms of confirming that there is a full, united, comprehensive approach by members of the euro area to defend the currency in every circumstance. Based on the initial response, that has been understood by the markets. One must remain vigilant. We cannot determine the outcome of such matters in the space of 24 hours but the initial response has had the intended effect.

Some of the questions asked by Deputy Gilmore will be a matter for discussion within the taskforce headed by Mr. Van Rompuy. I refer to economic governance issues in general, how the Stability and Growth Pact works, what improvements need to be brought about and whether there are areas in which one could introduce measures that would be regarded as preventive rather than corrective. A warning system is currently in place for excessive deficit procedures. The sanction is usually in the form of a fine. Debate is ongoing on whether there should be a greater degree of surveillance or monitoring. All of those issues must be discussed.

As yet, no decision has been taken but there has been an indication of the need for the Van Rompuy taskforce to accelerate its work. It was envisaged that the work would proceed until the end of this year prior to recommendations emerging but it may well be that they would emerge sooner than that. As part of the urgency of the need to deal with those matters that relate to the structural issues that arise in the European economy and how the stability of the currency is viewed in that respect, not just from a monetary point of view but a fiscal and competitiveness point of view, a Commission proposal this week will input into that process. The first meeting of the taskforce will take place in the following week, on 21 May. We are seeing a ramping up of the ideas that will be brought forward for discussion and ultimate agreement within the taskforce, which will then come back to ECOFIN and the European Council in due course.

No one wants to see the euro in this position again. That involves first demonstrating that community instruments are in place to support the euro or countries. The only country that has sought support is Greece. A contingency arrangement has been put in place and a special purpose vehicle has been set up by euro area member states to allow for the purchase of bonds in the market which would be guaranteed by the states proportionately. This country has signed up to that commitment. We must show solidarity for the stability of the currency.

Deputy Gilmore raised the future regulation of hedge funds. It has always been our view that we must ensure we are competitive in the context of the provision of financial services.

They provide a significant number of well-remunerated jobs. The IFSC has weathered the financial storm relatively well, perhaps better than expected. Potential has been identified in the funds administration area for future job creation in this country. It is clear that one must balance that perspective with the need for adequate regulation. We need to consider our position in that respect.

My view and the view of the Minister for Finance and the Government is that there was a mistaken view in terms of governance of such instruments in the past. That is why we ended up in the current position. It is clear that we must devise an improved surveillance and monitoring mechanism and a regulatory system in all respects, not just in terms of financial institutions but some financial instruments as well. Our general disposition is that we are open to joining a consensus that would see Europe providing for an improved regulatory regime in all of those areas. We should also be mindful of the fact that this is a global industry and it is important that we are competitive in the industry as well in terms of retaining jobs. Significant Exchequer resources accrue to this country annually as a result of having a profitable financial services industry. The IFSC has had that benefit for us both in terms of employment and revenue. Based on the fact that this area is a work in progress and that no decision is imminent, although the ongoing work is urgent, that is the best response I can give.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: I thank the Taoiseach for describing how the issues are to be progressed at European level and the expected work of the taskforce. Not only is it important that there is agreement at European level on the need to stabilise the currency but it is important that there is agreement at national level as well on the measures that are required to do that. It is with a view to establishing where the Government stands in respect of the issues that have now to be addressed that I am pursuing these questions.

With respect, the Taoiseach's responses on where the Government stands on the future of the regulatory regime in Europe are a bit on the vague side. Issues require to be addressed such as the regulation of hedge funds. It is clear that the speculation we have seen in the recent past against individual countries and the euro gives rise to a requirement for much greater regulation. I interpret what the Taoiseach has said as a somewhat belated move in Government thinking from the era of light touch regulation and what he described as the mistaken view of the past. I presume what he means by that is the kind of policies that were advocated and expounded by the then Minister, later Commissioner, Mr. McCreevy, and the generalist position of the Government. There is a need for the Government to be clear and to outline the position on the regulation of hedge funds, the so-called Robin Hood tax and the other issues which will now be considered at European Union level and which are the next phase of this process.

The Taoiseach did not answer the earlier part of my question, namely, the implications and consequences of the weekend's agreement for our national budgeting. Could the Taoiseach confirm there will not be an early budget? Is it the case that there will be a requirement for greater European supervision of our budgetary process as a result of the agreement? What is the Taoiseach's take on Europe's interpretation of our current deficit and likely deficit given the EUROSTAT decision on the €4 billion that went into Anglo Irish Bank and whether that has to be factored into the national accounts?

The Taoiseach: The point I made previously in response to Deputy Kenny is that, thankfully, this country has established some credibility in international markets due to what we have been proactively doing. One of the main messages that arises from the weekend's developments is that the strategy the Government has been pursuing since July 2008 has been vindicated. Firm action to arrest the fiscal deficit over a realistic period builds confidence and market credibility.

[The Taoiseach.]

We must pursue vigorously all the elements of the economic recovery strategy especially on the question of improving the public finances — what is known as fiscal consolidation — or the markets would punish us severely. That is the reality we now have to face. What has happened has shown that the Government was correct to resist suggestions about prolonging the period of adjustment, which was something that was mentioned in the public debate at the time. The idea was probably mentioned in this House as well that we should have had a period of adjustment that was longer than up to 2014. Had we listened to that advice from elements of the Opposition——

Deputy Olivia Mitchell: The Government did extend the years.

The Taoiseach: ——it would have added to the deficit. The same would be the case if we had added to the deficit by an unsustainable stimulus package or avoided painful domestic adjustments.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Taoiseach is abusing the question I asked.

The Taoiseach: I will reply to it.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Taoiseach is abusing the question I asked. I did not ask an adversarial question.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Taoiseach should be allowed to conclude.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Taoiseach should not get into an adversarial mode.

The Taoiseach: I am sorry.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Taoiseach is on his second reply but I will not have an opportunity to respond to it.

The Taoiseach: Opportunities are taken by everyone in the House to explain issues. I am making the point that the current market volatility confirms that had we taken no action — views were expressed as part of the public debate——

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: That is not the question I asked.

The Taoiseach: I will answer the question as I wish in my own way. That is my prerogative, but I intend——

Deputy Joan Burton: Why does the Taoiseach not include the €18 billion for Anglo Irish Bank?

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Burton.

The Taoiseach: I intend——

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Burton, could we have the Taoiseach without interruption, please?

The Taoiseach: The problem is that the Deputy does not hear anything that does not suit her.

Deputy Joan Burton: That is the biggest addition to what——

An Ceann Comhairle: Could we have An Taoiseach without interruption?

Deputy Joan Burton: What about the €8 billion——

The Taoiseach: I am not suggesting she should not support this. I am sure she acknowledges and welcomes the——

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Burton.

The Taoiseach: This is the time for Leaders' Questions. It is not yet time for the House to hear Deputy Burton.

To finalise the point, had we taken the route proposed by others we should now be in a very severe crisis, relying on supports which would, effectively remove our economic sovereignty.

Deputy Joan Burton: What about the €8 billion?

The Taoiseach: I am trying to make the point that there was a view about——

(Interruptions).

The Taoiseach: A Cheann Comhairle, could I have the protection of the Chair?

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputies, we can only have one speaker at a time in the House. Otherwise, we will not hear what is being said. An Taoiseach, without interruption, please.

Deputy Seán Barrett: This is not a Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis.

The Taoiseach: Are we not entitled to defend our position and explain what we are doing?

Deputy Seán Barrett: This is not a Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis——

The Taoiseach: I have not suggested this is a Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Barrett, please.

The Taoiseach: I am supposed to stand here, take the Opposition's analysis, sit down and say it is right. Is that it? Had I done this, we should be in a very different position to the one we are in now. In regard to the question that Deputy Gilmore asked——

Deputy Paul Kehoe: Is the Taoiseach going to have a "B" conference?

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Kehoe.

The Taoiseach: I am sorry, is Deputy Kehoe the Chief Whip, or what is he?

Deputy Paul Kehoe: He is afraid to have a "B" conference——

(Interruptions).

The Taoiseach: We shall give Deputy Kehoe an invitation to the next one. He should not be getting red about it and he does not have to attend if he does not want to.

(Interruptions).

The Taoiseach: He should not worry. It is not like his own, and he is under no duress to attend ours.

[The Taoiseach.]

On the question as to whether there will be a budget, the Minister for Finance and I have said that with revenues on stream and spending down 10% over the first quarter compared to last year, and being on target, it is not envisaged that we will have any requirement for a budget, other than at the end of the year because the strategy that was outlined is working.

In respect of the international transactions tax, again, that will require a response at global level. As the Deputy knows, the British Prime Minister indicated his support for that at the G7 summit but it did not meet with unanimous approval there——

Deputy Jim O’Keeffe: He has gone, now.

The Taoiseach: ——and it is a matter of continuing discussion. However, it is something we need to look to in order for the banking industry to re-establish credibility with the public. An international transactions tax, if globally applied and in a way that does not undermine Ireland’s competitiveness, is something I do not have any ideological problem with as long as it is pragmatic, effective and efficient.

On the question of speculation, the bottom line is that this will occur where weaknesses are identified. That is what happened in the current situation. Clearly, beyond the Greek situation a bet was being taken as to whether the euro was in a position to survive. The sovereign debt issue was even being questioned, not just institutional or private debt. Clearly, we faced the prospect of a second financial crisis, where the indebtedness of states was being questioned in terms of their ability to repay.

The response over the weekend has had the intended effect. However, at this point it must be accompanied by the fact not just that a contingency measure has been put in place to support the currency by member states, but also that further structural adjustments will have to be accelerated for those countries for whom this applies. Deputies will have seen that Spain and Portugal have indicated that they will have a report from the European Commission by mid-May or June, I understand, to look at that situation as well.

There is no room for complacency in this country, either, or for self-congratulation in our situation. We need to acknowledge, however, that having taken the steps necessary we are being believed internationally. We now have to build domestic confidence at home. One way we can do that is through the budgetary process we have outlined. A €3 billion adjustment for 2011 is certainly a possibility but there have been no formal or informal indications from the European Union that it requires or expects anything beyond that level of adjustment at this point. In any event, it is in Ireland’s interest that we make this adjustment. We would always look to the European institutions as being supportive, and work with them on the basis of a common analysis to the effect that Ireland has established a certain degree of credibility and that we must now proceed along these lines in order to effect an economic recovery strategy that will have credibility abroad as well.

Requests to move Adjournment of Dáil under Standing Order 32.

An Ceann Comhairle: Before coming to the Order of Business, I propose to deal with a number of notices under Standing Order 32. I will call the Deputies in the order in which they submitted their notices to my office.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to discuss the following matter of national importance, requiring urgent consideration, namely, the now signalled loss of 900 jobs at Quinn Insurance, which has come as a severe blow to the threatened workers, their families, communities and the wider inter-dependent

community in each affected area in Counties Cavan, Dublin, Fermanagh, Meath and further afield, and the need for the full truth to be laid out in public as to why the Financial Regulator decided to ban the company trading in the Six Counties and in Britain hours before he sought the appointment of provisional administrators. Why has it taken so many weeks to restore even partial access to these markets and what efforts has the Government employed to ensure that all decisions of the Financial Regulator have been justified, given the serious consequences for this company's reputation and viability in all markets, and the serious loss of jobs now consequential on his actions?

Deputy Denis Naughten: I am seeking the adjournment of Dáil Éireann under Standing Order 32 to discuss a matter of urgent importance, namely, the need for the Minister for Health and Children to postpone HSE plans to close Loughloe House long-stay facility in Athlone within the next two months, and to publish any and all available reports associated with the decision, in light of the fact that inadequate consideration has been given to the implications which this closure will have on patients and staff, and the lack of a full evaluation of the HIQA report on the facility.

Deputy Catherine Byrne: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise the following issue of national importance, namely, the recent announcement that the home help hours across the country will be reduced to 7.5 hours per week. A home help will be able to spend no more than ten minutes getting an old person out of bed and dressed in the morning, and 15 minutes assisting him or her in showering. This is totally unrealistic and it will mean that many elderly people will not be properly catered for. These measures are mean and unjustified for the many elderly who need a lifeline into the community. They are the most needy and vulnerable group in our society and what the Minister is proposing is inhuman. In a time of recession, this Government, between the Green Party and Fianna Fáil, can justify another ministerial salary for a directly elected mayor, while many people are struggling to live their daily lives.

Deputy Martin Ferris: I seek to adjourn the House under Standing Order 32 in order to discuss the impact the budgetary cuts are having on the Brothers of Charity in County Limerick and their ability to provide much-needed facilities for people with special needs; and the negative impact the cuts will have on both the people receiving care from the Brothers of Charity and on their families and the need to reverse all such cuts in provisions for this area.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I hereby give notice pursuant to Standing Order 32 to raise the following matter of urgent importance, namely, the need to ascertain the detailed plans of the Minister for Health and Children and the Health Service Executive to curtail service delivery programmes in the HSE's midlands area, incorporating Counties Westmeath, Longford, Offaly and Laois, with particular reference to proposed cutbacks and cost-saving measures under the euphemistic guise of "reconfiguration", affecting Portlaoise Regional Hospital, to include the future of the accident and emergency service, the maternity unit, general surgery and the urology service and how such changes will impact on the people of the midlands.

An Ceann Comhairle: Having considered the matters raised, I do not consider them to be in order under Standing Order 32.

(Interruptions).

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: That is not fair.

Order of Business

The Taoiseach: It is proposed to take No. 17, Energy (Biofuel Obligation and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2010 [*Seanad*] — Second Stage (resumed); and No. 18, Nurses and Midwives Bill 2010 — Second Stage (resumed). It is proposed, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders, that Private Members' business shall be No. 33, Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction (Fixed Penalty Notice) (Amendment) Bill 2009 — Second Stage, and the proceedings on Second Stage shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion at 8.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 12 May 2010.

An Ceann Comhairle: There is one proposal to be put to the House today. Is the proposal for dealing with Private Members' business agreed to?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I require a clarification from the Taoiseach. In view of the report just published by the Ombudsman for Children about the systemic failures within the HSE to provide for the protection and welfare of children under “Children First”, the national guidelines for child protection and welfare, will the Taoiseach accommodate a proper opportunity for statements and questions to the Minister of State with responsibility for children? The report just published underscores serious failures within the delivery systems——

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy will have to avail of some other way of raising this matter.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Surely the Order of Business is the time to ask——

An Ceann Comhairle: No, it is not appropriate to raise this on the Order of Business.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Indeed it is. This is not a matter of promised legislation; I am asking about the ordering of business. Given the seriousness of the report now published, which is the first overarching report published by the Ombudsman for Children — previous reports were all specific to individual complaints — this is important and must be addressed on the floor of the House. Will the Taoiseach provide time this week to discuss this serious matter? We must get the necessary assurances that the deficiencies highlighted by Ms Logan are being addressed.

An Ceann Comhairle: The proposal relates to Private Members' business.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I beg your pardon, a Cheann Comhairle?

An Ceann Comhairle: The matter on which we are endeavouring to reach a decision relates to Private Members' business.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Not at all. Actually, of course it does. That proposition has not yet been agreed to and I have the right to withhold my agreement until I obtain clarification.

An Ceann Comhairle: I am requesting the Deputy's agreement.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I mean no disrespect to the movers of the Private Members' Bill, who will fully understand that I am seeking a response from the Taoiseach on a serious and damning report in which the Taoiseach should take a personal interest.

Deputy Liz McManus: Before we agree to this proposal — I am not seeking a vote against it — I ask the Taoiseach to note that the legislation entitled Energy (Biofuel Obligation and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2010 has now been altered quite dramatically by the Minister

for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Deputy Eamon Ryan, who has tacked on an entire section dealing with the completely unrelated matter of carbon windfall taxes for electricity generators. Although it now seems to be common for Ministers to add at a late stage in the debate sections which have absolutely nothing to do with the rest of the Bill, I do not think it is good practice. It is quite dangerous in terms of ensuring proper scrutiny of legislation. The same thing happened during the passage of the Communications Regulation (Premium Rate Services and Electronic Communications Infrastructure) Bill 2009, to which a totally unrelated part was added at the last minute.

I ask the Taoiseach to rein in his Minister a little. Nobody objects to the particular provision, but it should not be done in this way. The legislation dealing with bio-fuels has now morphed into something completely different because of amendments introduced at the eleventh hour.

An Ceann Comhairle: Is the House in agreement with the proposal dealing with Private Members' business?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Will the Taoiseach deal with my point?

The Taoiseach: To be helpful on the issue raised by Deputy McManus, I point out that there will be an opportunity on Committee Stage to deal with policy and other issues that arise with regard to any additions to the Bill. These are introduced because they are urgent; in fact, they may be in response to demands by the House for legislative provisions in respect of certain matters. When a Bill is used to facilitate this, it seems it can inspire a negative reaction as well as a positive one. The intention is——

Deputy Liz McManus: All I am looking for is scrutiny.

The Taoiseach: Scrutiny can be provided without any problem——

Deputy Seán Barrett: On Second Stage.

The Taoiseach: ——on Committee Stage of the Bill. For the remaining speakers on Second Stage, which is to resume today, it is an opportunity for their parties to put forward their points of view on any aspect of the Bill.

The report of the Ombudsman for Children, which was mentioned by Deputy Ó Caoláin, mirrors a previous report produced by the Minister of State with responsibility for children, Deputy Barry Andrews, about the need to provide facilities for child protection. We have seen since then the placing of the codes of conduct on a statutory basis, and the health service is in the process of employing a further 200 social workers to assist in ensuring the "Children First" regulations are properly implemented. It will be a matter for the Whips to decide when they would like a debate on this matter. I am sure the Minister of State, Deputy Andrews, is open to this.

Deputy Alan Shatter: The Taoiseach has just grossly misrepresented the report of the Ombudsman for Children. The report is a damning indictment of the political failure of this Government, successive Ministers for Health and Children and the Minister of State with responsibility for children to properly ensure that the child protection guidelines are applied.

An Ceann Comhairle: Just a brief comment, please, Deputy.

Deputy Alan Shatter: The Government and the Department are accused of unsound administration under section 8 of the legislation that created the Office of the Ombudsman for Children. That is a very unusual decision by an ombudsman, and by the Ombudsman for Children.

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot have such contributions on the Order of Business. We must move on.

Deputy Alan Shatter: The Taoiseach should hang his head in shame at what is a total failure of political responsibility and accountability with regard to children at risk.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Shatter is abusing the Order of Business.

Deputy Alan Shatter: This report should be before the House next week for discussion.

A Deputy: Hear, hear.

An Ceann Comhairle: Is the proposal for dealing with Private Members' business agreed to? Agreed.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Will the Taoiseach consider providing an opportunity some time next week for a discussion on the €750 billion fund agreed last week by the Ministers of the eurozone countries, and Ireland's proposal to add to this by dealing with competitiveness, investment and growth, so that we can present a clear picture of what we are doing to other countries?

Last Thursday, I raised certain questions with the Tánaiste. Either she was being an obstinate pupil or she was in the Department of skills because she refused to answer any question asked of her. These questions were clear. First, are we to have a referendum on children's rights this year? The all-party Oireachtas committee agreed after much deliberation on a wording for the referendum, which has been received by the Minister of State with responsibility for children.

Second, I asked the Tánaiste when the legislation providing for a directly elected mayor of Dublin would be produced, and if it is proposed to hold that election in isolation or on the same day as the children's referendum. I also asked about the people in Donegal South-West, Dublin South and Waterford who are disenfranchised. The Government is hanging on by a thread and knows it cannot win any of those three seats unless there is another miracle in Fatima or Knock. It is unfair that these people have been disenfranchised to such an extent and for such a long time. I ask the Taoiseach to confirm whether the Government has any intention of holding the three by-elections that are now due. If it does intend to hold a referendum on children's rights at the same time as the election for Lord Mayor in Dublin, is it proposed to have these by-elections on the same day? In this way the people who are now disenfranchised can at least have a say on the Government's mismanagement of the country.

I note one of the Green Party Ministers is in the House. His leader and counterpart has an interest in the water services Bill. When is that Bill expected? It is stated that it is not possible to indicate at this stage when it can be expected. However, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government seems to have a different view. Will the Taoiseach enlighten us on that?

The Taoiseach: A motion on the question of the by-election for Donegal was voted on in the House last week, so I cannot answer that.

Deputy Enda Kenny: The Taoiseach gave instruction.

The Taoiseach: If the Deputy can give a commitment that he can get a candidate who will not resign if elected, we could look at the issue.

An Ceann Comhairle: Order please, Deputies.

The Taoiseach: The Deputy should try to ensure they sign up for a bit longer than the last one.

With regard to the referendum on children, I have stated on numerous occasions that this matter is being considered by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. He is engaged with the Attorney General on that matter. The report came to us after much good cross-party work a month or two ago and is being considered. As soon as the matter is ready for consideration by Government, it will be considered.

On the water services Bill, I am not in a position to inform the Deputy of any date for it yet. The legislation on the mayoral elections is in preparation.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: I understand that legislation will be required to enable Ireland to participate in the package agreed at the weekend for the stabilisation of the euro. When will that legislation be prepared and brought before the House? Is it intended to have two separate pieces of legislation now, one dealing with the agreement at the weekend and another dealing with the assistance to Greece?

What is the position with regard to the reports on the Dublin Docklands Development Authority? In mid-February, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government told us the reports would be published by him within a matter of weeks. We have seen neither the Minister nor the reports since then. Whatever about the Minister, will the Taoiseach tell us the whereabouts of the reports and when they might be published?

With regard to the announcement made today by the Minister for Health and Children banning a list of head shop products — which I welcome — will the Government now consider dealing with the other half of that problem, namely, the regulation of the head shops. Deputy Joe Costello will introduce a Labour Party Private Members' Bill to address this issue. Will the Government consider adopting that Bill and dealing with the other half of the problem, which involves the planning side and the regulation of shops and use of premises?

The Taoiseach: The objective of the regulation we have in mind is not simply to regulate the shops, but, hopefully, to see them go out of business altogether. The details of that legislation are being brought forward by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The legislation will involve both criminal and civil sanction in respect of an onus of proof being placed on the owners of such establishments as to the legality of the products they are selling. The legislation is in hand. The order signed with effect from midnight last night has the effect of rendering illegal what has been regarded up to now as legal under the Misuse of Drugs Act. This has a good practical outcome in terms of what has been happening today as a result of the legislation being brought to the notice of those who own these shops. They are being closed, and, hopefully, will remain closed. We must wait and see how that works out, but we will certainly bring forward legislation in this area in an effort to provide a comprehensive response on this issue.

I apologise to Deputy Kenny who also raised the question of an opportunity to discuss the issues that arose last weekend. I understand the Bill relating to the pooled bilateral loans to Greece is due to be debated in the House next week and the timing for it has already been given to the Whips. Deputies will be able to discuss all the issues under that heading. The establishment of the special purpose vehicle aspect of the €440 billion decision for a contingency fund that would arise in the event it is required may require separate legislation. However, we want to proceed with the legislation in respect of the Greek situation as quickly as possible so that we can show our bona fides and solidarity to Greece. As Deputies are aware, the first tranche will be provided within the next couple of weeks. It is not imperative that we are part of the first tranche, since it can be provided by other states that do not have the same

[The Taoiseach.]

requirement of legislative approval as us. We would like to proceed with the legislation in any event and show our good faith by doing that so that we are ready and able to assist when required. The other matter probably will require legislation. That issue is being checked out currently.

On the other aspect, the use of the Commission's own resources for the €60 billion fund which is being established, which comes from the excess or margins of the budget which is now being given first call for this purpose, this will not require legislation as it will probably be done by a Council regulation.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: In response to questions regarding the proposed children's rights referendum, the Taoiseach stated that the Minister and Attorney General were considering the matter. Will the Taoiseach please clarify what it is they are considering? Will he relieve the concern of people about whether they are considering the issue for referendum at all? Surely it is accepted this is a referendum — an all-party agreement already existing in committee — that must proceed. Will the Taoiseach clarify that the only consideration the Minister and Attorney General are giving relates to a possible date and the appointment of a referendum commission? It is important that a distinction is made and that there is clarity on what is being considered, because there is growing concern, not only within this Chamber, but externally among a raft of people in non-governmental organisations who are keenly interested in the children's rights referendum proceeding. The answers the Taoiseach gives do not in any way assuage that growing fear, so I urge him to take this opportunity to make the situation absolutely clear.

On promised legislation, the Ceann Comhairle would not allow me press the situation *vis-à-vis* time being afforded to address the report just published by the Ombudsman for Children on the implementation of Children First, the national guidelines on the protection and welfare of children.

An Ceann Comhairle: Going into great detail is inappropriate on the Order of Business.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: At times I wonder why I bothered voting for the Ceann Comhairle, no harm to him.

The Child Care (Amendment) Bill has passed all Stages in the Seanad. When will it come before this House so that we will have an opportunity to debate it? I would like a definite answer with regard to the projected date for the address of that legislation on the floor of this Chamber. In the absence of the co-operation or agreement of the Government Whip on that, perhaps we will be able to address the report published by Emily Logan.

The Taoiseach: I suggest that is a matter for discussion between the Whips. It is being published today and will have to be studied, examined and debated in the House in due course, if that is the wish of the House.

Second, with regard to the report, the Oireachtas committee produced a report which met with cross-party approval at that level. The Government must now assess the situation, consult the Attorney General to ensure that whatever emerges deals with all the legal issues and examine what has been brought forward with everybody's agreement. Just as the Executive does not abdicate the issue to the Legislature, the issue cannot be abdicated by us in terms of what we must do now in examining that question. It is for the purpose of trying to accommodate all the issues and listening to what has been said by that committee that we must consider what way we can move forward. However, we must work through those issues interdepartmentally and with the Attorney General and see if questions arise as far as they are concerned that must

be considered by the Government and addressed. That is a work in progress at present. We are aware it is a cross-party proposal that came forward from the members of that committee. It is being considered.

The Child Care (Amendment) Bill has completed all Stages in the Seanad. It is due to come to this House on Second Stage.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: When will that happen?

The Taoiseach: The return of legislation from the other House to this House is a matter for agreement between the Whips.

Deputy Brian Hayes: Last Thursday, the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills expressed the view that a full Dáil debate on the issue of school patronage would be a good idea. I welcome her comments. Can the Taoiseach allocate time for that in advance——

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy will have to pursue this in another way.

Deputy Brian Hayes: It is a short contribution in comparison to some, a Cheann Comhairle.

An Ceann Comhairle: I am grateful to the Deputy for the brevity.

Deputy Brian Hayes: Can the House hold a debate on school patronage in advance of the publication of the promised legislation?

The Taoiseach: I can only refer the matter to the Chief Whip. I am not in a position to confirm it today.

Deputy Tom Sheahan: In the interest of getting business done on the Order of Business, I wish to bring the case of a man in my constituency to the Taoiseach's attention. He is a husband and father who was made unemployed last June. He applied for social welfare, was refused——

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, can we anticipate this inquiry being about promised legislation?

Deputy Tom Sheahan: Yes. He was refused and appealed to the chief appeals officer. The latest communication the family received today, following the man being made redundant last June, was that they should have a reply within the next three weeks. Is that good enough? In the interest of getting business done——

An Ceann Comhairle: It is not appropriate to the Order of Business.

Deputy Tom Sheahan: ——is it good enough that a family should be denied its entitlements because of a work to rule and the lack of Government business being done?

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Sheahan——

Deputy Richard Bruton: There was a time when we got answers to such questions.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Sheahan should ask a parliamentary question or raise it in an Adjournment debate. There are many other ways to raise it rather than take up time on the Order of Business. I call Deputy Olivia Mitchell.

Deputy Olivia Mitchell: My question was about the Stabilisation Fund and the Taoiseach has responded to it.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I have before me a sheaf of papers consisting of parliamentary questions over recent months but I could not do the responses of the Minister for Health and Children justice by calling them “answers”. How long will this situation continue? Each reply contains the phrase: “If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.” What is meant by that?

Deputy Olivia Mitchell: When the patient dies.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: It is called contempt for the House.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: This process is a complete charade. A Cheann Comhairle, this is a serious matter.

An Ceann Comhairle: There are many other ways to raise it.

Deputy Liz McManus: There are not. That is the point.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The Minister for Health and Children continues to use an industrial dispute to treat Members of this House, and particularly Members of the Opposition, with total contempt. She is hiding behind an industrial relations matter. How long will this continue?

Deputy Olivia Mitchell: Those questions are about emergencies.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: If you, a Cheann Comhairle, do not allow me to address this matter to the Taoiseach in his capacity as Leader of the House who introduces the business of the House each day — in fact, there is a conflict of interest in that position in any event but, unfortunately, this is the way we do our business — can I ask you in your capacity as Chairman to address this charade?

An Ceann Comhairle: I do not have any responsibility for the replies to questions.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: Has the Taoiseach responsibility? Can I invite the Taoiseach to take responsibility in the matter?

The Taoiseach: I will reply when the Deputy is finished.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: What am I to do? Must I sit down and be good and orderly?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Taoiseach has indicated he will reply.

The Taoiseach: I always seek to accommodate Deputy Flanagan in any possible way, as the Deputy would confirm. I understand there is much frustration in the House with the impact of this dispute, and it is not a question of using it as an excuse. There is an issue arising because of the continuing industrial relations issues which are not yet resolved, even in terms of ballots being organised and prepared. The work to rule and industrial relations issues continue to affect the business of the House in terms of getting information in a timely manner for Deputies. It has compromised the ability of Deputies on all sides of the House to work as effectively as they would wish on behalf of their constituents. I will continue to try to find a way to improve the matter.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: It does not affect Members equally; it affects us.

Deputy Joan Burton: With regard to the Taoiseach’s comments about the legislation dealing with the bilateral arrangements for moneys for Greece, can he say if there have been any

changes in the proposals as a consequence of the decision at the weekend? One of the difficulties for the Opposition, and it is another reason that we sought a detailed discussion on what happened at the weekend, is that it is unclear at this point from media reports what Ireland's obligations will be under the total package. On a related matter, Herr Regling and Mr. Watson, the two people carrying out the scoping exercise on the banking inquiry, appeared before the finance committee last week and said they are on schedule with their report but that it must first go to the Cabinet and then to the Attorney General. Will the Taoiseach give a commitment to publish their report in full and present it to the House, or will it be like the Docklands report and rest with a Minister who might or might not decide to publish it? They also indicated that they would not be in a position to advise on terms of reference. Is it the case that the Government alone will draw up the terms of reference of the banking inquiry?

Also, in the context of what has happened——

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is really spanning the spectrum of issues and is not in order. The inquiry must be about promised business or a promised report for the House.

Deputy Joan Burton: A Cheann Comhairle, I have raised only one issue, the vast commitment and loss of money for Irish taxpayers involved in the actions of the Government with regard to banking. It is the only issue I have raised. I am not aware I have raised any other.

Will the report of the gentlemen, one from Germany and the other from the IMF, carrying out the scoping exercise for the banking inquiry be published in full or does this fresh news that it will first go to the Government and then to the Attorney General mean that, like the Docklands report mentioned by the Leader of the Labour Party earlier, it will be a case of we have heard about it, but not seen it?

The Taoiseach: Obviously, the intention is to publish reports. The Docklands report is being considered at present but, as I said earlier, there are legal issues involved and we must respect that. The only reason that such consideration must be given is to ensure that whatever action is taken is effective and that whatever further issues arise can be dealt with. Similarly, the report of those carrying out the scoping exercise will be a matter for debate in the House when it issues. Again, it is a question of ensuring that where legal issues arise nothing would be done to prejudice the further consideration of these matters by the House or others subsequently.

Deputy James Bannon: I compliment my colleague, Deputy Flanagan, for raising an important issue. The Taoiseach should take a leaf from Gordon Brown's book and walk the walk. The Minister for Health and Children should do likewise.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, we are on the Order of Business.

Deputy James Bannon: The country would be better off without a Fianna Fáil Taoiseach at present. I have 847 representations not attended to at this stage and the list is getting longer.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy will cultivate disorder in the House if he persists in that.

Deputy James Bannon: The Taoiseach is obliged under the law to address those issues here in this House. He is not doing so. There are people frustrated and in despair in his own constituency of Laois-Offaly because of his carry-on.

An Ceann Comhairle: This is the Order of Business. The Deputy must find other ways of making these points. On Second Stage,——

Deputy James Bannon: I put down Adjournment matter and they are not taken.

The Taoiseach: He himself would have councils in despair.

An Ceann Comhairle: —I am sure there will be many opportunities. There will be many opportunities later this week.

Deputy James Bannon: We have no other channel in which to raise those issues but in this Chamber

An Ceann Comhairle: Would the Deputy resume his seat and allow Deputy Durkan?

Deputy James Bannon: On another issue relating to legislation, the development of a modern forestry sector combined with environmental protection should be a matter of extreme importance. When can we expect the forestry Bill to be finally brought before this House?

The Taoiseach: The forestry Bill will be published later this year.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: It sounds like there are green shoots in the forestry area.

Apropos of the issue raised repeatedly in the House, there is a Bill proposed before the House. The Ceann Comhairle knows as well as anybody else in this House knows that there are countless people all over this country who are concerned about whether or not they qualify for a payment or a service provided by the health and social services sector. There are people who have had hip operations two or three years ago awaiting a second operation. The procedure—

An Ceann Comhairle: This is the Order of Business.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I am talking about promised legislation.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is a long-time Member of this House and knows he is completely out of order on the Order of Business.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I am a long-time Member of this House—

An Ceann Comhairle: There are so many other ways he can raise this matter.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: —and I have come to the conclusion that I am completely in order because this is promised legislation.

An Ceann Comhairle: Let us hear about it.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: If the Ceann Comhairle waits for me to finish the sentence, I will tell him. There are countless people awaiting services. For instance, as the Ceann Comhairle will also be aware, with the centralisation of rent support applications people in my region apply to a box number anymore. We have seen a breakdown in the provision of health and social services to such an extent that we have never seen previously. Would it be possible to expedite the process of the Eligibility for Health and Personal Social Services Bill so that the Members of this House, for once and for all, can have some indication from the Minister? The Minister was here in the House and disappeared again, almost like a Green Minister.

An Ceann Comhairle: Is there promised legislation in this area?

The Taoiseach: There is no date for that legislation.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I did not hear that.

The Taoiseach: There is no date for that legislation at present.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: That is the problem, there is no date. As there is no date, nothing will be ever done. This is a serious situation.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy must leave it for the moment and address it in some other way.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: For God's sake, Deputy Charles Flanagan already indicated to the Ceann Comhairle that one will not get an answer to a question. What are we doing in this House?

An Ceann Comhairle: There are other ways.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: What other way is there?

An Ceann Comhairle: There are so many other ways. Just call to me——

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Which other way is there?

An Ceann Comhairle: ——and we will discuss the matter.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Tell the House, a Cheann Comhairle, which way.

An Ceann Comhairle: Call to me and I will talk to you privately. I call Deputy Catherine Byrne.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: No, I would like to know how we intend to get an answer to these questions. What will happen?

Deputy James Bannon: Is there a date for the Taoiseach's resignation?

An Ceann Comhairle: Submit it as an item for the Adjournment.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: The Minister will not come in for the Adjournment either.

Anyway, I have another question on promised legislation.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: 2012.

Deputy Liz McManus: One could pray.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: It could be 2014. The national vetting bureau Bill is another urgently required piece of legislation. It has been promised in the House on several occasions. It is a matter that requires immediate attention. I wonder where it is now. What is happening?

The Taoiseach: That is being worked as a priority at present. The heads are being drafted.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I was looking up some figures recently and I discovered that there were more drug offences within the prisons, approximately 900 offences in a single year. It is probably worse inside than it is outside. In that regard, the bail (amendment) Bill was deemed to be important from the point of view of ensuring that people did not get into the business of reoffending while on bail. The Taoiseach promised it on 21 April but I note it is still not possible to indicate a date for it. Is it now possible to indicate?

An Ceann Comhairle: I will make an inquiry for the Deputy. Has the Taoiseach any update on that?

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: It is coming up.

The Taoiseach: I understand that is a consolidation Bill but there is no date for it at present.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I am aware of the fact that it is a consolidation Bill but it would give the Members of the House an opportunity to vent their frustration when they cannot get answers to anything. At least, we could talk about it.

The Taoiseach: There will be other Bills where the Deputy can vent his frustration.

Deputy Catherine Byrne: On promised legislation of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, when will the criminal justice (psychotropic substances) Bill be published so that we all can see what the measures included in it are, and when will it come into effect? The Minister, Deputy Dermot Ahern, has stated that the Garda will play an important role in ensuring that head shops are compliant with this new law. Will the Minister, therefore, increase Garda manpower in communities to enforce this legislation and can the Minister assure us that when new legal highs come on the market they will be dealt with sufficiently and swiftly without further delay in banning them?

The Taoiseach: The heads of the Bill have been approved. It is being drafted as a matter of urgency to be brought to the House as soon as possible thereafter.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: Does Vote 32 now imply that there is a major cutting back in capital expenditure on transport, given the bad news received that the interconnector has been put back until 2018 at the earliest, the Metro might be put back to 2016, the western rail corridor, etc.?

An Ceann Comhairle: On detailed information, I am sure the line Minister would help——

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: The line Minister does not know.

An Ceann Comhairle: ——by way of a parliamentary question.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: The line Minister does not talk to CIE. He does not have a relationship with CIE.

An Ceann Comhairle: If it is general policy, a parliamentary question would elicit the information.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I am asking the Taoiseach whether he could throw some light on it. Every since we got a Green Minister of State in the Department of Transport, all the projects seem to be getting scrapped one after another. Would the Taoiseach comment on it?

The Taoiseach: It is not true.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: It is true. In the past couple of weeks,——

The Taoiseach: The Deputy never saw more public transport investment than he has seen in the past few years. It is unbelievable.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: ——it is a disaster.

The Taoiseach: There was zero when his party was in power.

Energy (Biofuel Obligation and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2010 [Seanad]: Second Stage (Resumed)

Question again proposed: "That the Bill be now read a Second Time."

Deputy Liz McManus: I wish to share my time with Deputy Ferris.

My party is in support of the obligation and see it as an opportunity. However, it is an opportunity that needs to be grasped fully if Ireland is to benefit in more than simply meeting our commitments as regards carbon emissions and putting us on the right road in terms of our climate change obligations. We have an opportunity here to develop an indigenous industry and I have great concerns because it seems that the Minister has not seen what a good opportunity this is.

There were concerns, particularly over the past year or so, about the danger that bio-fuels presented in the developing world where the race to grow bio-fuels was being done at the expense of food crops. I am glad that the Minister revised the target from his own target of 5.75% down to 4%, which was the Labour Party position. It is a target that we need to set about meeting. However, it is quite clear that unless things change, and unless the Minister adopts a much more proactive and progressive view, we will be dependent unnecessarily on imported bio-fuels. I would ask the Minister to be cognisant of the fact that we have people who are developing the idea of energy crops who see opportunities that are in the pipeline but that are being thwarted and prevented from realisation and resolution because of a lethargy at Government level.

With regard to import substitution and to ensuring we have a better approach to imported fuels, it cannot happen without assistance and support from the Government. I do not necessarily mean that this costs a great deal of money. The statutory framework, of which this legislation is part does not, according to those in the industry, appear to go far enough. I am not a promoter of any individual company but Ethanol Ireland made a very strong pitch when it presented its case to the Joint Committee on Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. It made a compelling case for ensuring a higher tariff regime based on good standards. The presentation was quite remarkable in that it showed how different tariff regimes apply across Europe. This could be described as protectionism but such regimes are allowed and are already in place in other countries. It would be a great pity if, because of Government failure, we do not realise this country's potential to institute a regime appropriate to our requirements, and appropriate to our indigenous development needs. For example, I refer to France as the most extreme case in that it does not import any bio-fuels. It can be seen that the statutory and taxation systems in place along with the tariff regime make a significant difference.

I refer to the Second Stage debate in the Seanad. I believe the Minister said that plants were not being developed in Britain. As I understand it, those plants will be solely for export rather than for the domestic market. The Minister made the point that if it is incorporated into law this would create a delay and I support his target of 1 July. However, this legislation needs to be as watertight as possible. I hope we can deal with this point more effectively on Committee Stage.

I refer to farmers and businesses currently dealing with energy crops, in particular, with the growing of miscanthus. This plant is a classic example of a fledgling industry which is growing. This crop can be used in power stations to replace peat which is a dirty fuel. This industry is being stunted very effectively by the Minister. I challenge him to deal with this now.

[Deputy Liz McManus.]

I was dismayed at the reply to a parliamentary question which related to the refit scheme that needs to be put in place to assist the development of miscanthus for use in the firing of power stations. The reply to my parliamentary question stated that there was no commitment to announce a renewable energy feed-in tariff price for biomass in January 2010.

I refer to a meeting of all the stakeholders at the farm centre in Dublin on 2 December 2009. The Department stated that the demonstration projects and refit changes to allow co-firing of biomass in peat power stations were being worked on and that there should be announcements on both by the end of January. There has been an announcement on one but not on the other. I am very concerned about the widespread impression, which may be unfair, that the Minister is deliberately holding back on the refit announcement in order to make his national renewable energy action plan look as if it has a bit more substance when it is produced in June. That is not good enough. That refit scheme can make all the difference. Already, farmers are refusing to participate in growing miscanthus because they are fearful.

Business needs certainty. This is a message the Minister preaches with regard to climate change and a change of practices and which is preached by all of us. In this instance he is in a position to provide certainty. It is not a significant sum of money but it will make a significant difference in getting what we now recognise as our potential to develop these kinds of crops, particularly miscanthus. Currently, a total of 3,000 acres is under miscanthus and it has been suggested that this could rise to 60,000 acres. I urge the Minister to get moving and not to wait until he has a grand plan. This is something that works. We have heard many presentations about wonderful schemes to harness our wind and waves and fill up our valleys with the spirit of Ireland projects. This is something that works, it is an indigenous crop, there is a market for it and we should just get on with it.

Even though I support what the Minister is doing, I do not agree with his piling on of amendments at a very late stage which have to do with unrelated matters. He does this with regard to other Bills. He is a serial operator and he is doing it with this Bill. Matters dealing with the carbon windfall levy are being tacked onto this Bill. This does not allow for proper scrutiny or for public awareness. The Minister has an obligation to undertake a regulatory impact assessment and to consult with the CER and with electricity producers and others.

I have received a letter — I am sure the Minister has also received this letter — from Endesa Ireland. This company states that it is very aggrieved about this measure. It is not clear to me whether this company is included and I ask for clarification from the Minister. This company is very fearful and it has not had a chance to see the amendments. This is where the issue of public scrutiny comes into play. The company has already paid for these allowances and now it is fearful it will be penalised and will be unable to expand its business as it would wish.

Deputy Martin Ferris: The fact that this Bill sets out the objective of achieving a 4% market penetration of transport fuel usage is in itself an admission that previous targets have not been met and is a less ambitious target than was referred to several years ago, with 2010 set as the target date. The figure of 5.75% was targeted as a staging post towards 10% by 2010, in line with EU targets. A figure of 2% was set as the target to be achieved by 2008 but this had only reached 0.5% by 2007. While current levels are not accurately known, one estimate I have heard is that it is around 2.5%, which is well behind the rate of growth that would be required if this country is to achieve those ambitious targets. It would be unfair to blame the Government totally for this, although I would question the overall strategy. However, it illustrates the difficulties related to this area. The same failure to achieve the 5.75% target also applies to the EU overall.

Some of the reasons for the shortfall have to do with the pricing of fuels which incorporates bio-fuels. It was estimated a number of years ago that bio-fuels for vehicles would only become economically viable when oil cost more than \$73 a barrel. The current price is \$83 per barrel but there has not been the predicted increase to the levels that would be required if the targets set for usage were to be met. There is also the issue of where the crops necessary for production and the plants to convert them into fuels will come from. There are concerns about the danger that food production, particularly in the less developed countries, might be affected. Some of the leading producers of energy crops are in that category and there would be a strong incentive on the part of countries like India, for example, to devote more land use to energy crop production if the value of those crops was greater than for food and if there was, as there is, a large demand from developed countries for bio-fuels.

The amount of land that would be required to meet the current 5.75% target and the 10% target set for 2020 is massive. For example, it was estimated that if France was to have met its target of 5.75% bio-fuels in vehicles by 2008, two years ahead of EU 2010 target, it would require some 2 million hectares to be used for production of energy crops. The total current agricultural area of France is approximately 33 million hectares. In other words, France would need to use 7.5% of its agricultural land for growing energy crops. The equivalent for Ireland would be 327,750 hectares, which is equivalent to current total crop area, to attain the same target.

It is highly unlikely that any EU country will devote so much of its agricultural area to energy crop production, but as the figures show, even if it did, domestic production would never meet the demand that would be set if even 10% of vehicle fuels was comprised of bio-fuels. The reality, then, is that if targets are to be met most of the demand will come from imports which replaces one form of dependency on fossil fuel imports for another. However, there is still scope for increasing the level of energy crop production in this country from the current low levels. There is land that is suitable for the growing of willow, for example, which would represent a better use and a potentially better return to the farmer. There is an ongoing debate about the incentives for farmers to be become involved in this area and few farmers seem to be interested in the area.

There is a clear need to increase that involvement. Only 200, or less than 0.1%, of farmers were engaged in the production of alternative energy in 2005, compared to an EU average of 0.4% of farms engaged in energy crop production. However, the area of willow and miscanthus grown in Ireland has increased. It was just 300 hectares in 2006 but grew to 1100 hectares in 2007. The area under oilseed rape, used to produce liquid bio-fuel, increased from 4000 hectares to 6000 hectares in 2007. I am not sure what the current figures are now, but they will have shown some increase on those years.

There are ambitious targets for the expansion of the sector in the western counties. Under its wood energy strategy and action plan, the western development commission forecast a 300% growth in the wood energy sector over the next ten years which would add approximately €15 million annually to the region's income and create up to 900 full-time jobs as well as saving 620,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions every year. When fully operative it would have a demand from local farmers for 472,000 tonnes of thinnings worth approximately €1.7 million annually.

The fact that grants are also tied to the farmer having a contract with an end user of the crop means that a more holistic approach needs to be taken in order to tie the production of the crops in with the actual production of the bio-fuels. That would involve either farmers as individuals, in co-operation with one another, or in a business relationship with a processor willing to take their crops, creating a local market for their produce, which would also be dependent on the processor of bio-fuels having a market for the end product.

[Deputy Martin Ferris.]

With the restructuring of the European Union sugar market, which made the sugar production sector here redundant, there were suggestions that the existing crop and the old sugar factories at Mallow and Carlow could be used for the production of bio-fuels. The company in question, Greencore, had no interest in this and there are no existing plans for the growing of sugar beet as an energy crop. The potential for the redirection of the sugar crop, and even of the remaining processing plant has been lost. At the time Greencore closed the sugar factories the then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Deputy Mary Coughlan, said that she raised the possibility of using Mallow to process beet for bio-ethanol but that Greencore showed no interest. Greencore would have received only 75% of their compensation had they not dismantled the plant with the consequent loss of hundreds of jobs.

A study commissioned by Cork county council in 2006 concluded that ethanol production was viable at Mallow if there was price support for farmers producing beet and wheat, but that this price support would be less than existing incentives. It also pointed out that the cost of converting the factory to that use would have been approximately 25% if a new factory for ethanol production had to be built. The report said that if there was a reasonable margin for beet and wheat growers an estimated 40,000 hectares would be available for beet production for ethanol at Mallow and 12,000 hectares for ethanol at Mallow. This would have yielded 2 million tonnes of beet and 102,000 tonnes of wheat, and would have provided sufficient feed stock for an ethanol production capacity of 180 million litres from beet and 36 million litres from wheat.

The annual maximum production capacity of ethanol at the Mallow plant would have been 135 million litres from beet and 35 million litres from wheat, resulting in a full capacity of 170 million litres per year. This would have been twice the target for Irish production of 85 million litres by 2010 and 75% of the EU directive target of 220 million litres by 2010. I only refer to this as it demonstrates the great potential that was lost in favour of Greencore selling the properties with the loss of hundreds of jobs, many of which would have been saved as well as contributing massively to the meeting of plans for bio-fuel production and use.

It is too late to save those factories, but there is still scope for the development of a strong indigenous energy crop sector using various crops, and to use them as inputs into the production of ethanol in processing plants here. It is to be hoped that the sentiments contained in the Bill are supported by positive measures to encourage the production and processing aspects.

Deputy Noel O'Flynn: I wish to share time with Deputy M.J. Nolan.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Noel O'Flynn: In the 29th Dáil I was chairman of the Joint Committee on Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. In June 2006 the committee published a major report on energy. The Minister, Deputy Ryan, was an important contributor to it at the time. The Vice Chairman of the committee, Deputy John Perry, also contributed significantly to it. In my preface to that report I observed that:

As the Irish economy develops one of the principal critical requirements is access to affordable and dependable supplies of energy. If Ireland is to meet the challenges of the future then it is essential that a co-ordinated energy policy be put in place as a matter of national importance. Ireland has a very heavy dependence on imported fossil fuels. The reality is that the transport sector is the largest energy consuming sector, is increasing at the fastest rate and is almost totally dependent on imported liquid fossil fuels.

I went on to note that Mr. Bernard Rice from Teagasc told the joint committee that:

[It] should be possible to get 5,000 miles per acre of rapeseed, roughly 100 gallons at 50 miles to the gallon. Therefore, in terms of using bio-fuels it will take upwards of two acres per car for every car in Ireland to continue to drive 10,000 miles per annum — the normal average. Accordingly, using land to grow bio-fuels so as to continue to give every Irish motorist that 10,000 mile driving per annum experience will take up to a very large part of the stock of arable land in Ireland.

This must be a wake-up call and it clearly shows that Ireland needs policies to address the changes that the future will bring.

During the Second Stage debate on the Energy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2006 I made reference to the appearance before the joint committee of European Union Energy Commissioner Piebalgs and I set out in my contribution how the Commissioner identified the six main issues facing Europe, namely, fully competitive energy markets in Europe, security of supply, energy mix, a climate change goal, technology and external energy policy. I made the point then and I make it again today that if these are the concerns of Europe, they must be the concerns of Ireland as well.

The Energy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2006 made a start on some of these issues. The Bill moved to facilitate full gas market opening, it sought to underpin the all-island energy market and it granted power to the Minister to provide for the taking of emergency measures by ministerial order in the event of a sudden crisis in the energy market. In addition, it conferred on the Minister the power to issue policy directions to the CER and it sought to expand the functions of the CER with the removal of the legislative constraints to facilitate regulated electricity interconnection not owned by the ESB.

The Energy (Biofuel Obligation and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2010 helps us to move another step forward, which I welcome. The Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC has placed a requirement on all member states that 10% of the energy used in transport in each member state should be renewable by 2020. I welcome that bio-fuels will now play a central role in the delivery of this target and that it will also have the added benefit of reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The Government White Paper on energy policy committed to the introduction of a bio-fuel obligation which would underpin delivery of the national bio-fuel targets and which will take account of EU developments. The aim of the Bill is to introduce a bio-fuel obligation in Ireland which will compel road transport fuel suppliers to use bio-fuel in their fuel mix. The effective initial penetration rate will be 4% but it is envisaged that this will be increased over time in line with EU targets and to commitments on climate change and energy security. Many benefits would accrue from introducing this obligation. First, it will help us to meet our commitment under the 2009 EU directive to have a 10% penetration rate of renewable energy in transport by 2020. It will help reduce our greenhouse gas emissions from transport. It will improve our energy security. It will provide opportunities for job creation by encouraging the agricultural sector and industry into new areas. The Bill also ensures that we deliver on our commitment in the Government's programme and White Paper on energy policy to introduce a bio-fuel obligation.

When discussing the Bill, it is important that we are all clear about what the term bio-fuel means. It is a word sometimes bandied about without being fully understood. As such, the term deserves a quick explanation. Basically, bio-fuels are produced from biomass. Biomass is any organic material that originates in plants and animals which can be used as an energy source.

[Deputy Noel O'Flynn.]

I refer to the many advantages that a bio-fuel obligation offers. One of the most important benefits of introducing the obligation is that it will improve our energy security and reduce our dependence on finite fossil fuels. Last week during a Private Members' motion in the Dail, we were reminded of the benefits of energy security. The bio-fuel obligation encourages us to develop alternative forms of energy. As it stands, some 90% of Ireland's energy requirements are currently imported. This means we spend more than €6 billion overseas every year on imported fuels. It does not make economic or environmental sense. Transport accounts for a very significant and ever increasing proportion of our energy use in Ireland. It is the fastest growing sector in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. According to the EPA, transport accounted for almost 30% of energy use in 1990. This jumped to more than 40% in 2005. Put simply, it is not sustainable. The great dependence on fossil fuels means the sector is very exposed to oil price fluctuations. In this context, the promotion and use of bio-fuels is something to be welcomed.

Another advantage of introducing the bio-fuel obligation is that it will help us to lower our carbon emissions. We are all acutely aware of the consequences of climate change. The transport sector is responsible for over a third of energy-related CO₂ emissions. Bio-fuels provides one of the few available and effective means of reducing emissions from transport. There are several economic advantages to introducing the bio-fuel obligation. It will give a boost to the bio-fuel industry generally by providing a guaranteed market to the bio-energy sector. Bio-fuels will also offer an additional outlet for agricultural products, enhancing farm incomes and creating possible enterprise opportunities for rural communities.

I refer to the example of the USA. No country in the developed world can afford to ignore the issue of energy supply and security. In March 2009, the US Government approved \$780 million for an energy stimulus plan. Over two years, the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will allocate nearly \$8 billion to energy efficiency. Most of the funding is dedicated to helping those on low incomes modify their homes to conserve energy and lower heating bills. Up to \$6,500 can be invested in a home for energy upgrades. The Act also provides money for state energy programs, alternative electricity generation and to reduce energy use in Government and school buildings. The US Vice President, Joe Biden, stated the program will help make the country less reliant on foreign energy sources and will create jobs. The US Government will establish approximately 40 training centres to teach workers how to assess home heating and electricity usage and to make the modifications.

We have established our own energy stimulus plan in Ireland. We have extended the national insulation plan to include a new national energy retrofit programme. Under this programme, €90 million will be invested in 2010 with a substantial proportion of the funds ring-fenced for those suffering from fuel poverty. The retrofit programme will provide an estimated economic dividend of more than €400 million to the economy this year, as well as creating approximately 5,000 jobs next year.

There are many advantages to introducing the bio-fuel obligation. However, we must nonetheless ensure that we guard against any potential adverse consequences for the environment, consumers and those living where the products are sourced. Therefore, I welcome several measures aimed at sustainability included in the Bill. Strict requirements will be applied in respect of the type of land from which bio-fuel crops can be taken. There will also be strict reporting requirements on social conditions. For example, water cannot be diverted from local populations. The bio-fuels used must produce 35% less greenhouse gas emissions than their fossil fuel comparators.

The Bill also requires that measures are taken to protect bio-diversity. In this context, several review clauses have been built into the Bill. This shows the Government is serious about creating a sustainable future in terms of supporting green enterprise and tackling environmental issues head on. I commend the Minister, Deputy Eamon Ryan, on the vision, innovation and leadership in the policies he is producing to provide alternative energy sources. In conclusion, I reiterate that energy policy is critical to the Irish economy and the Bill is but one of a number of tranches of legislation we will deliver to the Irish citizen as part of an energy policy which will secure Ireland's future.

Deputy M. J. Nolan: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the legislation. I wish the Minister well with the Bill. I am aware there are time constraints in respect of the implementation and enactment of the legislation and I hope it will have a speedy passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

It is staggering to note that Ireland imports 99% of its transport fuel requirements. More than 90% of our energy requirement is made up of imported fossil fuels. Clearly, this cannot continue. This generation may satisfy its requirements by importing fossil fuels but future generations will suffer as a result. It is important to acknowledge our obligations and it is important that the European Union and the Government do something positive in respect of energy. Bio-fuels represent just one aspect of the debate.

It is important to note that Ireland imports more than 2.349 million tonnes of petrol per year. Since 2006 a limited quantity of bio-fuels has been supplied under the MOTR excise relief scheme. The scheme has been marginally successful but in order to ensure there is significant investment in the area of bio-fuel production, something more substantial is required. A presentation was made recently to the Joint Committee on Communications, Energy and Natural Resources by a company which hopes to proceed with the development of a 100,000-tonne bioethanol facility in Belview Port in south Kilkenny. The delegates indicated clearly that for an investment of the type they are planning, they needed firm guarantees that the Government is committed to its policy in the area of bio-fuels. I compliment the Minister on the manner in which he has engaged with this and other groups and commercial organisations. I understand he gave this particular delegation a very sympathetic hearing. I hope, as a result of amendments we expect to see on Committee Stage, that the company will be able to get the comfort it requires so that the banks will back its project.

While ethanol can be imported at a competitive price, it is not possible to produce it here because of climactic conditions and labour costs. However, it is important that we have some type of protection and support for an indigenous bio-fuel industry. Some 70% of bio-fuels are currently imported, mainly from South America, Brazil in particular. There are no large-scale bioethanol facilities in the State and it is important from an economic point of view that we support the development of such facilities. We are committed under the 2009 renewable energy directive to have 10% penetration of renewable energy in transport by 2020. Even if we meet that commitment, 90% of energy used in transport will continue to be imported and will consist mainly of fossil fuels. The Government White Paper on energy policy commits to the introduction of a bio-fuel obligation for these same reasons. Of that 10% penetration, bio-fuels will comprise roughly 8.5%, with the balance provided by means such as electric vehicles. It is important that we begin now to work towards meeting our obligations as members of the European Union. We have ten years left to implement these requirements.

As well as being necessary in order to meet our binding European Union targets for 2020, the Bill will also reduce our greenhouse gas emissions from transport and will improve our energy security, albeit only marginally. Given the amount of wheat and barley produced here,

[Deputy M. J. Nolan.]

we are ideally suited to develop a profitable indigenous bioethanol production facility. In 2008 wheat production on the island of Ireland was almost 1 million tonnes, all of which was used for animal feed. Barley production was approximately 1.25 million tonnes, of which 60% was used for animal feed and the remainder for malting. Last year all the wheat production was used for animal feed because of poor weather conditions, and we had to import 250,000 tonnes of wheat which was used mainly for milling. The fuel versus food debate has not arisen in the context of the Irish situation but it is an issue that must be addressed internationally.

Encouraging an indigenous bio-fuel industry will reduce the importation of petrol and other fuels by approximately 4%. This is a move in the right direction which will offer a significant tax contribution through the employment it provides and the payment of tax by commercial operators. The provisions in this Bill will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and help to meet our Kyoto Protocol and European Union bio-fuel obligations. The legislation will offer a significant contribution to Ireland's fuel and energy security. The Bill enjoys the broad support of all parties in the House and I wish the Minister well as he steers it through the Oireachtas.

Deputy John Perry: I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak on this important Bill. I begin by acknowledging the great contribution by Deputy O'Flynn as former Chairman of the Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Marine and Natural Resources in the 29th Dáil, particularly his contribution to the far-reaching report of 2006 which provided the groundwork for this legislation. The public meetings and consultations facilitated by the Deputy led to the production of a visionary document.

In his introductory remarks the Minister said that bio-fuels would play a central role in meeting our binding European Union targets for 2020 and in so doing, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions from transport, improve our energy security and provide a valuable opportunity for the agricultural sector and industry to diversify into new areas. The Minister also said that policy in this area must strike a balance between multiple objectives while also ensuring that bio-fuels must at all times come from sustainable sources and that increased market share for bio-fuel take place at least cost to the customer. The Minister also informs us that the Bill will ensure that consumers have access to appropriately priced, sustainable and reliable sources of bio-fuel in the coming years which also give an important incentive to domestic production.

The Bill starts with the simple premise that energy usage in the transport sector must make its contribution to global reduction in greenhouse gases. At European Union level we have the renewable energy directive 2009/28/EC, which places a requirement on all member states that 10% of energy used in transport come from renewable sources by 2020. This Bill transposes the directive into national law. From a scrutiny perspective, it is important that national parliaments debate these issues and ensure their transposition does not breach the requirements of subsidiarity. The target of 10% by 2020 is very substantial; whether it is achievable is another issue.

The energy policy objectives the Bill addresses seem reasonable. However, I have doubts on reading the detail. I am concerned that the complex detail of the technical and administrative issues is at variance with the simplicity and directness of the objectives.

The bill is complex in many ways. I am concerned that the simple objective of using bio-fuel in the transport system requires that bio-fuel producers and suppliers open bio-fuel obligation accounts, that commercial bio-fuel transactions use a parallel certificate system and that there will be a trading system for bio-fuel obligation certificates. We are setting up a complicated back-office system to make bio-fuel requirements work in practice. That must alert us to the fact that although the fundamentals of what we are trying to achieve are praiseworthy, the way we are going about it in practice is off target.

I have serious concerns about the establishment of another new trading system for bio-fuel obligation certificates. The danger is that they may change, as the financial trading system did over the years. We have all seen that pattern. That system started off with a small number of real trading products such as deposits and loans, and then changed fundamentally. The bill has no controls or limitations on the adaption of the bio-fuel obligation certificates into potential products such as futures, contracts for difference, hedges and derivatives. The bill is too complicated technically, administratively and legally.

We face real handicaps in developing bio-fuel crops. Our national capacity for processing those crops will be always marginal compared to what larger countries can achieve. There is a danger that the Irish bio-fuel industry will not be able to achieve significant scale. The sector will be always a marginal player in bio-fuel production and processing. We cannot ignore the large export potential of other world regions such as Brazil, China and Thailand compared with the Irish and EU markets. The production costs in those countries are significantly lower than in the EU. I am concerned that we will start up another struggling production sector — like the sugar sector — that will not survive in the real world.

Various reports in the past decade have shown that our basic bio-fuel feed stock availability will not enable us to reach bio-fuel targets. That would require part of the current food and feed crop production to be diverted to energy purposes. That would most likely lead to additional imports of food and feed.

If, as seems likely, our bio-fuel business can operate only on the basis of significant grant aid, excise relief, bio-fuel imports and other state support, we must question the entire project. The Minister tells us there are no Exchequer costs associated with the bill. However, there is an economic cost to the country, starting with the 2% per litre levy paid by oil companies. There will be other costs associated with the production, refinement and distribution of bio-fuel. There could be substitution costs if scarce national resources are misdirected as a result of any additional revenue costs or taxation incentives to the sector. Studies have shown that biodiesel is expected to cost roughly 30% more than diesel currently costs. All those costs are the real cost for the national economy. We must avoid them if we are to improve our competitiveness, which is important right now.

The carbon tax on farm diesel is now coming into effect. It is another cost increase for the agricultural sector and the retail business, including hauliers. Farmers claim it will reduce farm incomes by 2%. We cannot keep piling up costs on the productive sectors in the economy while hoping growth will recover. There is tax on tax, and it is taking more money out of the economy.

Small and medium-sized businesses and small domestic manufacturers are already paying too much for energy. In the retail business, the small companies are subsidising the large ones. The unit costs charged by the ESB for small companies show they are heavily subsidising the huge commercial companies. They are paying far in excess of what is charged in Northern Ireland. There is no level playing field regarding the direct costs of business. Those small companies are probably even subsidising energy costs for the multinationals sector, which is very unfair.

A better strategy would be for us to recognise reality and avoid putting scarce national resources into a marginal business. We would of course still have to meet our bio-fuel-related carbon requirements. I propose that we do that in a different way. We could trade the bio-fuel carbon for the carbon equivalent for energy crop production, which we as a country can do much better. Ireland will be better off environmentally and economically if we concentrate our scarce national resources on bioenergy crops.

[Deputy John Perry.]

Bioenergy is one of the most significant sources of renewable energy in Ireland. Bioenergy crops, especially forestry, are much more commercially viable than bio-fuel crops. The entire north-west of this country is well adapted to bioenergy production based on forestry and timber. We should consider moving our carbon renewals policy in that direction.

We can see the scale of forestry in the west of Ireland, but people want to thin it out at the moment. There are no grants — forestry involves 30 years of growing, and there is a massive cost disincentive for companies to thin out the forests. The State was giving huge incentives for people to plant forestry, but it appears there is no market for the timber. The thousands of acres of mature forestry could be harvested, but after all the effort and the incentivisation by the Government, it appears there is little or no reward or financial gain for that massive investment. The Minister might comment on that. We have the timber for bioenergy, but there is no plan of action to use it. Very few — if any — companies are prepared to facilitate that and transfer the timber, as there are currently financial constraints. There is a way to deal with the farming population and the thousands of acres of timber.

I am concerned that the bill is part of a wider Green agenda driving our energy policy. That policy is an example of the worst type of Green Party policy making: dogma driven solutions in search of real problems. There are many real problems in energy policy, but they require real solutions.

It is not enough for the Minister, with a majestic wave of the hand, to ward off those who are saying the energy asset investment approach is seriously unbalanced and getting worse. The Minister cannot tell them that they do not understand his vision, and that they will come on board when they see the light. The Minister has shown an unbelievable indifference to the views of those who do not agree with his policy perspective. They are serious people with serious views, and the Minister cannot wave them aside as a minor irritant.

The present situation regarding green energy policy reminds me of the property bubble. Vast sums of public and private money were invested in an inflated and unrealistic property sector. There were few significant objections to the property bubble investments. The Fianna Fáil Ministers, working hand in glove with the property speculators, told us it was okay — that the assets were sound and the sector was strong. Yet it all came crashing down in spectacular fashion. I am concerned we will repeat the financial sector bubble with a wind farm bubble if we are not careful. Far too many of our financial resources — billions — are being invested in wind farms and the associated grid links and interconnectors. The approach of the current Minister to investment in the electricity system is such that we will end up with three parallel and competing electricity systems. The danger is that we will have a grid system with an interconnector system, a wind-generation system and a conventional generation system, each with enough independent capacity to meet our electricity needs. Such a policy could certainly cause many problems.

There is much we can do by way of conservation to ensure energy is used wisely. It is necessary to make the best use of our renewable resources. In this regard, we must be realistic. One must remember the wind does not always blow, as I noted having passed many wind farms, and bear in mind the challenge of storing electricity when generated and the circumstances associated with the grid in the west.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: The Deputy seems to be very much against his own party's policy.

Deputy John Perry: I speak as a businessman looking at the——

Deputy Eamon Ryan: It seems to run directly contrary to Fine Gael policy.

Deputy John Perry: This is an integral part but not the only part. One must remember that while one can talk the talk, one must be very careful one not to mislead people.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: I am just making that point that the Deputy's opposition to wind power seems to run contrary to Fine Gael policy.

Deputy John Perry: It is integral. It is a view I have to express clearly because——

Deputy Eamon Ryan: It seems to be against Fine Gael policy.

Deputy John Perry: Ours is a broad-church party. It is not a very small party like the Green Party, which has a very narrow focus.

Deputy James Bannon: There is no proper planning for wind farms.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Out of a small seed a mighty oak is grown.

Deputy John Perry: I have heard many concerns expressed over Gates 3 and 4 and the application to join under Gate 3 in respect of a big wind farm, yet one cannot join under Gate 3 because it is closed indefinitely. The view that thousands of jobs can be created on wind farms does not stack up. We do not want to mislead people and I am very honest in saying so.

Renewable energy resources have a contribution to make but the true cost of heavy emphasis on wind energy resources must be acknowledged and explained to the public. The problem is that this is not occurring. People bought into the idea of a bubble in the past and had high expectations.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Analysis shows electricity prices would be reduced.

Deputy John Perry: I am still awaiting the evidence. We are in business, employ a lot of people and know exactly the high cost of electricity we are paying at present. Small companies are now subsidising multinational companies in this country. Can the Minister explain that? That is the difficulty. Small companies are paying an excessive charge and are being penalised by comparison with those in Northern Ireland. How come we cannot have the same charges in both jurisdictions? How come the prices in the North are so low?

A realistic balance must be struck between real economic costs and wind energy options. The environmental and economic benefits of wind energy are not as great as the Minister and other proponents claim. We must have a prudent economic approach to any proposal for further significant national investment in wind farms. Wind turbines have a short life and require maintenance, which costs money. The maintenance and retrofit costs of offshore wind turbines are very significant. It is now time for the Commission for Energy Regulation to step up to the mark and do its job on energy capacity and energy asset planning. We must avoid the disaster of light touch regulation, which we had, in the energy sector. I call on the regulator to exercise its powers decisively and bring some economic sanity to the energy debate, particularly with regard to the amount of money we invest in wind farms.

Deputy John Browne: I thank the Minister for introducing the Bill. It is quite timely in the present climate of high oil prices. The Minister, when replying, might comment on the high prices because I do not believe the cost of crude oil bears any resemblance to the price of oil in Ireland. Prices of diesel and petrol seem to be at an all-time high.

I worked in the oil business for 15 years before becoming a Member of this House and I have a fair idea of how it operates. There is certainly very little competition and there are many cartels in operation. The Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources

[Deputy John Browne.]

and the Minister for Transport should be demanding that the oil companies state why the price of oil is so high. The price is certainly having a major effect on transport operators. Many of them are in contact with me daily and state that because of the great increase in the price of oil, the fact that we are in a recession and the fact that they are unable to get increases from companies for which they operate, they find it very difficult to survive. We need to consider this very seriously.

In the south east, there is Green Biofuels in Marshmeadows, New Ross, and there is a bioethanol facility proposed for Belview Port. Glanbia has a pure oils development at Gorey in County Wexford. There are many opportunities in my county and the south east in general to develop the industry.

The legislation to introduce the bio-fuel obligation is very important and I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about it. The Energy (Biofuel Obligation and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2010 will introduce a bio-fuel obligation in Ireland. Under the terms of the legislation, an initial bio-fuel penetration rate of 4.166% is being set, to be increased over time in line with EU targets and further commitments on climate change and energy security. This bio-fuel obligation will be administered by the National Oil Reserves Agency, NORA, on behalf of the State. Its introduction follows movement at European level, in particular the renewable energy directive by the EU Commission in 2008. This directive set out a mandatory target for bio-fuel penetration in road transport fuels within the European Union of 10% by 2020.

This legislation marks a significant step forward for Ireland. From the date of the introduction of the obligation, 1 July 2010, all petrol and diesel on sale in this country will include at least 4.166% bio-fuel. This means that within the first year of the operation of the obligation, some 220 million litres of fossil fuels will be substituted with bio-fuels. This penetration is expected to increase to over 500 million litres by 2020, in line with EU regulations.

The introduction of this bio-fuel obligation is, therefore, excellent for Ireland's environment and each and every one of us. Ireland, like all European Union countries, has agreed to reduce carbon emissions as part of international environmental commitments. An important step towards reaching our goals in this regard will be to increase the use of sustainable and renewable energies, including bio-fuels, and this new obligation will be taking a considerable amount of fossil fuel out of our vehicles' engines and replacing it with green and renewable energy.

The introduction of the bio-fuel obligation will lessen Ireland's dependence on the importation of fuels. Bio-fuels can and are being manufactured in Ireland. By producing these fuels at home, we are helping to make the country more energy-independent. This is vital for our country, which at present is dependent to a large extent on the importation of various forms of energy from overseas and is, therefore, at risk should their supply be compromised.

In addition to these benefits, investing in renewable energy sources such as bio-fuels offers Ireland a considerable opportunity for growing an indigenous bio-fuel sector and generating employment with the sector. The twin concerns of environmental protection and energy security mean the development of a strong bio-fuels sector in Ireland should be a priority.

Much of our focus at present is, understandably, on matters concerning our economy, industry and unemployment level, but renewable energy and bio-fuel production do offer us potential for growth and job creation. Ireland's first and only commercial-scale biodiesel manufacturing facility is up and running in my constituency. The company, Green Biofuels Ireland, is based in New Ross and currently employs 22 people. It was established by a group including the Wexford Farmers Co-Operative Society, which comprises some 4,000 farmers. When I served in the Departments of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources and Agriculture,

Fisheries and Food, I was very involved in helping and supporting this local group, along with Deputy Connick and all of the other Members of the Oireachtas from County Wexford. We agreed that there was a tremendous opportunity for County Wexford to lead the way in this area. The then Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Deputy Noel Dempsey was fully supportive. He came to County Wexford to open the plant. I am happy to say that it is now up and running and providing good employment. This green energy is seen as part of what we should be developing for the future. The company deserves great compliments on investing such a huge amount of money in the plant.

The simple aim of Green Biofuels Ireland is to use waste material to manufacture a renewable diesel substitute which can be distributed through forecourts to consumers, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving Ireland's security of fuel supply. Biodiesel has a number of advantages over conventional mineral diesel fuel: it is a clean burning alternative to mineral diesel fuel; it is produced from renewable sources; it is non-toxic and biodegradable; and it dissolves in water faster than sugar. In terms of use to the consumer, biodiesel may be used as an alternative to standard mineral diesel in most applications. It is important that it does not require engine modification because the substantial amounts of money associated with previous forms of engine modification did not encourage people to take such action. Biodiesel can be used conventionally without any engine changes. It also has greater lubricity than fossil diesel, which means it prolongs the life of the engine.

Green Biofuels Ireland has the capacity to produce more than 34 million litres of biodiesel annually. The biodiesel produced by the company is largely produced from waste, including cooking oils and similar by-products. As a second generation bio-fuel, biodiesel is produced from waste and therefore does not have to compete with food production for land. Over the years, some people have expressed concern about suggestions that food production might be compromised by the development of bio-fuels. This form of bio-fuel will not have any effect on the use of land for food production. The use of the biodiesel produced in New Ross results in the saving of a minimum of 90,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year, which is equivalent to removing 25,000 cars from our roads. These reductions are helping Ireland to meet its commitments under the Kyoto and climate change protocols. While the current production capacity of Green Biofuels Ireland is 34 million litres, the New Ross facility has the potential to double in size. This could be of significant benefit not only to the local community, in terms of employment, but also the Exchequer. The company is currently involved in a research and development project with the support of the Marie Curie industry academia partnership and the Pathways Europe funding scheme. The project involves research into the use of algae and seaweed oils as raw materials for bio-fuel production.

It is important that this legislation is brought through the Oireachtas as quickly as possible. The Minister has met representatives of Green Biofuels Ireland, as we have on a number of occasions. They would be concerned if any delays in the passage of this legislation through the House were to be envisaged. They want to get on with the business of developing, expanding and creating jobs. As biodiesel is a clean burning alternative to mineral fuel, it is an immediate solution to the problem of reducing our dependence on imported fuels. As the Acting Chairman, Deputy Johnny Brady, comes from farming stock, he will be interested to hear that biodiesel works on heavy duty transport applications, such as farm machinery, as well as private cars and other vehicles. I have mentioned the Green Biofuels Ireland facility as an example of the type of high-tech job creation, growth and development that should be encouraged in Ireland at present. The Government and Deputies on all sides of the House are looking for alternative forms of job creation. This is certainly a possibility in that regard. I hope the introduction of the new bio-fuel obligation will encourage the ongoing development of a vibrant

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bio-fuel sector and lead to increased research into bio-fuel alternatives that can lessen further our dependence on imported fossil fuel.

I would like to mention another company, Ethanol Ireland, which is based at Belview Port, across the border in County Kilkenny. It is anxious to get its project, which involves the production of bio-fuels from wheat, up and running. We all know that farmers are going through a difficult period at present, as they try to sell barley and wheat. It is farcical that Diageo is no longer purchasing malting barley from farmers in counties Wexford, Wicklow, Kilkenny and Kildare. It is importing it from England instead. I do not agree with its claims that there are some problems with Irish barley. The quality of the barley that is grown in the counties I have mentioned has been recognised throughout the world for many generations. Diageo has taken great pride in proclaiming the virtues of beer, etc., produced from Irish malting barley. Farmers in County Wexford, who have been producing top-quality malting barley for many years, have led me to believe that Diageo is now importing barley from England and other European countries. Perhaps we can encourage Diageo to make a statement on the matter, which I hope to raise on the Adjournment tomorrow night.

Deputy James Bannon: The Minister, Deputy Eamon Ryan, is taking note of what Deputy Browne is saying.

Deputy John Browne: It is important that crops of this nature are purchased, so that farmers will be encouraged to continue to grow them. The proposed bioethanol facility at Belview Port is important for the future of the bioenergy industry. The company in question is hoping to create 400 jobs during the construction of the facility over 24 months and to employ 50 people during its ongoing operations. It is clear that significant employment would be associated with harvesting and transporting crops and providing essential supplies and ancillary services. It is estimated that 40% of the revenues generated by the company will be consumed locally. In addition, significant rates and development levies would be paid to Kilkenny County Council, a stable €60 million market would be established for local tillage farmers and the large-scale regeneration of the wheat and barley growing industry in the area would take place. It is obviously an important matter.

I ask the Minister to respond to a document that has been made sent to all of us by the Irish Farmers Association in recent days, under the heading “The Time for Talking is Over, Co-Firing REFIT Tariff Must be Introduced Immediately”. The IFA document calls on the Minister to honour his commitment to introduce a co-firing REFIT tariff immediately. According to the IFA, “the introduction of a REFIT tariff is essential to enable biomass crops to compete with peat and ensure that farmers earn a fair price for the crop”. The document continues:

To achieve the target almost a million tonnes of peat will need to be replaced with biomass per annum. It is estimated that only 50% of the biomass resource is currently available mainly from forestry resource and that up to 25,000 hectares of bioenergy crops, either miscanthus or willow will need to be established to satisfy the shortfall.

It is not unusual for the IFA to criticise the Department in this manner. I know that the chairman of the relevant IFA group, Mr. J.J. Kavanagh, who is from my home county, is a very responsible person. He contacted me in the last few days to ask me to raise this issue. I ask the Minister to respond by outlining how he will proceed from here. It is important for us to encourage farmers to grow alternative energy crops. I appreciate that grant aid was provided in the past for the growing of miscanthus. Perhaps the Minister can tell the House when he intends to introduce the renewable energy feed-in tariff, which is important.

As a representative of County Wexford, which is the home of wind and wave power, I see tremendous opportunities for the development of wave energy facilities in Kilmore Quay and elsewhere in south Wexford. I ask the Minister to consider incentives that would encourage people to participate in such development. We need to encourage those investors who are interested in this sector, as it can be expensive to get involved. Wind turbines have been erected in Bunclody and throughout north County Wexford. They sometimes prove to be contentious in striking a balance between the desires of local people and the farming community, which has examined alternatives. It is an important energy source for the future and the stand off between those who want to develop wind energy and the ESB has continued for the past number of years over the price paid by the ESB and the encouragement it offers. Now that there is competition in the electricity market, perhaps it will open more. It is highly costly to get involved in wind energy projects and no impediments should be put in the way of those who want to develop these projects and who are prepared to invest in them. It is important for the future

I welcome this Bill, which will be important for the future of the bio-fuel industry. Many companies and individuals are willing to invest if the legislation is right and if the encouragement is there. Oil prices have gone through the roof. They are artificially high in Ireland and the Minister must intervene and call in the oil company representatives to see what is going on because the price at the pump for diesel and petrol is not justifiable or acceptable and fierce pressure is being put on transport operators.

Deputy Andrew Doyle: I wish to share time with Deputy Bannon.

I welcome the Bill, which is a response to the EU directive which necessitates that 10% of transport fuel must be supplied by renewable sources by 2020. It should be viewed as an opportunity. The underlying core of the legislation is to create an opportunity but I sense it is a stick without a carrot in several ways. Ireland is at the bottom of the league in the production of farm energy. Tomorrow the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security, of which I am a member, will be addressed by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food regarding greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and their impact on climate change as well as the potential for bio-fuel production, which is key.

The Bill obliges oil companies to supply 4.5% of their product through bio-fuel but the 2% Government levy on petroleum products also applies to bio-fuels. There should be a tax break or other incentive for bio-fuels. A sum of €50 million has been set aside by the Minister to pay for carbon credits. Some of that money could be used to resource research, development and production of an agri-renewable energy industry and to encourage alternative energy investment.

Issues such as the feed-in tariff need to be addressed. There was unanimous agreement at a joint committee meeting that the tariff should be brought into line with the European norm to make it attractive for people to get into bio-fuel production on a sustainable scale. Unfortunately, the Bill does not provide an obligation for the verification of the source of the bio-fuel to ensure it is from a non-food source or from sustainable agricultural waste. There is also no requirement on oil companies to source a percentage of their supply from local producers of bio-fuel to assist the rapid development of the bio-fuel sector in Ireland. In addition, there are vague references to the critical issue of standards of bio-fuel to ensure safety for customers.

The message to the public is bio-fuel production must almost develop on its own with grants provided here and there. They are not guaranteed or sustained and there is no joined-up thinking. This casual intervention creates a top down layer. We have, on the one hand, an initiative where 600,000 gallons of ethanol is being produced from whey by Maxol in Cork but there is no national strategy to promote the co-ordination of this industry and, in particular, to

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ring-fence seed funding for smaller bio-fuel plants. The climate change committee has been inundated with different research. A Cabinet sub-committee on climate change and energy security is in place but we tend to forget the energy security issue. Ireland is at the end of a long pipe transporting fossil fuels, which leaves us dependent on everybody else in the chain being in supply in order that we continue to have a supply. Approximately 11 days of natural gas supply is on reserve. Following the winter we have had, it is not guaranteed that it could not run out.

It is all the more frustrating when the agriculture sector is undergoing huge change. There is serious uncertainty in light of the new CAP reform measures that will be introduced. There is volatility in supply of normal commodities but there is a potential to develop second generation production, which does not affect food production. The challenge is though land use to marry food production with the desire and requirement to produce alternative and renewable energy. The Common Agricultural Policy should be rechristened the common land use policy because in many ways the earth, the wind and the waves are the key to it. We can feed and give energy to our people. We can provide heat and light in their homes and fuel for their transport, if we do this right. Statistics are available and the number of people on the planet, how much they need to eat and how we can generate sufficient fuel and energy to accommodate them are not mysteries.

The EU, for instance, supports decentralised local production. Germany has 2,500 biogas plants. These are sustainable rural community initiatives. Dr. Gerry Murphy and others made a presentation to the joint committee about anaerobic digesters and they recommend that such plants be set up in local communities. They can serve a 5 km radius with local farmers producing grass to put into an anaerobic digester, which produces methane. They also use slurry which addresses two or three problems. It is an energy source. By transporting it to a digester and storing it, the nuisance of the smell of methane is eliminated. The product that results from the process is a fertiliser, which is more nutritious for the soil, thereby reducing the requirement for chemical or artificial fertilisers.

However, we are missing the primer to get everything going. The Minister is sincere about this but it is frustrating that there is no joined-up thinking. The Cabinet sub-committee has not put forward initiatives. The Bill has been introduced in isolation and it is not part of an overall picture. The 4.5% bio-fuel target was picked without putting an incentive or a carrot in place. That is the result the Minister wants to achieve but it will not be done in such a way as to allow the development of an entire industry and a resource much more effectively and without threatening people. All this will do is add to the cost of bio-fuels. The carbon tax could have been used in a different way so that an exemption was given to anyone producing fuel. I note the Minister is grimacing. We could fuel our bus fleet from methane gas.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Could the Deputy explain how he proposes to exempt people if they produce their own fuel?

Deputy Andrew Doyle: A carbon tax will be paid if we do not reduce the amount of carbon expelled by the transport sector. People could be incentivised to produce methane gas thus reducing the carbon output. A total of €50 million is set aside every year to pay a carbon tax. Why do we not use that money to prime the sector?

Deputy Eamon Ryan: We are spending approximately €100 million.

Deputy Andrew Doyle: Why does the Minister not use the €50 million specifically in this area? We are bottom of the league for farm energy production. We could prime that sector by providing certain guarantees, securities and incentives to get it going.

In only three years of the past decade has the employment attracted to this country by the IDA and Enterprise Ireland provided a surplus of new jobs over those lost. In one year the number of jobs created almost cancelled out those lost. That was in the boom years. Combined with the food sector, this sector could provide sustainable jobs and meet a host of other obligations and targets.

In reference to what Deputy Browne said about Diageo, as the Acting Chairman, Deputy Johnny Brady, is aware, in another guise I have been pushing for the provision of country of origin information for food products but perhaps we need to have country of origin information on our pint of plain in terms of the source of the barley.

Deputy James Bannon: I welcome the Minister, Deputy Eamon Ryan. I am pleased that the Minister with responsibility for this area is present for the debate on the Bill. The main objective of the Bill is to ensure that 4% of transport fuels would come from renewable sources. The Minister's announcement in November 2009 that fuel suppliers would be obliged to include 4% of bio-fuels in their annual fuel sales under the bio-fuels obligation scheme will be enforced from July of this year. As always, there is a European Union input to the legislation as the reform comes under the renewable energy directive 2009. The EU has set a target that 10% of fuels would come from renewables by 2020. I do not believe that target will be reached if it is left to the Green Party and Fianna Fáil. I am pleased that elections will take place in the intervening period. I have every confidence in our party implementing those policies when we get the opportunity.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: The Deputy's party could be in coalition with us.

Deputy James Bannon: That is if the Green Party is not wiped out. I do not think we would have any appetite to join the Greens in government or that we ever will.

Acting Chairman: The Deputy should stick to speaking on the Bill please.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Would Deputy Bannon never go into Government with us?

Acting Chairman: Let us stick to debate on the Bill.

Deputy James Bannon: There is a certain distrust between farmers and the Greens——

Acting Chairman: The Deputy should stick to the Bill.

Deputy James Bannon: ——and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the growing of miscanthus, better known as elephant grass. Farmers have been badly let down by the Government. The pilot bioenergy scheme failed to deliver for them. I know many farmers across the midlands who were refused payment on the grounds that a crop was not deemed to have reached a satisfactory level of establishment, despite the pilot nature of the scheme. I met with those farmers and posed many parliamentary questions to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the issue but I did not receive satisfactory answers. In view of the experimental nature of the first miscanthus crop and the work carried out by farmers in terms of necessary and prescribed work to ensure a full crop establishment in 2010, the failure to reimburse farmers by way of entitlements to grants is a huge indictment of the Minister and the Department. It was odd that the Minister launched a new bio-energy scheme without ironing out the problems associated with the first launch which was made with great fanfare in County Monaghan.

The other problem that comes to mind in terms of bio-fuel production is the availability of sufficient acreage for the necessary bio-fuel production. That brings me to the food versus fuel

[Deputy James Bannon.]

debate. There is sufficient availability of under-utilised land that would be ideal for the production of bio-fuel. In fact, Teagasc has reported that there are more than 100,000 hectares of land that could be utilised for the production of bio-fuels.

My biggest concern about the Bill, which Fine Gael supports on the basis that certain areas will be ironed out on Committee Stage, is that the necessary consultation will not take place between the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. While the farming sector is at an all-time low, the production of bio-fuels could, if handled properly, inject new life blood into the industry. The exciting aspect of the Bill is that it will mean energy will be produced on our own farms and by our own farmers.

The statistic of 90% of our energy requirements being currently imported is something I hope will change in the not too distant future. It is also disturbing to think that we spend €6 billion per annum on imported fuels. What we must not forget is that this obligation will add 1 cent per litre to the cost of petrol and diesel. It is therefore doubly important that there is a native input into the production of bio-fuels to counter the increase. If the Minister can meet our obligations while maximising bio-fuel production we will meet our commitments to farmers and the environment.

The importation of raw materials for bio-fuels raises some interesting environmental issues. It is not only the case that we must consider transportation costs and the impact of such transportation on the environment, we must also consider the implication for the countries from which the fuels are imported, especially if they are developing countries.

I came across some interesting literature at the Young Scientist of the Year exhibition in 2008 or 2009 which indicated that in America the use of maize for bio-fuel can be more polluting than petrol. I would welcome a comment from the Minister in that regard. Two years ago food riots took place in Central America, Africa and other places. Some countries are seeking a ban on bio-fuel production because it will lead to a further shortage of food, although we do not have that problem in Europe yet. We should take a similar approach in this country to the forestry scheme. It was not a great scheme as some of the best land was taken out of food production. A certain type of land should have been designated for the growing of trees. Some of the best land in the midlands is covered with forestry and it will be generations before it is cleared again and is free to be used for food production.

The Government's national bio-fuel strategy has been a failure.

Debate adjourned.

Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction (Fixed Penalty Notice) (Amendment) Bill 2009: Second Stage

Deputy Jim O'Keeffe: I move: "That the Bill be now read a Second Time."

I wish to share time with Deputies Pádraic McCormack, Tom Sheahan and Michael Creed.

Acting Chairman: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Jim O'Keeffe: This is an island nation with more than 2,000 vessels on the sea fishing boat register. About 5,000 fishermen are employed in the fishing fleet with a further 4,000 employed in fish processing and ancillary activities. Our coastal communities are very dependent on the fishing sector.

The sea fisheries (amendment) Bill, which I circulated last year, remained on the Order Paper for quite a while on foot of consultation and discussion. It is one that I hope the Government will support. It is designed to deal with a long-standing grievance of the fishing community where Ireland is now the only maritime jurisdiction within the European Union without a system of administrative sanctions for some fishery offences. The Bill is designed to change that and establish a much improved enforcement mechanism in relation to less serious fisheries infractions, promote a greater culture of compliance and reduce administrative and other costs for the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority and fishermen alike.

I want to make it clear that neither I nor Fine Gael has any interest in introducing a pirate's charter in relation to serious quota and environmental breaches. These are, and will continue to be, dealt with by the courts. Those involved in cowboy activities can face the full rigours of the law as far as I am concerned and I have no sympathy for them. However, it has been the experience of every maritime power in Europe that criminal sanctions are not an efficient or effective way of encouraging compliance with the myriad of technical regulations that govern every aspect of life at sea. I recall when I launched this Bill with the party leader, Deputy Enda Kenny, in Castletownbere, a point made by local councillor, Noel Harrington, which I thought was very apt. He said that nowadays many fishermen believed they should have a barrister with them in the wheel house when they put to sea to enable them to comply with all the technical regulations or to advise them thereon.

The scheme of this Bill is to preserve the ability of the Naval Service to issue warning notices for suspect behaviour at one end of the spectrum and to retain the jurisdiction of the courts at the other, while, in the meantime, introducing a median level of administrative sanctions to deal with the vast majority of fisheries offences that fall between these two extremes. The Bill introduces sanctions in the form of fixed penalty notices, up to a maximum of €1,000 for any one offence, for infractions of sea fisheries legislation which do not warrant or justify the very serious penalties envisaged in section 28 of the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006. It provides that the Minister may introduce regulations which allow for the provision of fixed penalties for certain offences under the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006. This provision is modelled on section 47(2) of the Maritime Safety Act 2005. The Bill in no way supplants the 2006 legislation. The fixed penalty notice system will thus complement rather than replace the system provided in the 2006 Act.

The response of the Government in the past to earlier proposals for administrative sanctions in relation to sea fisheries offences has always been that it would be unconstitutional to introduce such a regime. The Bill answers the constitutional argument by providing for an Irish system of administrative sanctions using precedents that have withstood constitutional challenge over the years. It will be difficult for a fisherman or indeed anybody else to understand or accept that a fixed penalty notice regime can apply on land but not at sea. I cannot see how it could possibly apply on the land but not on our coastal waters and I am interested in any argument that may be put forward in support of that. Quite frankly, I cannot believe such an argument exists.

It is clear from precedents that on the spot fines have a long and hallowed history in the Irish legislative armoury. Legislation and secondary legislation can impose administrative sanctions on misusers of quad bikes in the Wicklow mountains, boat captains on the Shannon, restaurant owners the length and breadth of the country and every single man and woman with a driving licence. They were provided for almost 50 years ago in the Road Traffic Act 1961 and as recently as 2005 in the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act. What I am now proposing is a system which is well within the four corners of what has been ratified by the Supreme Court and constitutionally upheld time and again. It seems extraordinary that the Government can

[Deputy Jim O'Keeffe.]

consistently state that administrative sanctions are unconstitutional when fishing is involved, yet encourage their use in relation to road traffic offences at the same time.

A regime of administrative sanctions which utilises monetary fines with a residual right of appeal to the District Court has consistently been held to be within the ambit of the derogation allowed under Article 37.1 of the Constitution. If Article 34 of the Constitution is quoted, which provides that justice must be administered in a court, the answer in relation to the system I am proposing is Article 37, which provides for precisely this type of system and regime. With regard to the maximum allowable amount, the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 provides a legislative example of a €1,000 fine that is imposed as an administrative penalty. Once that figure is not breached for any one fine, the precedents of the High Court indicate that it is constitutionally irrelevant that a vessel is fined for several different offences. A number of notices for certain minor technical offences could be issued at the same time and each would carry the fine as laid down in the regulation.

Once the principle is established and accepted, it is my belief that one could go further and introduce a penalty point regime as has been introduced under the Road Traffic Act. This is particularly relevant at present in relation to changes that are on the way at European Union level. Essentially, therefore, there does not appear to be anything unique to fisheries legislation that would make it so constitutionally distinct as to preclude the possibility of a scheme of on the spot fines bulwarked by the eventual imposition of a temporary suspension of fishing licence arising from a penalty point regime. That can happen to any of us if we are foolish or imprudent regularly on the roads. I understand from the Scottish authority, Marine Scotland, that this is the approach it intends to adopt in dealing with the new EU regulations when finalised. It intends that the fixed penalty notice regime will take on board the new EU approach.

The other argument used in the past was that somehow there was a European obligation that would make a system of administrative sanctions a legal impossibility. The argument was made in 2005, during discussions on the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Bill, which eventually became law in 2006, that Ireland was precluded from introducing administrative sanctions by the European Commission as they would not contain the dissuasive element necessary to enforce the goals of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Such an argument conveniently ignores the views of the European Commission and is simply answered. The European Commission and the Parliament have consistently called for administrative sanctions to be introduced to enforce fisheries compliance, most recently in November 2009. As of 1 January 2010, Ireland is bound by a fisheries enforcement regulation drafted by the European Commission, which introduces a nascent system of Europe-wide administrative sanctions. It seems curious that the EU has, we are told, counselled against the introduction of administrative sanctions in Irish fisheries while at the same time drafting its own scheme. This Bill provides the State with the opportunity to draft an administrative scheme that will act in tandem with our coming European obligations. However, the main point regarding Europe and our inhibition about introducing a scheme of administrative sanctions in the fishing sector is that Ireland is the only member state that does not use such a scheme. In recent years, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and England and Wales have all introduced systems of administrative sanctions. Again, it seems unlikely that these schemes, which are working successfully as we speak, are being operated in defiance of European policy. That is not and has never been the case, and it is high time we stopped hiding behind non-existent European objections.

If the proposals in my Bill are not accepted we will be isolated as the odd man out in Europe. The aim of the amending Bill is to provide an improved enforcement mechanism which will allow for an appropriate fine to be imposed to punish less serious infractions. Such an approach will reduce the costs and uncertainty for both fishermen and sea fishery protection services. It

will lead to faster conclusion of cases and the avoidance by fishermen of criminal records, with the associated stigma, for minor offences. Above all, it will promote a greater culture of compliance by allowing sea fisheries protection officers to levy on-the-spot fines for a wide variety of minor and technical fishery offences.

I am indebted to the Oireachtas Library and Research Service, particularly its senior law researcher, John Kenny BL, for the extensive examination it conducted on my behalf on the feasibility of introducing administrative sanctions into Irish fisheries legislation. What is clear from this research is that while the Common Fisheries Policy does indeed require a dissuasive national scheme, there is no reason this should exclude a complementary layer of administrative sanctions to control minor or technical infractions.

The attitude of the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority, which I am glad to see represented here, is also very interesting. At the moment the SFPA is armed with a legislative blunderbuss and nothing else. It can prosecute or do nothing. When it prosecutes, even for minor offences, the fishing boat skipper must tie up his boat, sometimes for weeks on end. He faces loss of income, court costs, fines, possible suspension of his fishing licence, and even forfeiture of his catch and gear, which is mandatory for a conviction on indictment and for a second summary conviction. The deck-hands face loss of earnings and eventual loss of their jobs.

We should recall the evidence given last July by a representative of the SFPA to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It states:

We have an enforcement strategy because we are empowered to enforce the legislation. If we had more powers, such as giving warning letters and administrative sanctions, we would start as we do in the area of food safety, by issuing advice, guidance, warning letters, administrative sanctions and prosecutions through the court. The compliance strategy would look at graded steps towards prosecution and the barriers to compliance on the other side of the equation and try to deal with them. That is where we are in terms of enforcement with our compliance strategy. At present we do not have the gift to issue administrative sanctions.

I would like to give the SFPA this gift.

Fishermen want administrative sanctions; those who are charged with enforcement — that is, the SFPA — want administrative sanctions; the European Union wants administrative sanctions; and the Supreme Court has clearly ratified the administrative sanction approach involved in a regime of fixed penalty notices. It is my belief that virtually all members of this House, particularly those from our coastal communities, are in favour of this approach. I therefore strongly urge the acceptance of the Fine Gael Bill, an empowering Bill which will allow the Minister — by the way, I congratulate the new Minister of State, Deputy Connick, on his appointment — to introduce regulations.

If we pass this Bill, as I believe we should, this will allow the various stakeholders, including Department officials, the SFPA, the fishing organisations and anyone else with an interest in this area, to work out a system of regulations to implement the Bill, as has happened successfully in England and Wales, Scotland and, most recently, Northern Ireland. There is absolutely no reason this cannot happen here. To make it happen, all I ask is for all parties to support this Bill.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Deputy Tom Sheahan: As I stood on the pier in Dingle just under a fortnight ago——

Deputy Seán Sherlock: And sang a song for Ireland.

Deputy Tom Sheahan: —I saw three Spanish boats, which looked like double-decker buses, in the harbour. Given that I had time on my side, I waited to see whether those three boats would be inspected, but they were not. Meanwhile, it was brought to my attention that a file had been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions about an Irish boat in Killybegs that was found to be 4 kg over its quota. That is why we are here. Something needs to be done.

As outlined by Deputy O’Keeffe, and from the evidence given to us by the SFPA, we are hammering our own fishermen. In 2008 the SFPA carried out 2,232 inspections of Irish vessels and only 746 of foreign vessels. Up to June 2009 there were 832 inspections of Irish vessels and 311 of foreign vessels. I put it to the Minister that our fishing industry has been brought to its knees, not only by what has happened over the years regarding quotas and time at sea, but also by the regime of criminal sanctions.

When this Bill was launched in Castletownbere, I commented on the number of boats that were tied up there and the large crowd that attended. It was sad that there was such a crowd of fishermen there; they should have been out fishing, but for various reasons, one of which was the possibility of criminal sanctions, they could not. The argument has been put forward that the Department is hiding behind the Attorney General. Deputy O’Keeffe has investigated this, with a lot of help, and he has found there is no constitutional problem with the provisions of the Bill.

While I was in Dingle I sought out a member of the SFPA and asked him why those three Spanish boats had not been boarded or checked. He told me there was no need to board or check them because they had everything in order. If this is the kind of regulation going on, when a file on an Irish fisherman with 4 kg over the allowance has been sent to the DPP, the Minister should get involved and sort the issue out.

In the *Fishing News International* of November 2009, Mr. Harm Koster, the executive director of the European Union’s Community Fisheries Control Agency, stated, to my shock, that the EU member states have a budget of approximately €592 million for fisheries inspections and that some EU countries, for example, Ireland, spend almost as much money on fishery controls as their fish landings are worth. Can the Minister of State tell me it is right to be spending as much on our fishery controls as our fish landings are worth? It is wrong to spend so much on inspections of Irish vessels rather than foreign vessels.

Fishermen have a tough life. Fishing is an industry that comes down from generation to generation. Our fishermen have fished all their lives, as did their fathers and grandfathers. They work in dangerous and compromising weather because of the restrictions on them. If the Minister accepted this Bill and allowed the implementation of administrative sanctions, that would do a great service for the fishing community. The boats would not be tied up, gear would not be confiscated, the catch would not be confiscated and we would not be clogging up the court system. It is a win-win situation. We are not setting out a charter for rogues or for people involved in breaking the law, but for dealing with minor indiscretions. We believe these should be dealt with through a penalty point system and fines.

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority, SFPA, has said it is not within its gift to issue administrative sanctions. Why do the Government and Department object to administrative sanctions? We have these sanctions in all other areas. We should be using any chance we have to help our fishermen rather to criminalise them. In the context of what Harm Koster said with regard to Ireland spending as much on fishery controls as its fish landings are worth, I suggest the Minister make it his remit to amalgamate the SFPA, the Naval Service, the Coastguard and customs. If we could do that, we would get rid of significant bureaucracy. If we did that in line with allowing administrative sanctions, we would protect our waters in all aspects and like the US and Australia would have a real handle on what is going on in our waters.

I commend the Bill and urge the Minister of State to take it on board. He should also, perhaps, listen to some of his own Fianna Fáil coastal colleagues.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: I welcome the Minister of State, Deputy Connick, to the House. It is unfortunate he was not here when the 2005 Bill went through the Dáil because at that time we had a Public Gallery packed with fishermen from every port in Ireland. They were so concerned about the effects the proposed legislation would have on them and their families that they came here in large numbers to protest against the Bill going through the Dáil.

The purpose of this Fine Gael sponsored Bill, Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction (Fixed Penalty Notice) (Amendment) Bill, is to correct a serious anomaly included in the Sea Fisheries Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006. I compliment Deputy Jim O'Keeffe on bringing this Bill before the Dáil to correct the serious anomaly in the 2005 Bill. The essence of the Bill is that we want to change the system of sanctions for minor fisheries offences from a criminal system to a mixed system of criminal and fixed penalty notices or on-the-spot fines for minor fishery offences. This is a sensible proposal and objective. I do not know what attitude the Government will take to this Bill, but I hope the Minister of State will accept it on behalf of the Government in the good faith in which it is being brought before the Dáil.

We want to achieve a reasonable rebalance of the way breaches of the sea fisheries law can be dealt with. I hope the Government will accept this reasonable Bill and that it will not have any hang-ups about acknowledging that it may have made a mistake with regard to the criminal aspects of the 2005 Bill. That Bill was brought before the Dáil by the then Minister, Deputy Noel Dempsey, but it was the Minister of State, Pat the Cope Gallagher, who was here the night the Bill was discussed. We put it to him strongly at the time, and he had agreed, outside the Chamber in his constituency in the fishing villages of Killybegs and elsewhere, that the Bill was not what it should be. Unfortunately, the Bill still went through the Dáil. The aspect of the 2005 Bill that left fishermen with a criminal record for relatively minor offences under the current law was the major concern of the fishing communities with regard to the Bill at the time.

When the 2006 Act was going through the Dáil, there was significant opposition from fishing groups and their families. Significant concern was also expressed by many Government Deputies from coastal or fishing port areas with regard to the Bill. This was expressed both in the Dáil and outside of it. Perhaps the Deputy after Deputy on the benches opposite who condemned aspects of the Bill on the night were playing to the packed Public Gallery. Those in the Public Gallery were pleased by that, but the fishermen were very much disappointed when the same Deputies supported the Bill in the vote despite the reservations they expressed earlier. None of the Deputies on that side of the House who expressed their concerns at that time, particularly with regard to the aspect of the Bill we are trying to correct now, the criminal offence aspect, is here now, but I hope they have all expressed their view to the Minister or Government that this is a reasonable Bill which tries to amend that aspect of the Bill.

When the 2005 Bill was introduced by the Minister, it included some crazy provisions. I recall speaking in the Dáil at the time on one section of the Bill which included a crazy provision which would have allowed the Naval Service to engage in fire action with shipping vessels. Fortunately, owing to opposition from these benches, among public opinion and from some Government Deputies, the provision was withdrawn. However, the provision which deemed minor breaches to be criminal offences was not withdrawn but remained in the Bill. We are trying to correct this. What makes being found guilty of a criminal offence serious is that it goes on a person's record. It is a very serious matter to be convicted of a criminal offence. It would debar a person from serving in the Defence Forces or the Garda and legally entering the United States. It is a very serious provision in a Bill and we are seeking to correct it in the case of minor breaches of the provisions of the fisheries Act.

[Deputy Pádraic McCormack.]

Members of Fine Gael have spoken against the high level of fines imposed on Irish fishermen when compared with the EU average. Deputy Sheahan dealt with one aspect of this. We must not criminalise minor offences. That would be in line with the position in other EU member states, in which 86% of all EU fishery offences are dealt with by way of administrative sanctions. Why must Ireland be so different from other member states? Are we trying to impress them at a cost to our fishermen? The 2006 Bill was pushed through the Dáil just before Christmas. It was rushed legislation. As we pointed out at the time, rushed legislation is never good legislation. However, we now have an opportunity to amend it with this Bill. Rossaveal Harbour is located in my constituency. Ten or 11 years ago there were 40 trawlers based there; now there are less than 15. However, that appears to be irrelevant to the Government. I urge the Minister not to allow the last straw to break the camel's back by accepting the Bill.

I carried out some research when I spoke on the 2006 Bill. There was a total of 3,595 fishing offences in Spain in 2001, only four of which went before the courts. Why must Ireland always be the good boy in the European Union at the expense of its fishermen and their families by the inclusion of this criminal sanction in the legislation? I appeal to the Minister to accept this Bill in the good faith with which it is brought before the Dáil.

Deputy Michael Creed: I welcome the Minister of State. No doubt he will be joined at some stage during the debate by his colleagues who are conspicuous by their absence and spoke with forked tongues on the 2006 Bill, as my colleague, Deputy McCormack, might have described their contributions. I am aware that the Minister of State has a particular interest in fishing, quite apart from it being his ministerial responsibility. I read with interest the comments on his website prior to his elevation to the office of Minister of State. I know he will not allow himself to become hidebound by officialdom and hope his free thinking will prevail in his consideration of this Bill.

Deputy Seán Connick: Give me a little time.

Deputy Michael Creed: I congratulate Deputy Jim O'Keeffe who has taken a great interest in this area since before the 2006 legislation was passed and followed its implementation. He has consistently argued on a legal basis that this is a flaw in the earlier legislation and, with his professional training, he is better equipped than many to do this. That view was shared by those with forked tongues. It is worth noting the comment of the Minister of State's predecessor, Deputy Killeen, on the new regime that will be implemented by the European Union. He welcomed it on the basis that we had "already moved substantially to a culture of compliance." That is important. It might not always have been the case, but it is the case now and that is the context in which to place this debate.

It is right and proper to remedy the defects in the 2006 legislation. The point has been well made by Deputy O'Keeffe that whatever the previous Attorney General's or even the current Attorney General's reservations might have been about adopting a similar regime as that in place elsewhere in Europe with regard to administrative sanctions, the proposals made in Deputy O'Keeffe's legislation are rooted in the Irish legislative experience and precedent. Under the penalty points system, there are fixed notice penalties, with a right of appeal to the District Court. That is an established principle. If one parks one's car on a double yellow line and is given a ticket, one can either pay the fine or take one's chances and go to court. That is the essence of what is contained in this Bill.

Deputy O'Keeffe's presentation was as non-confrontational as is possible in these Chambers. To an extent, the Oireachtas is on trial. Can we rise above the knee-jerk, traditional party political positioning and posturing, allow the Bill to be debated in committee and deal with it

in the context of what is happening at European level? That also appears to expose a weakness in the Government's argument. The new regime which has come into being, the detail of which must still be worked out but which was provided for in law on 1 January this year, appears to suggest we can move to a system of administrative sanctions. Therefore, why not remove minor administrative misdemeanours from the criminal code and deal with them in an administrative fashion? That is the essence of this Bill. It would be welcome if we could rise above the knee-jerk reaction, whereby this side of the House can do no right and the Government side of the House can do no wrong until we get onto the Government side when we will have the monopoly of wisdom and the Government parties will be fools sitting on this side of the House. Regrettably, that is how the system works. With the collective wisdom of Members, we should be in a position to deliver a better law.

We are in no way advocating a charter for law breakers, cheats and those who put the livelihoods of their fellow fishermen at risk by driving a coach and four through laws, be they administrative or criminal, and fish illegally, plunder stocks, take no cognisance of conservation measures and undermine the entitlement of their fellow fishermen to make a reasonable living. That is not our objective. Our aim, as Deputy McCormack said, is to remove the fear for fishermen that if they go out in their boat and are a couple of kilograms above their allowed quota in a given month, they will find themselves facing a criminal sanction, with significant and punitive financial consequences.

This is about having a level playing pitch. For the benefit of those who might now be so aware, I will highlight the lack of a level playing pitch. Deputy O'Keeffe outlined how out of step we were with the rest of Europe in this regard. The average fine in Portugal for using and keeping on board prohibited fishing gear was €450, while it was €9,000 in the Netherlands. The average fine for unauthorised fishing in Belgium was €375 but €19,255 in the United Kingdom. The average fine for directed fishing of species subject to a prohibition was €20 in Denmark but €8,379 in Spain. The average fine for falsifying data required in the control of documents was €98 in Germany and €132,056 in the United Kingdom. In general, the average fine applied in Finland was €282 and in the United Kingdom was €77,922.

There is not a large number of alternative employment opportunities in these coastal areas. There are 10,000 people presently gainfully employed, both onshore and offshore in the processing and catching. As I travel around these areas, I hear the clarion call, "Give us a level playing pitch. Give us equity and fairness". That is what is at the heart of Deputy O'Keeffe's Bill. I would urge the Minister of State, Deputy Connick to be true to the spirit that was reflected on his own website prior to his elevation. He has a good grasp of the fishing issues. He comes from a coastal community that will watch with interest what he will say in this debate.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: The fly is in the web now.

Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Seán Connick): I welcome the opportunity to consider the issues involved in this Bill and to outline clearly the implications if the Bill was accepted and adopted.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I understand the Minister of State is sharing time with Deputies Browne and Alyward.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: They might not show up.

Deputy Seán Connick: I am not aware, I will continue.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: They are probably for the Bill.

Deputy Seán Connick: I accept that in bringing forward this Bill, Deputy Jim O’Keeffe and Fine Gael’s thinking was based on best intentions. However, the potential impacts, if it were introduced, are in my estimation not positive for the conservation of fish stocks or for the coastal communities dependent on fishing.

I believe that all in this House want to see a strong and vibrant fishing industry that supports employment in our fishing fleet, fish handling, processing and ancillary activities in our coastal communities. I am fully committed to supporting this industry which delivers employment and economic activity to many of the regions where there are few alternative income generation activities. The Irish sea fisheries sector is almost totally dependent on healthy fish stocks in Ireland’s 200 mile exclusive fisheries zone. As set down in the explanatory memorandum to the Bill, fish stocks in our zone are at historically low levels. It is, therefore, imperative that actions taken focus on measures to stop the decline and rebuild these fish stocks.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: We all are for that.

Deputy Seán Connick: I am not convinced, unfortunately, that this Bill would contribute positively to the rebuilding of fish stocks. Quite the opposite, in fact, my belief is that it could result in increasing the level of illegal fishing and further drive down the biomass of fish stocks leading to a collapse of many of the key commercial stocks around the coast on which our fishing industry is so dependent. In this regard, I consider that the Bill could have two possible outcomes, neither of which would protect fish stocks. The first possibility would be that this new Bill could introduce low fines for significant offences which would not be dissuasive and would promote illegal activity. The other option would be that it would introduce a new system for the administration of very minor errors which are currently subject to warnings and in this way distract and take the existing limited resources away from the real work of identifying and prosecuting the big offenders.

The issue of how and at what level sanctions should be applied has long been an issue with the fishing industry, particularly since the passing of the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act in 2006. This Bill, when viewed at first glance, may look as if it could provide a viable arrangement for the control of sea fisheries. However, the Bill does not stand up to closer scrutiny. The Bill would introduce a regime that would apply to fishing activity of all fleets in Ireland’s 200 mile exclusive fisheries zone. The reality is that the Bill, if it applied to the offences currently specified in Irish legislation, would remove the current deterrent arrangements in place that protect against illegal fishing and would seriously risk promoting increased illegal landings and other unacceptable fishing practices by all fishing vessels from all member states and third countries operating in the rich fishing grounds inside Ireland’s 200 mile zone. The Bill does not provide the necessary measures to appropriately regulate fishing activity and would not give a reasonable level of confidence that illegal fishing will not be rewarded. If the Bill were to be accepted, a new tier of minor offences would have to be created, which, in fact, are not currently prosecuted under the existing legislation.

The Irish seafood industry makes a significant contribution to the national economy in terms of output, employment and exports. Generating approximately 11,000 jobs in rural coastal regions, it is estimated that the industry contributed approximately €780 million to the national economy in 2008. Almost 60% of the employment and added value created in the marine sector is located outside the most developed regions of the country. The Irish fishing fleet is totally dependent on the state of fish stocks in the waters around Ireland, and it is the health of these stocks which ultimately determines the economic viability of our fleet and the supply of raw material to our seafood processors.

Over the past number of years we have seen a significant decline in quotas. Scientific evidence shows that many fish stocks important to Irish fishermen have declined to dangerously

low levels. The state of the cod stocks have attracted particular attention, but there are other important stocks at dangerous levels, including whiting, sole and herring. I am committed to supporting changes in the Common Fisheries Policy that strengthen that policy and deliver better management and conservation methods for our fisheries which would have a meaningful and positive impact on the goals of returning fish stocks to healthy levels. I and my predecessors have made clear at EU Council that we see the delivery of a level playing field on control across the EU as a central part of the reform. The new EU Fisheries Control Regulation adopted last October is not, I believe, a threat to Irish fishermen who have already moved significantly to a culture of compliance. As fisheries are a common resource it is vital that all operators from all EU fleets respect the rules. We must rebuild our fish stocks by implementing conservation measures and tackle illegal fishing by fleets in our waters, which is the major cause of the decline in our fish stocks and quotas.

However, the adoption of the Fine Gael Bill before us would, I believe, move us in the opposite direction. Instead of effectively addressing illegal fishing it could introduce a culture of non-compliance where those detected would be confident that any penalties imposed are lower than the economic benefit from the illegal fish retained from the fishing trip. As a coastal state with responsibility for protecting some of the richest fishing grounds in the EU and with a fishing industry almost completely dependent on sustainable fish stocks in our own waters, it is of the highest priority that there are effective control regimes in place across all member states, including Ireland.

Illegal fishing, which in many cases involves non-declaration of landings of key commercial stocks or mis-reporting of them, is not acceptable in the marketplace or with consumers, the general public or the law-makers at EU level. Since 1959, Ireland has applied its criminal law in relation to fisheries matters and, since our membership of the European Community, Ireland has applied the criminal law in the enforcement of fisheries policy. Current legalisation provides for graduated maximum penalties based on vessel size. However, it is important to understand that the larger vessels in our waters may have on board at any one time a catch with a value of several hundred thousand euros. Under the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006 it is a matter for the individual court to decide on the level of fine appropriate on a case by case basis, taking into account the seriousness of the offence, size of vessel and its impact. These sanctions apply equally to Irish, Spanish, French or any other operator found to have infringed the rules.

In the case of most fisheries offences, the EU Common Fisheries Policy requires that the penalties must be effective, a deterrent and dissuasive and must involve depriving the wrongdoer of the benefit of his or her actions. Mandatory forfeitures are necessary to ensure that the State complies with its obligations. The potential fines and forfeitures, therefore, are at a substantial level and I am legally advised that under the Irish legal system such penalties would be viewed as criminal in nature and therefore could only be administered by the courts by virtue of Article 34 of the Constitution which provides that:

Justice shall be administered in courts established by law by judges appointed in the manner provided by this Constitution, and, save in such special and limited cases as may be prescribed by law, shall be administered in public.

In the circumstances, a defendant is entitled to have the matter dealt with in open court with the full protections of the law and a jury trial, when faced by a potential penalty above certain limits. Continental systems governed by civil law have a different approach and it must not be assumed that we could adopt the sort of system which may be in operation in much of Europe.

It is of vital national interest that an appropriate regime is in place to protect fish stocks from any illegal fishing by all the fleets operating in our waters. This is necessary to ensure

[Deputy Seán Connick.]

that the long-term future of coastal communities is protected but also, critically, to avoid financial penalties being imposed on the State and the Irish taxpayer. All member states, including Ireland, are under close scrutiny by the Commission. In the case of France, in 2005 the European Court of Justice imposed a fine of €20 million together with a fine of €57.8 million every six months until the appropriate level of regulation was applied to the fishing industry. The EU Commission had brought forward an EU infringement case against Ireland in 2005 and 2006 on control failures. The actions taken by the State involving a new legislative framework, the establishment of the independent Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and increased staff for land based controls has resulted in the EU Commission not proceeding with the infringement case and imposing similar fines on Ireland. However, in the event that the Irish authorities are judged by the EU Commission as rowing back on the commitments made in 2005 and 2006 to deal effectively with illegal fishing, the infringement case could be reactivated.

Successive fisheries Ministers have seriously considered the imposition of administrative sanctions following representations from the Irish fishing industry. On a number of occasions the advice of successive Attorneys General has been sought on this approach. The legal advice is that imposing sanctions such as those set out in the Fine Gael Bill would undermine the existing legislative framework, allowing offenders to avoid the very serious penalties, prosecution and forfeiture of gear by payment of a fine of €1,000, or less.

The Irish legal system, in principle, permits the operation of a fixed penalty notice system in respect of minor penalties which afford the person an opportunity of paying the fixed penalty and avoiding criminal prosecution. Under such a system, fines are only imposed where they are accepted, and if a person wishes to dispute the alleged offence, then the matter is tried by a court. The Fine Gael Bill purports to follow that system. However, it proposes to provide that in the case of significant offences contained in tables 1 and 2 of section 28 of the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006, in respect of which very serious penalties can be imposed in the event of conviction, including fines and forfeiture of gear, a person can avoid prosecution by payment of a fine of €1,000 or such lesser amount as may be prescribed. In other words, under the Fine Gael Bill the potentially very significant penalties currently provided for in the fulfilment of EU law obligations that take account of the substantial financial reward possible from illegal fishing can be avoided by payment of a small sum of money on foot of a fixed penalty notice. Under the current system a judge can determine the gravity of the case and apply the level of fine which he or she deems appropriate.

The proposed fixed penalty notice system from a fisheries protection perspective is likely to be counter-productive in current circumstances. The only legally acceptable approach would involve applying the provisions of the Fine Gael Bill to minor offences which currently are not prosecuted or are dealt with by means of a warning. In effect, the acceptance of the Fine Gael Bill would require the creation of a new tier of offences which are currently not prosecuted. This will have the effect of increasing the bureaucratic burden on the industry and diverting the limited resources from the detection of serious offences to the administration of minor infringements. This can hardly be good for the Irish fishing industry.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: The Government does not care about the fishing industry.

Deputy Seán Connick: The new EU fisheries control regulation introduces a new and common approach to fisheries regulation. The regulation will see the implementation of measures to regulate and control the process that sees fish caught, landed, brought to market and sold. These measures will harmonise standards for inspection activities, and procedures will help deliver uniform implementation across the EU.

Deputy Michael Creed: That is what we are looking for.

Deputy Seán Connick: This new approach will make use of modern technologies such as electronic log books and vessel tracking. It will introduce systematic and automated cross-checking of data collected at the catch, landing and sale stages, to make it easier to spot attempts to break the rules. Under the provisions of the new control regulation, the list of serious infringements are set down. These serious infringements include the misreporting or non-reporting of catch which cannot, therefore, be considered a minor offence.

The new control regulation introduces for the first time a penalty points system in Article 84. However, that system is completely different from what is proposed in the Fine Gael Bill. The system provided in the control regulation is a system for allocating penalty points on conviction with the consequences of automatic suspension of the fishing boat licence when a certain threshold of penalty points is reached with a certain timeframe. The penalty points introduced in the new EU law are in addition to the financial or other penalty imposed by the member state.

I am legally advised that the existing approach to the regulation of the fishing industry, together with the new EU control regulation being implemented, is the most appropriate method of regulation of the fishing industry within our legal framework. This approach is consistent with legal advice and fulfils Ireland's responsibilities under the Common Fisheries Policy. I see no merit in the passing of this Bill now presented which I believe would lead to a number of negative outcomes for our own fishing industry.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I am not sure whether Deputy Aylward has another speaker in his time slot which has 17 and a half minutes remaining.

Deputy Bobby Aylward: I will do my best to keep going and I will waffle on for a while. I am very pleased to have this opportunity to consider this Bill, to explore particular aspects of the draft and the likely implications of some of its provisions. Even though I am from County Kilkenny, which is an inland county, I have connections to Wexford and Waterford, Dunmore East in particular. I travelled and travailed there in my youth and often caught a few herrings and mackerel which I brought home in a bag. I have a love for the fish that comes from the sea.

Deputy Jim O'Keeffe: I hope they were caught legally.

Deputy Bobby Aylward: At that time everything was legal. A person could sell them off the dock but not now. I fully accept the bona fides of Fine Gael in seeking to promote this Bill but I am not at all convinced it will have the desired effect. It is ill conceived and deficient in many respects. The thrust of the proposal is to provide adequate conservation measures for fish stocks. It goes without saying that we all recognise the singular value of our fishing industry and the importance of safeguarding the livelihood of all who depend on it. We have to provide robust support for the industry and ensure all those involved in it are protected from the various problems and challenges it faces. A sustainable, vibrant industry is essential and if we are to promote the industry, we must provide an environment in which the interests of fishermen are paramount. We must ensure the economic spin-offs from a successful commercial industry are harnessed properly into the country and the hinterlands in which fishermen operate.

Employment in our fishing fleet must be the primary consideration and employment in fish handling and fish processing must be sustained. There are several ancillary services which are necessary to the fishing industry and all these services are based in the local coastal communities, providing further work opportunities for local people. All have a valuable role to play in contributing to the worth and the prosperity of the local economy.

[Deputy Bobby Aylward.]

The Government is passionate and determined in its efforts to support the fishing industry. It is a traditional way of life for many families and its contribution to the economy is immense in terms of jobs, both in fishing itself and in the local economy it serves. For many people in these coastal regions fishing may be the only viable source of income. It is imperative, therefore, that we are active and sincere in our endeavours to continue to support all those activities which generate real income for families.

The sea fisheries sector in this country is almost solely reliant on healthy fish stocks within its 200-mile exclusive fisheries zone. Unfortunately, we know only too well that the levels of such stocks are at an unprecedentedly low level. This is alarming. It is clear that decisive corrective action is required to stem this worrying decline and reverse it as quickly as possible. We have to restore those stocks and it is only by introducing focused, effective measures that we can arrest the trend in diminishing numbers and ensure high levels of healthy stocks are maintained into the future.

This Bill is deficient in its attempt to achieve this imperative of rebuilding stocks. It may well be that this measure would have the contrary effect and would succeed only in encouraging the incidence of illegal fishing. The obvious result of this would be to drive down the biomass of fish stocks even further. This would lead inevitably to a virtual collapse of many of the key commercial stocks around the coast. We must avoid this happening as this would be the death knell for fishermen and their families. It would be catastrophic for that community.

Two effects of this Bill are completely undesirable and would fail abysmally in protecting fish stocks. This Bill could introduce low fines or penalties for significant offences. I do not believe this is proportionate. It would not represent an adequate deterrent and might serve only to promote various forms of illegal activity in the industry. This is neither realistic nor acceptable. The Bill could introduce a new system for the administration of minor errors which, as I understand it, are currently the subject of warnings. This provision would represent nothing more than an unnecessary distraction and would place an increased burden on scarce resources. There are more than enough demands on these limited resources at present. We cannot afford to be wasteful and we have a duty to maximise the effect of these resources. To that end, our sensible priority should be to target the resources towards identifying the big offenders and prosecuting them in due course.

One of the most burning issues in the fishing industry has been how and at what level the various sanctions should be applied. This has been even more topical since the enactment of the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act in 2006. I am not convinced the Bill under discussion will provide any type of viable or effective arrangement for the control of sea fisheries. On close examination, it falls far short of achieving anything of the sort. Effectively, this Bill would impose a regime which would apply to the fishing activity of all fleets in Ireland's 200 mile exclusive fisheries zone. If it were to be applied to the offences which are currently identified in Irish law, it would remove the existing deterrent measures which protect against illegal fishing. There is also a very real and serious risk that it would promote increased illegal landings and all manner of other illegal practices by all fishing vessels from all EU member states and the third countries operating in the rich and fertile fishing grounds inside Ireland's zone.

This Bill fails to provide the very necessary measures to regulate fishing activity in any appropriate way. It certainly would not give any reasonable level of confidence that illegal fishing would not be rewarded. A new tier or layer would have to be created if we were to adopt this Bill. These are not prosecuted at present under the relevant legislation. This would be cumbersome and it would be expensive. The Fine Gael Bill does not deserve our support.

It does not address illegal sea fishing effectively and instead could encourage a culture of non-compliance which is something we must avoid at all costs.

Any culture of non-compliance where anyone detected can be confident that any penalties which can attract are lower than the possible financial benefit from their illegal activity is clearly inappropriate and almost derisory. I for one cannot support that thrust.

The seafood industry in Ireland makes an immense contribution to our national economy. In the context of output, employment and exports, it generates over 11,000 jobs in rural coastal regions and it is estimated that the industry contributed a total of €780 million to the economy overall in 2008. Almost 60% of the employment and added value created in the marine sector is located outside the most developed regions of this country which are totally dependent on the conditions of fish stock in the waters around the country. It is the health of these stocks which determines, in the long run, the economic viability of our fleet and the secure supply of raw material to all our seafood processors.

I accept, and have said it at several committee meetings, that it is wrong that fishermen should be targeted as criminals if they are caught. It is one good issue in this Bill which was raised by Deputy Breen. It should be examined because the issue of any fishing family which goes about its daily life and is then caught, prosecuted and labelled as criminal is serious. I come from Kilkenny.

Deputy Jim O’Keeffe: This is the way to do it.

Deputy Bobby Aylward: Yes. I had to vote and compromise. I did not think I would be standing here on my own, but it has to be done. I see the good in regulation. I recall when the monofilament nets, some of which were one or two miles long, were removed. They were taking all the salmon from this country and letting them into our rivers — I come from a very rich county of rivers, comprising the Barrow, Nore, Suir and Blackwater — resulting in a decline in rivers which have been closed for the past three years. We are trying to introduce conservation to try to increase our salmon stocks.

In the Nore last year, which is located in my county, salmon fishing resumed because the experts and scientists told us we had returned to the correct level of allocated fish. We were able to take 480 salmon out of the Nore last year, which was as a result of the removal of monofilament nets from the sea. It is to be hoped that this year we can take 4,000 salmon out of the Nore, which is above its conservation limits. It is a sign that legislation does work.

The Suir is at 96% this year. A deputation is to meet the Minister this week to ask him if fishing could be allowed on the Suir. Its argument is that, in these recessionary times, money can be made from fishing. The Minister should allow fishing to resume in order that the families involved can return to the industry.

Deputy P. J. Sheehan: They will die of old age.

Deputy Bobby Aylward: No, it is all about scientists and conservation. We are very well behaved and law abiding people in our area. We stick to the rules and regulations.

Deputy Martin Ferris: Only by day.

Deputy Bobby Aylward: The stocks in the Barrow are very low and its conservation levels will not be reached for years. The Slaney in Wexford is also a problem — I will let the Minister of State discuss that. I do not know what the situation is there.

Deputy Jim O’Keeffe: The Deputy is an expert on river fishing. Does anyone from the Government side have an interest in coastal areas or sea fisheries? Why is he left here on his own?

Deputy Bobby Aylward: I am trying to give an example of what happens when one introduces the correct regulations.

Deputy Jim O’Keeffe: The Deputy is doing very well.

Deputy Bobby Aylward: We have drift net fishermen who hope to resume fishing; I do not know whether that will ever happen. At the current time the fish are not returning. Overall, it main issue is the survival of fish and keeping fish stocks——

Deputy Jim O’Keeffe: What about the survival of fishermen?

Deputy Bobby Aylward: The fishermen will not survive unless the stock survives, which is also very important. One has to have a bit of both. Whiting, herring and mackerel are very important and are needed to keep the industry going.

Deputy Jim O’Keeffe: He knows a lot for a landlocked county.

Deputy Bobby Aylward: It has two ports.

Deputy Seán Connick: Belview.

Deputy Seán Sherlock: I wish to share time with Deputy Ferris.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Seán Sherlock: I wish to respond to the last two speakers. The Labour Party supports the Bill which we believe is predicated on common sense, does what it says on the tin and is unambiguous in what it seeks to do, that is, decriminalise certain transgressions under the law. For Fianna Fáil to suggest somehow that any amendment to the current position would wreak havoc on the sustainability of the future of the industry is, to be frank, patronising to the thousands of fishing families who seek to make a living from this industry. It is quite patronising to the person who has taken the time to do the research and come before this House, and, in a genuine sense, who seeks to provide a solution to a problem the House has been debating since 2005.

I have examined the historical debates and it has to be stated, as a matter of fact, that the committees dealing with this matter had a very united view. There was cross-party support for an amendment to the legislation in order that one would not criminalise a person, as Deputy Sheehan has pointed out. Such a person would not be brought before the courts if he or she was 4 kg over a quota. That is the type of ludicrous situation which Deputy O’Keeffe’s Bill seeks to address. That is fair.

In examining the Commission’s Green Paper on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, it states that a minuscule amount, as I understand it, is afforded to fisheries protection. I agree the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority is needed, but there is a perception that the authority is not working in partnership or in tandem with the fishing organisations or the fishermen themselves. It is perceived, on the quay sides, as being against these people. I will speak about that in greater detail later.

I also wish to address the remarks of the Minister of State. I do not understand the logic behind the following comment:

I am not convinced, unfortunately, that this Bill would contribute positively to the rebuilding of fish stocks. Quite the opposite, in fact, my belief is that it could result in increasing the level of illegal fishing and further drive down the biomass of fish stocks leading to a collapse of many of the key commercial stocks around the coast on which our fishing industry is so dependent.

There is an assumption in that comment that if the current provisions whereby a man who over fishes by 4 kg is not subjected to the potential for administrative sanctions or sanctions before a court are changed or amended in any way, such a man will fish at a level of 200 kg over quota the following day. There is an underlying assumption that if some of the sanctions are amended or softened, the fishing industry and all those who own vessels will err on the side of criminality or will flout the law.

It is true that some have transgressed and should be subject to the full rigours of the law. However, for Fianna Fáil and the Government to suggest that any amendment would lead to a serious undermining and depletion of our fish stocks and would have an effect on sustainability is over-egging the pudding.

In his speech the Minister of State remarked in respect of France that all member states, including Ireland, were under close scrutiny by the Commission. He further remarked that in the case of France, in 2005 the European Court of Justice imposed a fine of €20 million together with a fine of €57.8 million for every month until the appropriate level of regulation was applied to its fishing industry. Did the Minister of State contextualise that statement? Did he state how much the fishing industry is worth to France? Did he state what percentage that fine was relative to the overall industry in France? Common sense dictates that fines of €20 million and €57.8 million are a drop in the ocean by comparison with what the industry is worth to France. It could not care less about sanctions. Few fishermen in France are subject to the equivalent of the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority entering and confiscating their boats and bringing them up before the civil courts within two or three weeks or subject to files going to the French DPP or the Attorney General. That is simply not the case in France but if the Minister of State can prove otherwise I would be pleased to hear it. It is a matter of relativity. We are all aware there are fishermen who are no saints; it is well documented. However, if the Government is going to give us an argument against proposed legislation, at least it should give us something factual, not something out of context.

There is also the issue of proportionality to which the Minister of State referred in his speech. He stated that successive fisheries Ministers have seriously considered the imposition of administrative sanctions following representations and that on a number of occasions the advice of successive Attorneys General has been sought in relation to this approach. He further stated that the legal advice was that imposing sanctions such as those set out in the Fine Gael Bill would undermine the existing legislative framework, allowing offenders to avoid the very serious penalties, prosecution and forfeiture of gear by payment of a fine of €1,000 or less. However, the Bill clearly states there is no reason one cannot go after those persons who flout the law, who are repeat offenders and who have been in breach on successive occasions. It is still possible to impose the full rigours of the law and I do not understand why the Minister of State cannot apply the same logic here to the situation that applies to those who use quads on the mountains, to which Deputy O'Keeffe referred. I believe this point is worthy of a response by the Government.

As I understand the Bill, it allows for a scenario whereby an element of discretion is applied. If someone seriously flouts the law, one can bring that person before the court. However, where a person exceeds the limit of 4 kg, for example, which has happened, one does not apply

[Deputy Seán Sherlock.]

the full rigours of the law because it is such a small administrative mistake or transgression and therefore common sense applies. I do not understand the Government's position in this regard.

We support the Bill. It has been discussed at cross-party level and at committee in the past. There has been agreement and I do not understand why the current situation prevails in the House. It speaks to the culture in this House as well, and it speaks volumes about why people outside the House are so cynical when one position is taken outside and inside the House, but then a person votes in a different way. It feeds into the cynicism about politicians when we give rich tea and sympathy to a position but then vote against it when it comes to the substance of the matter.

We agree there can be no doubt but that better enforcement is necessary for more effective fisheries management systems. Questions arise in our mind in respect of criminal sanctions and an equitable way of dealing with non-compliance of fisheries management systems. If the figures are to be believed, the marine sector yields an annual turnover of almost €3 billion and supports 44,000 jobs. These figures are supplied by the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority 2007 report. If we are to believe it, then we must examine in greater detail where sanctions should be applied.

We all agree that any illegal activity that endangers the fish stocks of this island must be punished. When speaking to the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Bill in 2005, my colleague, Deputy Tommy Broughan, stated the most effective route for implementing a workable and successful means of control seems to be to impose harsh criminal penalties only on the most persistent and extreme offenders, which corresponds with the point I made earlier. This Bill allows for such a mechanism. The Labour Party believed strongly then, as now, that other breaches should be dealt with by mechanisms such as administrative penalties, on-the-spot fines and a transparent and predictable points system on licences similar to that which applies to owners of motor vehicles found to be transgressing the law.

An amount of consternation exists among Irish fishermen about the role of the SFPA. There is a perception among fishermen that they come under greater scrutiny from the authority's officers and that non-Irish vessels are left off the hook. We should examine this in greater detail. On page 27 of the authority's 2007 report there is a reference to the number of instances where legal action is taken by the SFPA against Irish vessels. Of the 99 cases in which legal action was required, some 23 were referred to the Attorney General's office, 52 written warnings were issued and 24 detention orders were made. There were 99 cases from 19,174 landings in 2007. These figures may have been updated since. Let us compare this to the figures for non-Irish vessels. In 2007, there were 1,465 landings and 1,351 inspections whereupon enforcement was taken in 42 cases. Of the 42 cases, some 18 resulted in detention orders, warning letters accounted for 23 cases and one file was sent to the Attorney General. We must speak to relativity because when we compare the number of inspections of Irish to non-Irish vessels we must factor in the number of landings as well. Perhaps this addresses Deputy Sheahan's earlier point. In essence, based on these figures it could be argued there is no evidence to suggest Irish owners are scrutinised more. However, I am certain that the fishermen's organisations would have a strong view on the matter and such data should be scrutinised independently. The essential point is that of the legal actions taken, the vast bulk are administrative in nature. However, there is little or no analysis provided by the SFPA as to the nature of those administrative and detention-related sanctions. The Bill, rightly, points out that "the sea fishing community in Ireland has been aggrieved at the use of onerous criminal penalties to control even minor breaches of technical regulations". This is the essence of the Bill and it is on this basis we support it.

Deputy Martin Ferris: I thank the Labour Party for allocating us time to contribute to the debate on this Bill, which Sinn Féin supports. As the explanatory memorandum states, there is an issue regarding fish stocks. Everyone involved in the fishing sector in this country recognises that. However, it is also the case, as stated, that the punitive measures that were introduced to penalise Irish fishermen are not only inefficient but have caused a great deal of resentment within fishing communities. The current measures mean that a fisherman found to be in breach of certain regulations may end up with a criminal record rather than having to pay a fine as would be the case in legislation covering any other economic sector, such as farming. This means that anybody fishing even a little over quota will end up in court and with a criminal conviction. Such persons will be unable subsequently to travel to the United States or Australia, for example. This is a disgraceful provision which would not be imposed on any other sector in our community.

The explanatory memorandum refers to stocks being low, but there is an issue regarding the scientific evidence cited in support of some restrictions and a view that the research carried out is not always accurate. Even apart from that, many people in the sector are of the view that the management of the Irish fishery should primarily be a domestic responsibility rather than the current situation where almost everything to do with the sector is at the whim of diktats from the fisheries directorate in Brussels. The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority is in effect enforcing those diktats rather than any logically arrived at measures decided in this House. That is a legacy of the surrender of our fishery not only to the bureaucrats who determine quotas and sanctions but also to an entirely unfair distribution of quota allocation within Irish waters which, since 1973, has meant that Irish fishermen have been at an extreme disadvantage in terms of access to quota and has led to the taking of as much as €200 billion worth of fish from our waters. If that figure is accurate it represents a criminal waste of a potentially valuable natural resource that could have been developed in a way that made fishing a significant contributor to economic growth and exports.

When the entire European Union quota for all fishing waters in 2008 and for all European Union fleets was taken into account, the Irish quota was a mere 9% of the overall total. Even within Irish waters, where almost all of the Irish sector's catch originates, the disparities were glaring. For example, France had 42% of whitefish quota in Irish waters in 2008 compared with just 15% for Irish fishermen. That is, by any reckoning, a glaring disparity and a completely unfair distribution of quota. It is difficult to imagine that any other sovereign European Government would agree to that type of surrender of such a valuable natural resource, but that seems to have been lost on those who negotiated the disastrous deal prior to accession. The current reform of the Common Fisheries Policy presents an opportunity for the State to insist on a radical reform of the system to address these issues. It has also been pointed out that the European Union flouts its own principle of subsidiarity in regard to the governance of the fishing sector. In place of this rigid and unfair centralised management of the fishery, individual states — including Ireland — need to reclaim the primary responsibility for fisheries within the national 200-mile limit under the principle of “applied subsidiarity”. All vessels operating within that limit would then become subject to the full force of Irish law.

This is the background to the criminal sanctions that were introduced several years ago in the face of almost unanimous opposition from everyone involved in the fishing sector as well as from within the Fianna Fáil Party, including those Members who were members of the Oireachtas committee when the legislation was debated. Despite this opposition, the Government chose to proceed with measures that have caused a great deal of resentment among coastal communities throughout the country. One need only recall the two referenda on the Lisbon treaty to gauge the degree of resentment. In the first referendum, up to 90% of voters in coastal communities rejected the proposal in a show of protest against these provisions.

[Deputy Martin Ferris.]

The legislative measures were accompanied by the establishment of the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority which was empowered by the legislation to police the fishing community in a manner which, to many fishermen, effectively placed them on the same level as criminals involved in drug dealing. As I recall, the former Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Mr. Michael McDowell, made an insinuation at the time the legislation was going through that this was indeed how he viewed fishermen who were in breach of regulations. That was a disgraceful comment which hurt many people, particularly those in rural and coastal communities. Nobody would attempt to defend anyone involved in illegal practices that impact negatively on the rest of the fishing community or which represent a serious threat to fish stocks. However, there is a widespread perception that the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority acts in a heavy handed manner and concentrates to a massive extent on Irish fishermen, which is not reflective of the level of illegal fishing in our waters by non-Irish vessels. Many fishermen find the authorities in this country completely impotent or even uninterested in tackling this reality, even though it has been estimated that the illegal catch by foreign vessels from Irish waters could be one third or perhaps even more of the declared catch.

There is a strong belief among fishermen that illegal fishing by non-Irish boats is underestimated. On that basis, there are proposals that fishery control and surveillance should be related to quota so that vessels from bigger fleets are given proportionate attention rather than the current situation where Irish vessels are paid a greater level of attention by the protection agencies than is warranted by the share of the quota in Irish waters enjoyed by the Irish fleet. The Kerry County Development Board made a similar point in this regard in a report I presented to the Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Food two years ago, indicating that the regulations governing stock management were not being applied equally across the different national fleets.

I support the proposal to replace the existing criminal sanctions with the administrative sanctions and fines set out in this Bill. That change undoubtedly reflects the view within the fishing sector and would ensure that fishermen in breach of regulations are dealt with in the same way as other businesses found to be in breach of regulations pertaining to their sector. This is far preferable to the heavy handed powers contained in the most recent legislation. I urge the Government to recognise the sentiment that exists within the fishing community towards the existing legislation and the manner in which the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority executes its remit. The replacement of criminal sanction provisions with administrative measures and fines would go a long way to reducing some of the negativity that exists within coastal communities.

Deputy Aylward spoke about the number of salmon in the rivers Barrow, Nore and Suir last year and how he expects to see more salmon this year. The implication of this is that it was drift salmon fishermen who were responsible for fish not getting up the rivers. I made a living from drift fishing at one time, both legally and illegally. I do not deny it.

Deputy Bobby Aylward: That was the least of the Deputy's vices.

Deputy Martin Ferris: At that time we were fishing off the coast of Clare and Kerry and were refused licences, so we fished and made a living out of it. I assure the Deputy, as sure as night follows day, that under no circumstances were drift fishermen responsible for the decline in fish stock in rivers. It goes far deeper than that and is to do with the far greater power exercised by other sectors in our society. Pollution of the rivers killed salmon spawn and the non-replacement of hatcheries contributed to the problem. That river pollution was caused by large industries, local authorities and other sectors.

Deputy Bobby Aylward: Why are the salmon coming back now? Will the Deputy explain that?

Deputy James Bannon: They are not coming back.

Deputy Martin Ferris: I assure Deputy Aylward, from my experience on the ground, that in the year salmon drift net fishing was outlawed, there was a huge run of salmon. Deputy Dooley would know from his contacts in west Clare — people who continue to do a small bit of fishing illegally, if that is the word one wants to use — that the salmon are running as well as they were back in the 1970s and 1980s. It is inaccurate to say the drift fishermen were responsible. When drift nets were taken out of Irish waters, it was the end of their livelihood for a sector of the fishing fleet and this contributed to the pressure on other sectors. No consideration was given to the fact that people were being made redundant. Those people moved into potting of lobster and crayfish, gill netting and so forth, which put pressure on those sectors.

The legislation that introduced the criminal sanctions against coastal communities and fishermen has led to great resentment and animosity between the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority and entire communities. We must do the right thing now by removing criminal sanctions against decent, honourable people trying to make a living.

Debate adjourned.

Adjournment Debate.

Cancer Screening Programme

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I welcome the opportunity to discuss a matter of significant importance to the lives of the women in my constituency in County Clare. I have put a considerable amount of effort and time into the issue over the years, including during my time in the Seanad. My Seanad colleagues and I sought to have the BreastCheck service rolled out along the western seaboard. For some time prior to that, it had been available on the east coast. A number of colleagues, including former Senator Margaret Cox, championed that cause to ensure that women in the west of Ireland would have the same access to the same level of cancer prevention screening as those on the east coast.

As the Minister is aware, the breast cancer screening programme under the auspices of BreastCheck was set up for the west of Ireland, to be headquartered at University College Hospital, Galway. It was proposed that it would have a number of static units — one in Galway and one in Cork — and a number of mobile units carrying sophisticated equipment. Those would visit the various counties, of which Clare would be one, on a frequent basis to carry out breast screening among the identified target group of women aged 50 to 64. At that time it was estimated the service would be available to approximately 8,000 women in that target group in County Clare.

In 2007, significant advances were made when almost €27 million of capital funding was provided to construct the clinical units at Galway and Cork, and to procure the eight mobile units and the associated state-of-the-art digital screening equipment. That came on-stream, with a major announcement by the Minister in December 2007, in a 12-month period. It was expected at that time that the service was to be rolled out in County Clare in the following ten months. At the same time, €15 million of additional revenue funding was provided to cater for the national roll-out of the entire programme.

Unfortunately, the roll-out of this vital service throughout County Clare has not yet taken place. I accept that a small number of women from the north Clare area have been called to

[Deputy Timmy Dooley.]

the static unit at University College Hospital in Galway. However, the rest of the county is still waiting. The area with the greatest density of population is not covered.

I urge the Minister to tackle the problem with the agency that has been tasked with rolling out the service at the earliest possible opportunity. Women from the north of County Clare to south-east Clare — from Meelick to Miltown Malbay and back to Doonbeg, and from Whitegate to Loop Head — have the same entitlement to the service as women throughout the country.

I recognise that BreastCheck does some good work, but that is cold comfort to the vast majority of women in County Clare to whom the service is not available. There have been changes in the way in which the health service has been configured in County Clare. The mammography unit at Ennis was closed and, despite some initial protest, it was accepted that the national cancer control strategy, which included the development of centres of excellence at Galway and Limerick together with the roll-out of the BreastCheck programme, gave the best possible outcome for patients. The women of the county accepted that, but they are left waiting for that third component, which must be part of an integrated strategy for the control of cancer in our society.

A number of women in the north Clare area have had the use of facilities since August 2009. It was suggested that during the preceding ten months, there would be a complete roll-out of the service for the rest of the 8,000 women in the county. That has not happened, and I understand that even at this stage a site has not been identified for the location of the mobile unit. I look forward to what the Minister has to say, and I urge her and her Department to put a bit of pressure on our friends in BreastCheck. The organisation has, as I said, done some good work, but that is cold comfort to the lives of so many people who await that vital service.

Minister of State at the Departments of Health and Children, Social and Family Affairs and the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Áine Brady): I will take the Adjournment on behalf of my colleague, the Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Mary Harney.

I welcome the opportunity to set out the position on breast cancer screening services in County Clare. BreastCheck, the national breast screening programme, provides free breast screening to women aged 50 to 64 area by area. BreastCheck operates from four clinical units based beside hospitals — two in Dublin and one each in Cork and Galway — and a fleet of 15 mobile digital screening units that provide screening to women locally.

The majority of women are offered their mammogram at a BreastCheck mobile digital screening unit to make the service as close, convenient and accessible as possible for women. Factors that influence the choice of a site for a mobile digital screening unit include the capacity of the site to provide necessary utilities, including electricity, plumbing, access to toilet facilities and adequate space. It is preferable that a site can accommodate the unit for the length of time it takes to screen all eligible women in the area, which can be considerable.

BreastCheck uses a range of sites nationwide such as hospital or clinic car parks, civic centres, shopping centre car parks and the grounds of schools or colleges. Screening schedules involve months of careful planning and preparation to ensure women are screened in an organised and efficient manner, and BreastCheck has a duty to fully utilise its available resources at all times.

When BreastCheck was seeking an appropriate location for a mobile site to offer screening to women living in County Clare, it was advised by Clare County Council that planning permission would be required. No other city or county council has ever required planning permission for the temporary location of a mobile breast screening unit. Months of extensive negotiation between Clare County Council and BreastCheck followed.

To commence screening of women in County Clare while negotiations with the council continued, BreastCheck invited more than 300 women living in areas in north County Clare, including Abbey, Boston, Carran, Castletown, Cloghaun, Derreen, Drumcreehy, Gleninagh, Glenroe, Lisdoonvarna, Mountelva and Rathborne, for screening at the BreastCheck western unit in Galway.

Clare County Council has recently waived its requirement for planning permission. That means that BreastCheck can now commence the necessary preparations required to locate a mobile unit in the county. A suitable site has now been selected in the grounds of the county council offices in Ennis. During the coming months, BreastCheck will proceed with the necessary preparations to make the site suitable for delivery of a mobile unit to provide quality assured screening to women in the county. Screening of women is expected to commence in autumn this year.

It is BreastCheck's policy to publicly announce a screening schedule no more than three months in advance, as there is evidence that some women experiencing symptoms of breast cancer are likely to defer seeking a symptomatic referral from their GP and choose to wait for the routine screening.

However, any woman, irrespective of age, who has immediate concerns or symptoms, should contact her GP who will where appropriate refer her to the symptomatic services.

I am pleased that arrangements are now being made for the continued screening of eligible women in Clare, and that screening is expected to commence by autumn.

Mental Health Services

Deputy Dan Neville: I thank the Ceann Comhairle for letting me raise again the issue of regulation of the professions of psychotherapy and counselling. At present, they are not regulated. There is no criteria by which one may gauge the standard of psychotherapy and counselling services. Anybody can set up a counselling or psychotherapy service without qualifications and charge a fee to vulnerable people whose lives may be in danger from suicide.

I will give two examples of short courses that allow, facilitate or encourage people to do that. The first is a course to gain a diploma in skills for counselling eating disorders, which is granted to people after fewer than 50 hours' tuition. One could do eight modules over eight weekends and obtain a diploma in counselling for eating disorders. There is no basic qualification required to enter this course. Eating disorders are extremely complex and have emotional, psychological, psychiatric and physical health implications. They have the highest mortality rate of any mental health condition. A counsellor with training of less than 50 hours does not have the range of skills to even understand the issues involved and is not qualified to probe the unconscious. He or she is dealing with human vulnerability and serious damage can be done to very delicate people

The second example I have concerns an advanced diploma in suicide studies that consists of less than 100 hours of tuition. This is marketed as providing people with skills to counsel people at risk of suicide and the bereaved of suicide. Modules include suicide prevention, suicide intervention and suicide postvention, each of which is completed in just two weekends, yet one receives an advanced diploma in suicide studies.

Those who are at risk of suicide, attempted suicide and self-harming require detailed psychiatric diagnosis. This cannot be done with training over three weekends. Some 80% of those who take their lives are suffering from a psychiatric disorder. A bereavement by suicide falls outside the normal range of human experience. It is an overwhelming loss that leaves the bereaved confused and helpless, overwhelmed by many emotions and many unanswered questions.

[Deputy Dan Neville.]

The two examples show the need to fully regulate the professions of psychotherapy and counselling, which are so essential to dealing with all areas of mental health and emotional difficulties and assisting in many varied areas of counselling, including marriage counselling, family counselling, sex and sexuality counselling, sexual abuse counselling, occupational counselling, bereavement counselling, addiction counselling, long-term illness counselling, and post-traumatic stress counselling. These involve very delicate areas of human vulnerability requiring the highest level of professional assistance. They should be included under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005, which was introduced to regulate 12 professions. The areas to which I refer are not regulated under it because of issues that arose at the time regarding agreement between various groups. Disagreement has now featured for two years.

The psychological forum has criteria setting out the skills required of staff working in these areas. One does not allow doctors and nurses the freedom to walk in and out of each other's profession but it is allowed in respect of psychotherapy and counselling. The forum recommends that the baseline academic qualification for entry to training is a degree or equivalent in human sciences, be it medical, psychological, social or educational. For registration as a psychotherapist, the forum specifies a minimum of four years' training in specific psychotherapy modality at Master's level, which involves 1,400 hours.

With regard to entry for training for counselling, the forum requires that one have a leaving certificate or equivalent qualification, or a relevant degree, while equivalent accredited prior learning is considered. An interview is required to enter training for both counselling and psychotherapy to determine whether one is suitable. The baseline qualification and experience for registration as a counsellor is a minimum of four years' training in specific counselling and psychotherapy modality, involving a minimum of 1,250 hours. This is what is required, not a few weekends of training.

I tabled a parliamentary question asking the professions that have completed registration on the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and the reply stated, "Arrangements for the establishment of the first of these registration boards are currently being finalised". Can I take it that none of the 12 grades has been regulated since 2005 despite the high profile of the Bill which was intended for this purpose? The Minister has informed me that it is not until the 12 grades are dealt with that the areas I am addressing will be considered.

Deputy Áine Brady: I am responding to this matter on behalf of the Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Harney. I thank the Deputy for raising this issue and for giving me the opportunity to update the House on the ongoing regulatory programme undertaken by the Department of Health and Children.

The Health and Social Care Professionals Act was passed by the Oireachtas in 2005. The Act provides for the establishment of a system of statutory registration for 12 health and social care professions. The 12 professions to be regulated under the Act are clinical biochemists, dieticians, medical scientists, occupational therapists, orthoptists, physiotherapists, podiatrists, psychologists, radiographers, social care workers, social workers, and speech and language therapists.

The structure of the system of statutory registration will comprise a registration board for each of the professions to be registered, a health and social care professionals council with overall responsibility for the regulatory system and a committee to deal with disciplinary matters.

As a first step in the implementation of the system of statutory registration, the Minister for Health and Children launched the Health & Social Care Professionals Council in March 2007. The chief executive officer of the council was appointed in 2008 and additional senior administrative staff took up duty with the council in late 2009. The council must establish a registration

board for each of the 12 professions currently covered by the Act. These appointments, and further progress in the establishment of a suitable organisational structure, will greatly assist the council in its ongoing work in preparing for the establishment of the individual registration boards. Arrangements for the establishment of the first of these registration boards are currently being finalised. The council is currently working to put in place the necessary structures for registration, education and fitness to practise for the 12 health and social care professions designated in the Act and it is hoped to bring additional registration boards on stream in late 2010.

The Health & Social Care Professionals Council will enable health and social care professionals to practice in a regulated, controlled and safe environment and in a manner which will ensure the provision of high-quality interventions, meeting the challenges of increasingly complex and evolving care for service users. Health and social care professionals will be facilitated in ensuring responsible and accountable practices while providing the highest level of patient care and service.

While the proposed system of statutory registration applies, in the first instance, to 12 health and social care professions, the legislation empowers the Minister for Health and Children to include, on the basis of specific criteria, additional health and social care professions in the regulatory system over time, as appropriate.

A detailed examination is required of the degree to which such groups conform to the criteria included in section 4 of the 2005 Act governing the addition of further professions into the system, including the extent to which the profession has a defined scope of practice and applies a distinct body of knowledge; the extent to which the profession has established itself, including whether there is at least one professional body representing a significant proportion of the profession's practitioners; the existence of defined routes of entry into the profession and of independently assessed entry qualifications; the profession's commitment to continuous professional development; the degree of risk to the health, safety or welfare of the public from incompetent, unethical or impaired practice of the profession; and any other factors that the Minister for Health and Children considers relevant.

The priority for the Health & Social Care Professionals Council is to establish statutory registration for the 12 designated health and social care professions in the first instance. The issue of inclusion of other grades, such as psychotherapist and counsellor, within the scope of statutory registration will be considered after the initial designated 12 professional grades have been fully dealt with.

Road Network

Deputy Simon Coveney: I thank the Office of the Ceann Comhairle for allowing me to raise this matter and the Minister of State for being present.

I speak for the 15,000 people who live in Carrigaline, one of Ireland's largest commuter towns. It was the case some years ago that more people drove to work alone in their cars from Carrigaline than from any other town in the country. When I was a member of Cork County Council for three or four years, I worked on the planning of a western relief road for the town. Much of the zoning and planning permission for the many houses that have been built in Carrigaline, like other parts of the country, was agreed in anticipation of the construction of a western relief road to try to relieve the intense traffic on Main Street in the town. The street in question, which is no more than 8 m wide, was built for a town of 500 or 600 people but now has to cater for a town of 15,000 people. The eastern relief road in the town has worked reasonably well, especially in allowing traffic to flow from Crosshaven to Cork city, but the western side of the town still has no relief road. All the traffic is driven through Main Street, which simply cannot handle it.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

A detailed study of the town, which was undertaken in 2006 so that a western relief road could be designed, has been in place for some time. Cork County Council received planning permission from An Bord Pleanála in 2006 to proceed with the road. At the time, the board said that this most important infrastructural development would allow the town to continue to grow and breathe. We had planned to make progress with the project on a public private partnership basis so that a new town centre could be developed for a large urban area outside Cork city, but that project has been halted. As recently as this week the county manager said he was very anxious to move ahead with this road but simply does not have the money to do so. That is why I am raising the issue in the national Parliament. Funding needs to be allocated by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government or the Department of Transport to allow this crucial infrastructure to be built. A partnership between local authority and national funding is required so that the crucial bottleneck in the town of Carrigaline can be alleviated.

I am conscious that I am calling for funds at a time when the Government has none. I do not make that call lightly. This project would pay for itself, however. I live in Carrigaline. My office is on Main Street. More than 30 businesses on the street have gone out of business over the past 18 months. This town needs help. One of the ways the Government can make a significant contribution to the business community and the residents of the town is to provide a share of the funds needed to allow the western relief road to be developed. That will allow the town to grow and breathe and enable businesses to start flourishing again. That, in turn, will produce revenue and jobs for the State. The borrowing of this money can be justified, in my view. It is capital rather than current expenditure. I ask the Minister of State to pass on my appeal to the appropriate senior Minister. We need to make progress by providing funding or allowing Cork County Council to increase its borrowing capacity, so that this infrastructural project can take place. Everything is in place to make it happen, with the exception of the funding.

Deputy Áine Brady: I am responding to the Deputy on behalf of the Minister for Transport, Deputy Noel Dempsey. I thank Deputy Coveney for giving me an opportunity to address this issue in the House. The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority in accordance with the provisions of section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on such roads are funded from the resources of local authorities, supplemented by State road grants paid by the Department of Transport. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

On 22 February last, the Minister, Deputy Dempsey, announced the regional and local road grant allocations for 2010. A total of €411.409 million is being provided to local authorities this year for the maintenance and improvement of regional and local roads. In deciding on allocations for this year, the first priority was to ensure the protection of the existing road network, particularly the massive Exchequer investment of €6 billion which this Government has made through the provision of regional and local road grants since 1997. It is important that resources are targeted to address on a priority basis the most urgently required repairs resulting from the extensive damage caused by the prolonged severe weather. Local authorities should carefully reassess their planned road programmes for 2010 with regard to these priorities.

In August 2009, Cork County Council submitted a proposal for funding the land acquisition and construction of this project in 2010 and beyond. The estimated cost of this project is approximately €18.5 million. The Minister recently wrote to Cork County Council on this matter. He is awaiting its response.

The Dáil adjourned at 8.55 p.m. until 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 12 May 2010.

Written Answers.

The following are questions tabled by Members for written response and the ministerial replies as received on the day from the Departments [unrevised].

Questions Nos. 1 to 5, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 6 to 44, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 45 to 51, inclusive, answered orally.

Waterways Ireland

52. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the cost of recent court settlements regarding Waterways Ireland; if there are any other actions pending against Waterways Ireland; and if all actions have been settled against Waterways Ireland. [18963/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I assume that the Deputy is referring to actions arising from allegations of bullying and harassment in Waterways Ireland, raised initially in 2003. As previously stated on the record of this House, these allegations were the subject of an independent investigation carried out on behalf of my Department and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). The outcome of the investigations, as is clearly shown in the joint statement issued from the Departments at the time, is that the bulk of the allegations made by the complainant were not upheld. I can arrange to have a further copy of that statement made available to the Deputy if he wishes.

As the Deputy may be aware, the individual who made the allegations in this case subsequently took a case against DCAL and Waterways Ireland in the High Court in Belfast. Waterways Ireland was represented by its insurance company. I am advised that, during the proceedings, DCAL and the insurance company agreed, without admission of liability, a full and final settlement of £50,000 plus costs to be paid on a 50/50 basis. Waterways Ireland did not have to meet any of the settlement or costs from its own budget. I understand that the matter of costs is under discussion between the plaintiff, the insurance company and DCAL at present. I am also advised that Waterways Ireland is not aware of any further actions in this case.

I am happy to say, as did my predecessor, that Waterways Ireland as an organisation has my full confidence and I am satisfied that the difficulties it faced are behind it. Indeed, the facts

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and background to these issues do not support much of the public commentary there has been in the past. In that context, I want to repeat on the record of this House my predecessor's offer of a full and confidential briefing on these issues for Deputies by senior officials in my Department.

For the sake of completeness, I should also mention that Waterways Ireland, by the very nature of the work it carries out and the amount of waterway, towpath and facilities open to the public, is exposed to a number of public and employer's liability claims. These range from work-related accidents to civil actions arising from alleged injuries to people using the facilities or passing over waterways property.

In 2009 Waterways Ireland paid a total of €1.89 million in settling such claims. One work-related accident from a number of years ago, in which an employee suffered very severe incapacity, accounted for €1.4m of this total. This claim was settled in advance of the case proceeding following Senior Counsel advices and with the agreement of the Attorney General's Office. The remaining €490,000 relates to 15 separate employer and public liability actions — 5 relating to employees and 6 to members of the public, as well as 4 property-related actions. In 2010 a total of €119,445 has been paid in relation to injuries to 1 member of staff and 2 members of the public, as well as 2 property-related matters.

While Waterways Ireland remains strongly committed to maintaining high standards of health and safety, the nature of its operations means that there will be always be exposure to claims of this nature, which will continue to be managed by Waterways Ireland in accordance with standard procedures.

Volunteerism Sector

53. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if he is satisfied with the level of voluntarism here and his plans to address this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18938/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I can assure the Deputy that the Government continues to advance a range of measures that support voluntarism, in line with the recommendations of the Task Force on Active Citizenship.

This year my Department will provide funding of over €2.5m to 22 volunteer centres around the country. Two of these centres — in Clare and Longford — are being funded for the first time. In 2009, these centres registered over 13,000 volunteers and over 870 volunteer-involving organisations. This represent an increase of over 70% on the numbers registered in 2008. It is also worth noting that 61% of registered volunteers had never volunteered before and 69% were aged 35 years and under. My Department also provides core funding for Volunteering Centres Ireland, which plays a central role in facilitating and supporting the development of the network of local volunteer centres.

In addition, other activities being supported include:

- a cross-border volunteering initiative launched last year involving the GAA, Voluntary Arts Ireland and the Church of Ireland, which seeks to benefit the community on both sides of the border, especially marginalised and disadvantaged groups, through a strong network of local volunteers;
- the Young Social Innovators Initiative, which involves transition year students identifying social needs and developing strategies to address them through engagement with local, community and statutory organisations;

- funding for Focus Ireland to support the placement of social science graduates, within the organisation, who wish to gain experience and to develop skills in working with people who are marginalised; and
- support for Boardmatch, an organisation which aims to support the development of the voluntary and community sector in Ireland by strengthening boards of management and management committees of non-profit organisations.

The Deputy will be aware that 2011 has been designated as the European Year of Volunteering, with the overall purpose of encouraging and supporting — notably through the exchange of experience and good practices — efforts to create the conditions for civil society conducive to volunteering in the EU and to increase the visibility of voluntary activities.

My Department will be supporting the European Year and has appointed Volunteering Ireland (VI) as the national co-ordinator with responsibility for Ireland's participation in the initiative. VI is in the process of establishing a steering committee of relevant organisations from the community and voluntary sector, as well as State representatives. In carrying out its duties, VI will be required to closely consult and co-operate with a wide range of relevant stakeholders within civil society and, where appropriate, the national agencies or contact points of relevant community programmes.

National Drugs Strategy

54. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the action he will take to combat the problem of head shops; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18931/10]

81. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the discussions he has had regarding the response to head shops; the approach that he favours taking; and the timeframe within which it is expected the necessary legislation will be published and passed. [18910/10]

242. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if it is possible to control items sold in head shops; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19096/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 54, 81 and 242 together.

As I stated in reply to today's Priority Question No 48, I can strongly assure the Deputies that the Government is fully cognisant of the dangers posed by headshops and the psychoactive substances they sell, and I have been working closely with my Cabinet on colleagues on an inter-departmental basis to develop effective responses to the threats involved.

The Minister for Health and Children is introducing controls under the Misuse of Drugs Acts on a broad range of psychoactive substances, commonly referred to as "legal highs", which are sold in headshops and through the internet. These regulations will be introduced with immediate effect. This follows approval by the relevant EU authorities. The regulations will make the possession and sale of the substances involved illegal and subject to criminal sanctions.

Also, following cross-departmental consideration of the issues involved, the Minister for Justice and Law Reform brought legislative proposals to Government today to make it a criminal offence to sell or supply substances that are not prohibited under the Misuse of Drugs Act,

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but that have psychoactive effects on humans. These proposals were accepted by Government and it hoped to have legislation drafted before the summer recess.

In addition, the Government is responding to the problem of headshops on a number of other fronts. For example:

- as part the current interdepartmental/agency response to the issue, relevant Departments and Government agencies are reviewing existing legislative provisions to establish whether headshops are in compliance with the legislative provisions applying;
- An Garda Síochána and Revenue's Customs Service are closely monitoring the activities of headshops on an ongoing basis, with a view to ensuring that no substances currently illegal are being sold;
- the HSE, in association with partner agencies under the National Drugs Strategy, is finalising a national drugs awareness campaign that will focus on the dangers of psychoactive substances available through headshops and the internet; and
- the National Advisory Committee on Drugs has been asked to carry out some targeted research in this area.

I can assure the Deputies that I will continue to work closely with my Ministerial colleagues in vigorously pursuing all viable approaches to counter the threats posed by headshops and psychoactive substances.

Proposed Legislation

55. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the measures he proposes to include in the *Údarás na Gaeltachta Bill*; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19018/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As the Deputy will be aware, the recently published draft 20-year Strategy for Irish was referred to the Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Sports, Tourism and Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and remains under consideration by it. I look forward to receiving the results of the Committee's deliberations in due course. Following consideration of the Committee's views, I will be re-submitting the draft Strategy to Government for final approval.

The Deputy will appreciate that any changes regarding the future powers and functions of *Údarás na Gaeltachta* will fall to be considered in the context of the Strategy. Accordingly, it would be premature of me at this stage to predict the contents of any proposed legislation arising from this process.

For the sake of completeness, I should add that I am examining the case at present for bringing a Bill before the House shortly with a view to extending the term of office of the currently elected members of *Údarás na Gaeltachta*. The last *Údarás* elections were held on 2 April 2005 and, in order to comply with the provisions of the existing legislation, the next elections must be held on a date between 1 April 2009 and 1 October 2010. Due to the ongoing work in relation to the draft 20-year Strategy for Irish and the possible implications for the functions of an *tÚdarás*, the Deputy will appreciate that it would be unrealistic to proceed at this point with setting a date for the next elections.

Rural Recreation Officers

56. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

the position regarding the rural recreation officer in each county; the number that have been appointed; the counties in which they have been appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18950/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): My Department, along with Fáilte Ireland, funds the employment of 12 Rural Recreation Officers to promote walking activity in areas where there are clusters of suitable accessible walks and to undertake the work associated with the roll-out of the Walks Scheme, which is administered by my Department.

The Officers are employed by local development companies in Counties Kilkenny, Donegal, Sligo, Roscommon, Laois, Kerry, Tipperary, Cork, Wicklow, Mayo and Clare, as well as the Galway Gaeltacht. They are employed on three-year contracts, the first of which commenced from March 2008.

Departmental Schemes

57. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if there are issues between the rural social scheme and the community employment scheme; if these schemes run together or if that causes employment and or funding issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19004/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As the Deputy is aware, I do not have responsibility for the management and operation of the Community Employment (CE) scheme.

I am not aware, however, of any current issues between the Rural Social Scheme and CE. In general, while the two schemes work independently of one another, there is good co-operation and ongoing liaison on the ground so that both schemes complement one another.

In relation to the Rural Social Scheme, for which my Department currently has responsibility pending its transfer to the Department of Social Protection, a strong focus is put on co-ordination with CE, as well as with the other schemes managed by the local development companies throughout the country.

At Departmental level, it may be noted that my officials co-operate on an ongoing basis with officials involved in the CE scheme.

Ministerial Responsibilities

58. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if agreement has been reached regarding any budgetary changes that were necessary due to recent departmental changes; if so, the effect the changes have had on the budget of the Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19014/10]

65. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs when the transfer of responsibilities from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Department of Social Protection, as outlined in the Taoiseach’s announcement of 23 March 2010, will be completed; the administrative and other arrangements consequent on this transfer of responsibilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18971/10]

74. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the position regarding the recent changes to his Department; if all changes have now been completed; if all personnel have been transferred; if all printing has been concluded; the overall cost of such changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19011/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 58, 65 and 74 together.

As the Deputies will be aware, as part of the restructuring of Departments and agencies announced by the Taoiseach in Dáil Éireann on 23 March last to ensure greater coherence and produce more efficient delivery, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will become the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and will incorporate responsibility for social inclusion policy and family policy from the Department of Social and Family Affairs and for equality, disability, integration and human rights from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The formal transfer of responsibility for social inclusion policy and family policy from the Department of Social and Family Affairs to my own Department has now taken place and an Order has been made in this regard. The Order cites that my Department has responsibility for these functions with effect from 1 May 2010 and the relevant personnel and staff working in these areas formally transferred to my Department from that date.

In relation to the transfer of responsibility for equality, disability, integration and human rights from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, my Department is continuing to liaise with the relevant Departments on this matter. I expect the formal transfer of these functions and consequent administrative and other arrangements arising on foot of the transfer of responsibilities to be finalised shortly.

The Deputies will also be aware that the changes in Departmental functions announced by the Taoiseach will have an effect on the Estimates of the Departments involved, including my own Department, and officials are currently liaising with the relevant Departments in relation to the transfer of relevant programme expenditure from one Department to another. All such transfers of funds will be carried out strictly on an Exchequer-neutral basis. Staff, and related administrative costs, will also be transferred between Departments, again on an Exchequer-neutral basis.

In relation to the specific query regarding printing, no such costs have arisen as the title of my Department has not formally changed as yet. Against this background, Deputies will appreciate that at present it is not possible to provide details in relation to costs arising as a result of the recent changes. It is my intention that all stationery currently held by my Department will be used to the greatest extent feasible. I have also directed my officials to ensure that any costs arising due to the name change of my Department are kept to a minimum and met from within existing resources.

Question No. 59 answered with Question No. 50.

Community Development

60. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the steps he is taking to encourage and promote enterprise and community activity in rural communities; if he has assessed the benefits of such efforts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18972/10]

78. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which he plans to develop and extend the schemes operated by his Department aimed at addressing the issue of urban or rural renewal with particular reference to the need to combat the situation arising from the current economic climate; the degree to which he further plans to increase expenditure in specific areas or headings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18920/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 60 and 78 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, my Department was established to promote and support the sustainable and inclusive development of communities — both urban and rural — and it has responsibility for a wide range of programmes and schemes targeting community, local and rural development. The key principle underlying my Department's activities is the provision of support to enable communities to identify and address problems in their own areas. The purpose is to provide support to communities in the most appropriate way as they work to shape their own futures, address their own common goals and achieve their full potential.

In terms of encouraging and promoting enterprise and community activity, the Deputy will be aware from replies to previous Questions from him of a number of key programmes that my Department manages. These include:

- The Rural Development Programme 2007-13, which will channel some €425m in funding for the purpose of improving the quality of life in rural areas and promoting the diversification of the rural economy.
- The Rural Social Scheme, which provides resources to maintain and improve local amenities and facilities in rural communities, while communities benefit from the skills and talents of local farmers and fisherpersons. Currently, there is a provision for 2,600 participants on the Scheme and funding of the order of €46.4m is included for it in my Department's Vote this year.
- The CLÁR Programme, which provides co-funding to help accelerate investment in selected priority developments in areas that have suffered significant depopulation. Funding of €8m is being provided for the Programme in 2010.
- The Community Services Programme, which provides employment opportunities for people from disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities, long-term unemployed, Travellers, lone parents and rehabilitated drug misusers. Some 2,700 people are employed in the 445 projects currently approved for funding. The Programme has a budget of €46m this year.
- The Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP), which specifically supports individuals into employment and self-employment through education, training, work experience, job placement, enterprise and the social economy in urban and rural areas. Funding of €67.5m has been made available in 2010 for the LCDP.
- The RAPID Programme, which, through its focus on deprivation and social exclusion, seeks to address the impact of the economic downturn on vulnerable communities and to provide opportunities for social and economic recovery.

Other significant programme areas include the work of Údarás na Gaeltachta; actions under the National Countryside Recreation Strategy; the rural development sub-theme of INTERREG IVA, the cross-border programme for territorial co-operation covering Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland; and the range of measures that support community activity.

With regard to the development/extension of schemes operated by my Department, the Government decided in the 2010 Budget, as part of its strategy to manage its way through the current severe economic crisis and to return the country to prosperity, to implement a series of reductions in spending on public services. Therefore, it is not possible to consider any new

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schemes at present. To the greatest extent possible, savings have been sought through efficiencies rather than through reductions in services and priority continues to be given to the provision of frontline services.

Finally, in terms of evaluating the impact of the different programmes, the Deputy should note that value for money reviews are underway or planned for a number of the above schemes, including the Rural Social Scheme, the Community Services Programme and the CLÁR/RAPID Programmes. The Rural Development Programme is also subject to ongoing evaluation, with a mid-term review scheduled to commence this month for completion by the end of 2010.

Other initiatives undertaken by my Department to ensure optimal benefits for expenditure, to reduce administrative overheads and to improve performance across the range of community programmes include:

- a Value for Money Review of the Local Development and Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP);
- removal of the Regional Support Agencies from the CDP programme;
- a cohesion process to amalgamate Partnerships and LEADER companies; and
- a review of CDP clusters.

Further to this work, the LDSIP and the Community Development Programme have been re-aligned and integrated as the new Local Development Community Programme, which came into operation on 1 January 2010.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Elections

61. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the proposals he has regarding the Údarás na Gaeltachta elections which must take place in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19019/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): The last Údarás na Gaeltachta elections were held on 2 April 2005. In order to comply with the provisions of the existing legislation governing an tÚdarás, the next elections must be held on a date between 1 April 2009 and 1 October 2010. Due to the ongoing work in relation to the draft 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language and the possible implications for the functions of An tÚdarás, I am not yet in a position to make a decision with regard to a date for the next elections. However, I am examining the case at present for bringing a Bill before the House with a view to extending the term of office of the currently elected members.

The Deputy may wish to note that I recently re-appointed three Údarás members, including the Chairperson, whose terms of office were due to expire on 18 April 2010, for a further three year period to 18 April 2013.

National Drugs Strategy

62. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of campaigns being funded by his Department or any agency within the remit of his Department regarding highlighting the dangers of the use of illegal substances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18997/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As part of the effort under way at present across Departments and agencies to introduce controls on a range of psychoactive substances sold through headshops and through the internet, the HSE, in association with partner agencies under the Drugs Strategy, is finalising a national drugs awareness campaign that will focus on the dangers of psychoactive substances.

The Deputy will also be aware that raising awareness is a key element of the work of the Drugs Task Forces, in facilitating greater local and regional focus on drugs issues. From the funding allocated by my Department to the Task Forces, each has the discretion to support projects and initiatives aimed at creating greater societal awareness about the dangers of substance misuse. The nature, format, extent and frequency of such activities fall for decision by the individual Task Force. Many of the projects funded focus specifically on drug awareness, ranging from local drug awareness events to other initiatives such as “Awareness Weeks”. Such measures have proven to be effective as many of them focus on the issues particular to their own localities.

I am, of course, keenly aware that there is a variety of media through which the Task Forces disseminate information and promote their different activities and programmes. These range from website notices, local advertising, linkages with community fora/councils, as well as through Task Force members, notices on community focussed websites, etc. I would, of course, always encourage Task Forces to promote and link in with any relevant campaigns and adopt an all-encompassing approach to reach the appropriate target audience.

The Deputy will be aware that prevention is one of the pillars of the National Drugs Strategy. Various prevention and education interventions are planned, focusing on young people — both in the school and the non-school setting — as well as on the overall population. A range of awareness campaigns is envisaged as part of this approach.

Inter-Parliamentary Co-operation

63. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the meetings he has had or is proposing to have with Ministers with similar responsibilities in the Northern Ireland Assembly or the English, Scottish or British Parliaments; if such meetings have taken place; the matters discussed and the progress that has been made; if meetings are arranged; the agenda for the proposed meetings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19016/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): My Department has a number of North/South co-operation areas under its remit and these — and indeed East/West co-operation under the auspices of the British-Irish Council — continue to be a strategic priority, particularly in the context of the Good Friday and St Andrews Agreements.

Principally, my areas of responsibility in this regard include the two North/South Implementation Bodies within my Department’s remit — Waterways Ireland and An Foras Teanga (comprising Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency/Tha Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch). I am scheduled to participate in the forthcoming meetings of the North/South Ministerial Council in both the Waterways and Language Sectoral formats on 26 May 2010 with my Northern counterpart, Mr Nelson McCausland MLA, Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, and an accompanying Minister, to progress relevant issues in relation to these Bodies. Prior to that, I hope to have an informal meeting with Minister McCausland in the coming week. This will be my first opportunity following my appointment to meet with Minister McCausland to discuss issues arising from our two Departments’ joint responsibilities in this area.

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As Minister with responsibility for Rural Development, I will also attend meetings of the North/South Ministerial Council in the Agriculture Sector. The next meeting, and my first, is envisaged for the autumn. An agenda will not be finalised until closer to the date.

Other relevant areas of co-operation include participation in the British-Irish Council. Responsibility for chairing and organising the sectoral group on the Misuse of Drugs rests with Ireland, through my own Department. The group has, on average, 3-4 meetings of senior officials and one Ministerial meeting annually. The most recent Ministerial meeting of the Group was hosted on 24 February 2010 by the Isle of Man. The meeting, which focused on issues related to addressing substance misuse in prisons, was chaired by my colleague, Mr John Curran, T.D., then Minister of State with responsibility for the Drugs Strategy. The issue of new psychoactive substances (so-called “legal highs”) was also discussed at the meeting. Ministers agreed to meet again in spring 2011, with an agenda to be decided towards the end of 2010.

My Department also participates in the Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used Languages Working Group. This Group has looked at issues such as language transmission in the family, adult immersion, information and communications technology, language and physical planning, and language legislation. This sharing of experience has been of very real and practical benefit to us. A date for the next Ministerial meeting has not yet been fixed.

Finally, I might also mention that my predecessor, Mr Éamon Ó Cuív, T.D., accompanied the Taoiseach to the British/Irish Council Summit in Cardiff on 19-20 February 2009. At that meeting it was agreed to develop a joint document on the contribution of the Third Sector to Social Inclusion. The joint document on the subject was approved at a Ministerial meeting in Edinburgh on 25/26 March 2010, attended by Ireland at official level, and it was agreed that the subject merited further discussion and consultation among British/Irish Council members.

Programmes for Government

64. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the actions he has taken since March 2010 to ensure that the Programme for Government 2007 is being implemented by his Department; the matters he is addressing to ensure this; the progress made to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19015/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I can assure the Deputy that my priority over the coming period will be to progress the actions and commitments reflected in the Programme for Government and the Revised Programme for Government that relate to my functions and areas of responsibility in the re-configured Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs. In this regard, work will commence shortly on the preparation of a new Statement of Strategy for my Department. In developing this new Statement of Strategy, my Department will take stock of progress made to date in meeting Government Programme commitments and decide how best to focus efforts over the coming period so as to achieve real results on the ground and deliver on our mandate.

Over its lifetime, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs made significant progress in enhancing the cohesiveness and efficiency of delivery of various programmes that were transferred to it from other Departments. A similar challenge will face the new Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, but I am confident that the experience garnered in that context over recent years will prove invaluable in further enhancing the delivery of my Department’s new social development and social inclusion programmes to the benefit of all our customers and stakeholders.

Question No. 65 answered with Question No. 58.

Clár Reachtaíochta

66. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** den Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta an mbeidh reachtaíocht á foilsiú ag an Rialtas ar shainmhíniú nua ar cad is Gaeltacht ann agus ar athruithe ar theorainneacha na Gaeltachta; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina leith. [19023/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): Faoi mar is eol don Teachta, tá an dréacht-Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge foilsithe ag an Rialtas agus tá sí faoi láthair idir chamáin ag an gComhchoiste Oireachtais um Ghnóthaí Ealaín, Spóirt, Turasóireachta, Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta le breithniú. Tuigtear dom go bhfuil an Comhchoiste ag déanamh scrúdú ar na saincheisteanna éagsúla atá tagtha chun cinn — ceist na Gaeltachta san áireamh. Tá mé ag súil le tuairisc ón gComhchoiste in am tráth.

Mar a thuigfidh an Teachta, go dtí go mbeidh an próiseas críochnaithe ag an gComhchoiste agus an Straitéis críochnúil glactha ag an Rialtas, níl sé ar mo chumas aon chinneadh a ghlacadh i ndáil le reachtaíocht maidir le sainmhíniú ná teorainneacha na Gaeltachta.

Question No. 67 answered with Question No. 50.

Community Development

68. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if matching funding is still available to community projects under the RAPID scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19008/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As the Deputy is aware, the RAPID Programme aims to ensure that priority attention is given to tackling the spatial concentration of poverty and social exclusion within 51 designated RAPID areas nationally.

As has been outlined to the House on a number of occasions, it is a matter for individual Departments to report on the provision of funding and progress on delivery with respect to projects under their responsibility in the RAPID areas. In support, Pobal collects data from each RAPID area in respect of funding allocations received by projects from Government Departments and local state agencies. The latest data in respect of the Programme is available on Pobal's website under the RAPID section — <http://www.pobal.ie/live/RAPID> — and the Deputy may find it useful to review this information.

In the context of supporting small-scale projects identified locally by the Area Implementation Teams in each of the RAPID areas, the RAPID leverage schemes were initiated in 2004. These schemes are co-funded by the relevant agencies and fund projects that focus on community closed-circuit television, health and sports facilities, the provision of playgrounds and multi-use games areas and the provision of facilities in schools located in, or mainly servicing children from, RAPID areas.

Funding of €5m is being provided in my Department's Vote in 2010 to support a number of projects under the leverage schemes. My primary focus will be to ensure that the front-line services being supported by my Department — and especially those focused on the needs of the most socially deprived communities — are protected. Given that the schemes are demanded, it is not possible to indicate the extent of demands during 2010. However, I am satisfied that this year's allocation will be sufficient to enable further good progress to be made with small-scale co-funded projects in RAPID areas this year.

Departmental Funding

69. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the

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purpose of the €600,000 grants recently announced by him in relation to the various drugs task forces; if this money will enable premises to be opened in areas where previously there was no drugs awareness centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18998/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I recently made €600,000 in funding available for small-scale capital projects in Local and Regional Drugs Task Force areas. A total of €25,000 is being earmarked for individual Task Forces.

This funding is being provided under the Capital Premises Fund 2010, the purpose of which is to meet identified ‘once off’ capital needs in existing Task Force projects. The funding is being targeted at small refurbishment works and/or the purchase of equipment.

Applications must be submitted for assessment to the relevant Task Force, each of which has been asked to ensure that information on the funding is circulated to all relevant parties in their areas.

The closing date for proposals to be submitted to my Department is Friday 11 June 2010 and it is hoped to have funding allocated to successful projects by end-July.

Community Development

70. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs his views on the RAPID and CLÁR programmes; the number of applications received for funding in respect of each programme in each of the past three years; the amount of funding drawn down in each year for each programme; his views on the benefit of both programmes; if consideration is being given to a review or any major changes in the way the programmes operate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18996/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): In relation to the RAPID Programme, the Deputy should note that it is a matter for individual Departments to report on the provision of funding and progress on delivery with respect to projects under their responsibility in RAPID areas.

In 2004, my Department introduced the RAPID Leverage Schemes whereby it directly funds a number of measures such as the Local Authority Housing Estate Enhancement Scheme, the Physical Environment Improvement Scheme and the Playgrounds Scheme.

In relation to these Schemes, it should be noted that:

- 45 of the 46 RAPID areas applied for grants under the 2007/2008 Local Authority Housing Estate Enhancement Scheme;
- 35 of the 46 RAPID areas applied under the 2007/2008 Playgrounds Scheme; and
- Applications were also received from 45 of the 46 RAPID areas under the 2009 Physical Environment Improvement Scheme.

While my Department continues to process applications for payment, no new applications are currently being considered at present due to the high level of outstanding commitments.

My Department also co-funds a number of other Leverage Schemes, namely the Sports Capital Top-Up Scheme, the Community-Based CCTV Scheme, the Health Sector Co-fund Scheme and the Small Scale Capital Grants Scheme for Schools. However, it should be noted that applications for these schemes are processed by the lead Departments/Agencies — Tourism, Culture and Sport; Justice and Law Reform; the HSE; and Education and Skills, respectively.

The table below details the amount of funding paid out by my Department in the period 2007-09, as well as expenditure to date in 2010, in respect of each measure.

In order to ensure the continued relevance of the RAPID Programme, a review of RAPID area boundaries, including an analysis of data from Census 2006 across a range of socio-economic and deprivation indicators, has been undertaken to ensure that areas are appropriately targeting the most disadvantaged communities. Following the review, the Government approved the inclusion of five new towns in the RAPID Programme in 2009 — Ballina, Dungarvan, Enniscorthy, Mullingar and Rathkeale. The review also proposed changes to the boundaries of some of the other 46 RAPID areas and I anticipate that I will be bringing proposals to Government in this regard in the coming weeks.

In relation to the CLÁR Programme, the funding and co-funding provided to Government Departments, State agencies and local authorities accelerates investment in selected priority developments in areas that have suffered significant depopulation. These investments support physical, economic and social infrastructure across a variety of measures.

Information in relation to applications received and CLÁR funding provided over the last three years is set out below. For 2010, funding of €8m is available through my Department's Vote to support CLÁR activities.

Year	Applications received	CLÁR funding paid out
		€
2007	691	21,329,361
2008	426	24,178,471
2009	40	13,598,246

I am satisfied that the approach of the CLÁR Programme in targeting infrastructural needs in depopulated areas, through co-funding arrangements with other bodies, has been successful. As resources permit, I will continue to assess the priority areas for the CLÁR Programme on an ongoing basis.

Finally, the Deputy should note that, as part of the on-going programme of value for money reviews that are carried out on my Department's programmes and schemes, an evaluation is currently underway on the CLÁR and RAPID Programmes.

Rapid Programme — Expenditure

Object Account	Expenditure 2007	Expenditure 2008	Expenditure 2009	Expenditure 2010 (to date)
41040 — RAPID — Housing Est.	602,036.82	425,027.44	1,296,815.54	
41050 — RAPID — Playgrounds	1,479,561.31	1,013,758.31	1,699,985.08	1,559,995.72
41060 — RAPID — Top Up Sports Cap	1,674,523.00	1,209,032.00	2,672,548.97	1,096,800.00
41075 — RAPID — Traffic Measures	388,493.04	302,277.80	911,284.04	
41080 — RAPID — Health Sector Co-Fund	485,743.66	267,423.27	40,000.00	
41085 — Small Scale Grant for Schools	175,331.00	3,967,711.61	1,388,703.43	
41090 — RAPID — Community CCTV Co-Fund	510,301.50	989,047.50	1,055,265.00	140,000.00
41095 — Signage	0.00	29,040.00	1,944.00	
Total	5,315,990.33	8,203,317.93	9,066,546.06	2,796,795.72

Dormant Accounts Fund

71. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the position regarding dormant accounts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19001/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): The Dormant Accounts Fund Acts provides for an annual transfer by credit institutions and insurance undertakings of monies in accounts determined to be dormant into the Dormant Accounts Fund (DAF). Since its establishment in May 2003 to end-March 2010, the net transfers to the DAF have totalled some €326m.

The value of the DAF at end-March 2010, net of liabilities, was some €42m. This excludes the amount of some €46m currently maintained in a Reserve Account to meet reclaims and to cover expenses. The reserve is currently set at 15% of the total monies received by the Fund and not yet reclaimed.

The Dormant Accounts Board has prepared a revised Disbursement Plan as required by the legislation. This plan provides the overall framework within which decisions on disbursements are made and funding allocated. Allocations from the DAF are prioritised towards those areas and persons designated as most disadvantaged. I anticipate that I will be bringing the Board's new Plan to Government for approval in the coming weeks.

Further details of the projects to which funding has been allocated to date and a summary of the status of the DAF are available on my Department's website www.pobail.ie/en/DormantAccounts. For the Deputy's convenience, I am arranging to have a copy of the summary table forwarded directly to him.

Community Development

72. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the amount of funding that has been approved to each rural development programme in the country under the new round of allocations; the amount of funding that has been drawn down by them to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18922/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): In my Department's Vote for 2010, funding of €40m is being provided for the roll-out of the Rural Development Programme 2007-13, approximately €27m of which is being allocated directly for project funding.

The table below details the overall RDP allocations for each of the 36 Local Action Groups, which are delivering the programme on my Department's behalf, as well as their administration allocations for 2010. Total expenditure to date this year is also shown.

The Deputy should note that the Groups are being allocated project funding on a first come/first served basis this year in an effort to maximise project expenditure and impact. This approach will facilitate flexibility to assign funding to projects that can be completed in 2010.

Local Action Group	Overall Programme Allocation 2007-2013	Admin Allocation 2010	Total expenditure to date in 2010
	€	€	€
Avondhu/ Blackwater Partnership Limited	9,057,810	271,734.44	136,608.23
Ballyhoura Development Limited	11,673,519	350,205.75	323,400.43
Carlow County Development Partnership Limited	8,878,177	266,345.44	101,694.61
Cavan Part & County Monaghan Area Part	12,035,118	387,053.72	164,369.68
Clare Local Development Company Limited	14,028,529	420,856.08	208,974.01
Comhar na nOileáin Teoranta	4,642,415	173,395.41	62,286.33
Donegal Local Development Company Limited	12,831,901	384,957.22	264,265.99
Fingal LEADER Partnership	7,766,780	233,003.52	140,553.78
FORUM Connemara	9,668,965	290,069.10	103,301.36
Galway Rural Development Company Limited	15,257,985	457,739.78	173,087.94
Inishowen Development Partnership	8,286,143	248,584.41	88,068.14
I.R.D. Duhallow	10,315,943	309,478.45	128,647.85
Kildare (Cill Dara ar Aghaidh Teoranta)	12,282,448	368,473.62	159,297.46
County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership Limited	11,523,729	345,712.04	212,734.77
Laois Community & Enterprise Development	10,993,608	329,808.41	150,324.98
Leitrim Integrated Development Company	10,845,497	326,565.07	182,204.52
Longford Community Resources Limited	8,714,110	261,423.43	112,251.01
Louth LEADER Partnership	8,839,815	265,194.58	115,408.88
Mayo North East LEADER Partnership	10,751,894	322,556.98	228,318.59
Meath Partnership	12,748,771	382,463.32	171,620.55
Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta Teoranta	17,278,809	518,364.53	215,467.87
North & East Kerry LEADER Partnership Teoranta	10,558,882	316,766.62	105,915.85
North Tipperary LEADER Partnership Company	9,708,008	291,240.39	204,445.27
Offaly Integrated Local Development Company	11,520,489	345,614.84	258,341.17
Roscommon Integrated Development Company	12,838,021	385,140.82	171,686.03
County Sligo LEADER Partnership Company	10,888,673	326,660.35	180,158.83
South East Cork Area Development Limited	10,641,494	319,244.98	156,325.99
South Kerry Development Partnership Limited	12,370,667	371,120.20	171,979.30
South Tipperary Local Development Company Limited	11,106,187	333,185.78	255,195.00
South West Mayo Development Company Limited	12,150,007	364,500.39	152,443.05
Waterford LEADER Partnership Limited	10,558,519	316,755.73	187,921.36
West Cork Development Partnership	14,601,149	438,034.69	409,876.01
West Limerick Resources	9,997,751	299,932.68	159,887.66
Westmeath Community Development	10,987,060	329,611.97	223,267.74
Wexford Local Development	12,515,565	375,467.14	231,062.65
County Wicklow Partnership	11,135,560	334,066.97	131,584.27
Total	399,999,998	12,061,329	6,442,977

Charities Act 2009

73. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of regulations as determined by the Charities Act 2009 needing ministerial sanction that have been implemented to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18995/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): The Deputy will be aware that the Charities Act 2009 is structured in such a way as to allow for commencement, by Ministerial order, of its individual provisions on different dates over a period of time. However, commencement of the majority of the Act is contingent on a Charities Regulatory Authority being in place. To date, section 99, which regulates the sale of Mass cards, and some technical sections (sections 2, 5 and 10) of the Act have been commenced with effect from 1 September 2009 (SI No. 284 of 2009).

The Charities Act 2009 provides for the making of up to 25 separate sets of regulations by the Minister, once section 4 (which contains the provisions enabling the Minister to make regulations under the Act) has been commenced. My Department is taking legal advice at present in relation to the possible commencement of certain further provisions of the Act, including section 4.

My Department is currently rolling out an implementation plan for the Act, which will ensure that the essential elements are in place to enable the introduction of the statutory regulatory framework provided for in the legislation. The drafting of regulations in anticipation of the establishment of the new Charities Regulatory Authority is, of course, a key part of that work. In other countries, it has taken a number of years after enactment of the legislation for the new regulatory system to be fully introduced. This is likely to be the case in Ireland also.

Question No. 74 answered with Question No. 58.

Recreational Facilities.

75. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if supports are available for skateboard parks in view of the importance of such facilities for communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19002/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): There are no programmes or schemes within my Department's remit that specifically provide funding for skateboard parks.

However, the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013 has funding of €425m available to be allocated to qualifying projects up to the end of 2013. One of the objectives of the RDP is to identify and provide appropriate cultural and leisure facilities to local communities not otherwise available to them and, in principle, it is possible that skateboard parks could be eligible under the RDP.

There are 36 Local Action Groups contracted, on my Department's behalf, to deliver the RDP throughout the country and these Groups are the principal decision-makers in relation to the allocation of project funding. Such decisions are made in the context of the individual Group's local development strategy and in line with my Department's operating rules and EU regulations.

An Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

76. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Brian O'Shea** den Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta an mbeidh díospóireacht ann sa Dáil ar an Straitéis 20 Bliain don Gaeilge roimh shos an tSamhraidh; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina leith.. [19021/10]

80. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Brian O'Shea** den Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta an mó cruinniú den Fhochoiste Rialtais don Ghaeilge a bhí ann in 2010. [19022/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimh 76 agus 80 le chéile.

Mar is eol don Teachta, tá an dréacht-Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge foilsithe ag an Rialtas agus curtha os comhair an Chomhchoiste Oireachtais um Ghnóthaí Ealaín, Spóirt, Turasóireachta, Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta le breithniú. Tuigim go bhfuil an Comhchoiste tar éis roinnt cruinnithe a thionól le grúpaí agus eagraíochtaí Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta chun deis a thabhairt dóibh a gcuid tuairimí a chur in iúl. Tá mé ag súil le toradh an phlé a rinne an Comhchoiste a fháil in am tráth. Sa chomhthéacs sin, níor tionóladh aon chruinniú don Choiste Rialtais i 2010 go dáta.

Maidir leis an gceist faoi dhíospóireacht a bheith sa Dáil faoin Straitéis, cé go mbeinn lánoscailte dá leithéid, tuigfidh an Teachta, ar ndóigh, gur gnó é sin don Dáil féin.

Anti-Drug Dealing Campaign

77. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs his views on the recent report on the Dial to Stop Drugs campaign; if he will continue to support this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19005/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As the Deputy is aware, the Dial to Stop Drug Dealing campaign ran in three phases, across fifteen Local and Regional Drugs Task Force areas, in 2008 and 2009. To date, there have been 6,468 calls made to the confidential line, with 1,780 reports being made to the Gardaí.

The report the Deputy refers to is a comprehensive evaluation of the campaign and highlights the obvious and tangible benefits of the phone line, e.g., providing valuable drug dealing information to the Gardaí. In addition — and equally important — it noted the intangible benefits of the safe and anonymous contact with Gardaí afforded to concerned citizens and communities. Allied to this is the definitive sense of community empowerment that has been cited repeatedly by Drugs Task Forces.

Due to the success of the campaign, funding has been made available by my Department in 2010 to keep the phone line open. Over the coming months, I will be reviewing various options for further promotional campaigns, perhaps through a more centralised approach or through potential linkages with other campaigns and fora. In the interim, the line will remain open for all to use.

Question No. 78 answered with Question No. 60.

Grant Payments

79. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the amount of grants provided under the two programmes of grants for community and voluntary organisations during the past three years; his plans to expand this funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19009/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I assume the Deputy is referring to the Programme of Grants for Locally-based Community and Voluntary Organisations, which provides support to smaller community and voluntary organisations to a) meet the refurbishment costs of community premises, b) purchase office and centre equipment to enhance the services provided, and c) enhance the capacity of volunteers and staff working in the community and voluntary sector with support to offset the costs of training and research.

[Deputy Pat Carey.]

Funding of some €13m has been paid to groups under the Programme in the years 2007 to 2009 as follows:

- 2007 — €6.5m;
- 2008 — €3.5m; and
- 2009 — €3.1m.

The Programme was suspended for new applications on 28th February 2009 and, given the ongoing pressure on public funds, I do not envisage it re-opening in the near future.

Question No. 80 answered with Question No. 76.

Question No. 81 answered with Question No. 54.

Freedom of Information

82. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of applications under the Freedom of Information Act that his Department has received in each of the past three years; the number of staff assigned to deal with such issues; the increase, if any, due to recent departmental changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19010/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As the Deputy will be aware, as part of the restructuring of Departments and agencies announced by the Taoiseach in Dáil Éireann on 23 March to ensure greater coherence and produce more efficient delivery, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will become the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and will incorporate responsibility for social inclusion policy and family policy from the Department of Social and Family Affairs and for equality, disability, integration and human rights from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The process of transferring functions and changing Departmental titles is currently being progressed by the Department of Finance and it is envisaged that this process will be completed shortly. The Deputy will appreciate, therefore, that until the transfer of functions process is complete, it is not possible to provide the information requested in relation to any anticipated increase in the volume of requests made to my Department under the Freedom of Information Acts.

My Department has a designated Freedom of Information Officer, whose role is to provide support to staff responsible for processing and making decisions on requests submitted under the Freedom of Information Acts. The number of requests made to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs under the Freedom of Information Acts since 1st January 2007 is set out in the table below:

Year	No. of requests received
2007	27
2008	53
2009	38
2010 (to date)	22

Community Services Programme

83. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of community services programme funded day care centres; the number of such centres opened over the past three years; if discussions have taken place with any agency regarding the funding of such centres; if so, the result of such consultations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19006/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): The Community Services Programme (CSP) provides a contribution towards the costs of engaging staff to provide services delivered by community and voluntary organisations. In general, the CSP will only contribute to the delivery of a service where other sources of non-public revenue are earned by the organisation by way of sales of goods, services charges or fees. Some 450 organisations have been approved for inclusion in the CSP to date with estimated employment levels of some 2,700 persons.

My Department has identified 18 organisations supported by the CSP that provide a range of day and respite care services for older people. I am advised that this number has remained constant over the past three years, as has the level of positions funded.

I am not generally aware of discussions having taken place with agencies, as referred to by the Deputy, but would be glad to look further into the matter if the Deputy wishes to provide further details.

Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla

84. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** den Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta an mó scéim atá aontaithe anois faoi Alt 11 d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina leith. [19024/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): Tá 101 scéim teanga céaduaire, a chlúdaíonn 186 comhlacht poiblí ar fad, daingnithe faoi alt 11 d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla ó a tháinig an tAcht i bhfeidhm i 2003. Anuas ar sin, tá 30 céadscéim teanga céaduaire eile, a chlúdaíonn 35 comhlacht poiblí, á n-ullmhú. Ní miste dom a rá chomh maith go bhfuil 9 dara scéim teanga daingnithe faoi alt 15 den Acht go dtí seo agus go bhfuil fógra eisithe chuig 56 comhlacht eile faoi alt 15 den Acht ag ceangal orthu dréacht dara scéim teanga a ullmhú agus a sheoladh chugam le daingniú.

Tá plé leanúnach ar siúl idir oifigigh mo Roinn-se agus na comhlachtaí poiblí i gceist chun an próiseas maidir le haontú agus daingniú a gcuid scéimeanna a thabhairt chun ceann scríbe a luaithe agus is féidir. Táim dóchasach go n-éireoidh linn roinnt mhaith de na scéimeanna sin a dhaingniú i rith na bliana seo.

Drugs Task Forces

85. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs his plans to offer support to communities involved in combating drugs; the extent to which the programme was successful in 2009; the degree to which expenditure is likely to be specifically or particular targeted in 2010; the degree to which he has on hand requests for funding in respect of such purposes; his further plans to respond positively to such requests in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18919/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As has been previously outlined to the Deputy, the majority of expenditure allocated to community groups through my Department for drugs initiatives is channelled through the Local and Regional

[Deputy Pat Carey.]

Drugs Task Forces. Under this process, applications for funding are made directly to the Task Forces.

In 2010, in excess of €31m in current funding is being made available to fund the activities of the Task Forces, of which €21.045m is being allocated to the Local Drugs Task Forces and €10m to the Regional Drugs Task Forces. This funding will support some 500 initiatives that the Task Forces have prioritised for investment in their respective areas. In addition, I recently announced that funding of €600,000 is being made available for small-scale capital projects in the Task Force areas, building on the success of a similar initiative in 2009.

In 2009, 340 projects under the Local Drugs Task Forces were supported to the value of nearly €22m. Almost €10m was expended to support 146 projects in Regional Drugs Task Force areas. Further funding in 2009 also supported the following:

- 14 cocaine-specific projects (approx. €0.555m);
- 10 rehabilitation-specific projects (approx. €0.350m); and
- 3 drug-related projects dealing with homeless people (€0.460m).

In addition, capital expenditure of nearly €2.12m in 2009 supported 6 large scale projects, predominantly in the Regional Drugs Task Force areas, including targeted funding for Limerick City. Nearly 100 small-scale projects in 23 Task Force areas were supported with a total allocation of €552,000 to cover the costs of refurbishments, renovations and the purchase of equipment. Furthermore, under the once-off Regional Youth Initiative, 6 projects were funded in 2009 to the value of €0.471m.

The Deputy should also note that Dormant Accounts funding of €1.56m was approved in 2009 for 80 substance misuse projects with a family support focus in the Task Force areas.

While the overall funding for the Task Forces this year is less than it was in 2009, I am satisfied that this investment will continue to address problem drug use in a meaningful and real way and protect front-line services to the greatest extent possible.

Placenames Database

86. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the progress made to date on his Department's work regarding placenames; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18921/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As I indicated in my reply to a similar Question on 1 April 2010, the Placenames Branch of my Department undertakes research, with the support and guidance of An Coimisiún Logainmneacha, in order to establish the correct Irish language forms of the placenames of Ireland and to publish them for official and public use.

The Department is engaged in a comprehensive research programme to provide Irish versions for all placenames in the State on a county basis. Seven counties have been completed and published under this programme to date, namely, counties Kilkenny, Limerick, Louth, Monaghan, Offaly, Tipperary and Waterford. Work is complete in counties Dublin, Galway, Cork, Wexford and Leitrim, while research is at an advanced stage in a number of other counties, namely, Sligo, Clare, Longford and Kerry.

The recent work of the Branch also includes providing Irish language versions of the administrative placenames in the Gaeltacht Areas of Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Mayo, Meath and

Waterford and it has just completed work on some 6,200 non-administrative names in these areas as shown on the Ordnance Survey's historical large-scale maps.

A signal achievement of the Placenames Branch in recent years has been the launch in late 2008, in collaboration with Fiontar DCU, of the Placenames Database of Ireland at www.lo-gainm.ie. This free online searchable database has information on over 100,000 official placenames and has proved very popular with the public, with an average of 130,000 hits recorded each month.

Trade Statistics

87. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Taoiseach the value of imports and exports in euro and as a percentage of GNP with the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the eurozone and the rest of the world each year from 1995 to 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18899/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy John Curran): The information requested by Deputy O'Reilly is presented in the tables below which show the Republic of Ireland's external trade for the years 1995-2009.

Tables 1 & 2 show the value of the Republic of Ireland's trade in millions of euro with the Eurozone area; Great Britain and Northern Ireland; the US and the rest of the world. The export values are listed in Table 1, whilst the import values are listed in Table 2.

Tables 3 & 4 show the trade data from Tables 1 & 2 as a percentage of GNP for the respective years.

Table 1

Year	Exports				Exports Total
	Eurozone	UK	US	Rest of World	
€ million					
1995	15,321.9	9,014.3	2,881.8	8,112.1	35,330.1
1996	15,514.0	9,493.7	3,573.4	10,031.7	38,612.8
1997	17,925.1	11,054.9	5,050.2	10,837.8	44,868.0
1998	24,234.3	12,920.6	7,742.6	12,424.3	57,321.8
1999	26,821.7	14,690.2	10,336.8	15,107.5	66,956.2
2000	31,163.2	18,869.8	14,227.8	19,628.1	83,888.9
2001	32,994.9	22,629.8	15,694.4	21,370.8	92,689.9
2002	35,698.3	22,463.8	16,509.4	19,003.7	93,675.2
2003	33,836.5	14,843.1	16,939.2	16,457.3	82,076.1
2004	35,496.9	15,198.7	16,555.6	17,158.3	84,409.5
2005	37,839.6	15,351.8	15,474.8	18,066.0	86,732.2
2006	36,388.2	15,565.8	16,182.0	18,636.0	86,772.0
2007	36,661.3	16,742.8	15,825.0	19,997.0	89,226.1
2008	34,725.6	15,864.3	16,674.3	19,130.2	86,394.4
2009	34,876.5	13,510.9	17,584.6	17,550.4	83,522.5

[Deputy John Curran.]

Table 2

Year	Imports				Imports Total
	Eurozone	UK	US	Rest of World	
	€ million				
1995	5,020.5	9,264.6	4,607.5	7,288.2	26,180.8
1996	5,566.0	9,901.4	4,395.5	8,616.6	28,479.5
1997	6,474.8	11,358.3	4,922.6	10,107.9	32,863.5
1998	7,427.0	13,466.5	6,362.5	12,458.9	39,715.0
1999	8,486.0	14,626.5	7,383.7	13,830.7	44,327.0
2000	11,224.6	17,613.2	9,148.5	17,922.4	55,908.6
2001	11,645.5	20,481.1	8,699.5	16,558.0	57,384.1
2002	11,420.6	20,120.2	8,517.7	15,569.4	55,627.9
2003	10,257.1	14,704.5	7,416.4	15,486.6	47,864.5
2004	11,551.1	16,034.7	6,984.4	16,534.9	51,105.2
2005	12,721.4	18,270.9	7,999.9	18,472.5	57,464.7
2006	14,276.2	19,424.6	6,808.1	20,348.2	60,857.2
2007	15,445.9	20,869.2	7,050.6	20,119.7	63,485.5
2008	14,308.0	19,202.7	6,762.8	17,311.1	57,584.6
2009	10,460.3	13,617.9	7,839.4	12,918.4	44,836.1

Table 3

Year	Exports				Exports Total
	Eurozone	UK	US	Rest of World	
	% GNP				
1995	32.6	19.2	6.1	17.3	75.2
1996	29.9	18.3	6.9	19.3	74.5
1997	30.2	18.6	8.5	18.2	75.5
1998	35.3	18.8	11.3	18.1	83.6
1999	34.9	19.1	13.5	19.7	87.2
2000	34.9	21.1	15.9	22.0	93.9
2001	33.7	23.1	16.0	21.8	94.6
2002	33.5	21.1	15.5	17.8	87.9
2003	28.7	12.6	14.4	13.9	69.5
2004	28.1	12.0	13.1	13.6	66.9
2005	27.6	11.2	11.3	13.2	63.2
2006	23.9	10.2	10.6	12.2	56.9
2007	22.7	10.4	9.8	12.4	55.3
2008	22.5	10.3	10.8	12.4	55.9
2009	26.5	10.3	13.4	13.4	63.5

Table 4

Year	Imports				Imports Total
	Eurozone	UK	US	Rest of World	
	% GNP				
1995	10.7	19.7	9.8	15.5	55.8
1996	10.7	19.1	8.5	16.6	54.9
1997	10.9	19.1	8.3	17.0	55.3
1998	10.8	19.6	9.3	18.2	57.9
1999	11.0	19.0	9.6	18.0	57.7
2000	12.6	19.7	10.2	20.1	62.6
2001	11.9	20.9	8.9	16.9	58.6
2002	10.7	18.9	8.0	14.6	52.2
2003	8.7	12.5	6.3	13.1	40.5
2004	9.2	12.7	5.5	13.1	40.5
2005	9.3	13.3	5.8	13.5	41.9
2006	9.4	12.7	4.5	13.3	39.9
2007	9.6	12.9	4.4	12.5	39.4
2008	9.3	12.4	4.4	11.2	37.2
2009	8.0	10.4	6.0	9.8	34.1

European Council Meetings.

88. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Taoiseach the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19131/10]

The Taoiseach: For the period in question, my predecessor, an Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D., attended three scheduled European Councils and one Informal European Council. Since I took office, there have been eight scheduled European Councils and six Informal or Extraordinary European Councils. I have attended all fourteen of these meetings. There were also two meetings of the Heads of State or Government of the Euro Area Member States, both of which I attended.

In addition I have I also attended meetings between the European Union and other key regions, such as the Eastern Partnership Summit and the Union for the Mediterranean Summit.

Details of the meetings attended by my predecessor and I over the past three years are set out below:

European Council Meetings — Details of attendance from June 2007 to May 2010

Details of Meeting	Date	Taoiseach in Attendance	Location
European Council	21/22 June 2007	Bertie Ahern T.D.	Brussels
Informal European Council	18/19 October 2007	Bertie Ahern T.D.	Brussels
European Council	13/14 December 2007	Bertie Ahern T.D.	Brussels
European Council	13/14 March 2008	Bertie Ahern T.D.	Brussels
European Council	19/20 June 2008	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels

[The Taoiseach.]

Details of Meeting	Date	Taoiseach in Attendance	Location
Union for the Mediterranean Summit	13/14 July 2008	Brian Cowen T.D.	Paris
Extraordinary European Council	1 September 2008	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
Meeting of Heads of State or Government of the Euro Area	12th October 2008	Brian Cowen T.D.	Paris
European Council	15/16 October 2008	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
Informal European Council	7th November 2008	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
European Council	11/12 December 2008	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
Informal European Council	1 March 2009	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
European Council	19/20 March 2009	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
Eastern Partnership Summit	7th May 2009	Brian Cowen T.D.	Prague
European Council	18/19 June 2009	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
Informal European Council	17 September 2009	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
European Council	29/30 October 2009	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
Informal European Council	19 November 2009	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
European Council	10/11 December 2009	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
Informal European Council	11 February 2010	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
European Council	25/26 March 2010	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels
Meeting of Heads of State or Government of the Euro Area	7th May 2010	Brian Cowen T.D.	Brussels

Unemployment Levels

89. **Deputy Charlie O'Connor** asked the Taoiseach the most recent unemployment figures at the Tallaght social welfare office, Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19220/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy John Curran): The Live Register series gives a monthly breakdown of the number of people claiming Jobseekers Benefit, Jobseekers Allowance and other registrants as registered with the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Figures are published for each county and local social welfare office.

The most recent Live Register figures available are for March 2010. The table below contains the numbers signing on in Tallaght local office on the last Friday of March 2010.

It should be noted that the Live Register is not a definitive measure of unemployment as it includes part-time workers, and seasonal and casual workers entitled to Jobseekers Benefit or Allowance.

Persons on the Live Register in Tallaght Local Office by sex and age, March 2010

	Male	Female	Both sexes
Under 25 years	1,601	873	2,474
25 years and over	5,660	2,150	7,810
All ages	7,261	3,023	10,284

Economic Competitiveness

90. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation if he will provide an index showing Ireland's change in competitiveness with the United Kingdom, the

United States of America , the eurozone and the rest of the world each year from 1995 to 2009; the way the change in competitiveness is affected by exchange rate movements and by changes in the general price levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18900/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Measuring competitiveness is complex and requires an assessment of the full range of factors which enable firms to improve their productivity levels and compete in international markets. There are a number of international indices of competitiveness produced by international bodies, each with their own methodological constraints. The National Competitiveness Council’s annual report, “Benchmarking Ireland’s Performance”, provides a comprehensive assessment of Ireland’s competitiveness.

Taking a narrow view of competitiveness in terms of real effective exchange rates or price and labour costs is only one part of such an assessment. In this context the Central Bank in collaboration with the European Central Bank have developed a whole economy relative cost index, the Harmonised Competitiveness Indicators (HCIs), which provide an indication of trends in competitiveness. The nominal HCI is a nominal effective exchange rate for the Irish economy that reflects, on a trade-weighted basis, movements in the exchange rates vis-à-vis 56 trading partners. The real HCI (deflated by consumer prices) takes into account relative price changes along with exchange rate movements. The table below presents the data for the period 1995-2010, indexed to January 1995.

Harmonised Competitiveness Indicators for Ireland (HCIs) Indexed to 1995

	Nominal HCI	Real HCI
1995	100.0000000	100.0000000
1996	101.1569645	100.1539968
1997	107.0831644	104.7683951
1998	100.0559429	96.96116841
1999	102.8059632	99.647066
2000	94.47624453	93.77630533
2001	93.66730177	94.37036338
2002	92.23568996	95.77472406
2003	99.91679504	106.4380709
2004	107.0372547	114.6902756
2005	108.0074388	115.8064085
2006	104.3572645	111.7806597
2007	106.4869467	114.9072085
2008	112.2811943	120.7418793
2009	113.5452813	121.3825494
2010	114.3403397	116.8666855

Source: Central Bank/Forfás.

For comparisons with the Euro area and other countries, the data is presented for the period 1999-2009, (with 2000 being the base year for comparisons). The data below covers Ireland vis-a-vis the UK, the Euro area, the US and Japan, which covers close to 90 per cent of our trading partners.

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Exchange rates deflated by total economy unit labour costs.

Real	Relative Indices			
	IRELAND vis-à-vis:			
	Euro area	UK	US	Japan
1999	98	108	101	115
2000	100	100	100	100
2001	103	103	99	115
2002	100	103	104	130
2003	102	114	126	152
2004	105	114	142	168
2005	109	118	146	182
2006	112	119	148	202
2007	112	119	161	229
2008	115	142	179	224
2009	107	147	166	185

Source: Central Bank.

Both exchange rate movements and changes in general price levels impact directly on our relative cost competitiveness. As the euro appreciates or depreciates vis-à-vis the currencies of our non-eurozone trading partners, so too does our competitiveness improve or disimprove. With the depreciation of both UK Sterling and the US Dollar, Eurozone goods and services, including Ireland’s, become more expensive relative to goods and services produced in those countries for sale in both domestic and foreign markets. The more recent appreciation of the dollar and strengthening of sterling vis-à-vis the euro have helped to improve our competitiveness. There is little that the Government can do directly in relation to influence exchange rates, although increased exports to the Eurozone can reduce exposure to currency fluctuations and increase certainty for internationally trading enterprises.

In terms of changes in general price levels, a fall in domestic prices relative to prices in other countries will impact the price competitiveness of domestic firms. In this context, since January 2008, Ireland has regained competitiveness as domestic inflation has remained below that of our main trading partners.

In terms of domestic inflation, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) fell by 3.1 per cent in the twelve months to March 2010. The Irish HICP — the harmonised European measure of consumer prices — fell by 2.4 per cent in the year to February 2010, the largest decline in the euro area, compared with an overall EU increase of 1.4% and an increase of 3.0% in the UK. This narrowing in the differential in prices is very much to be welcomed and clearly will help the competitiveness of Irish businesses. A further reduction in prices is forecast for the remainder of this year compared with low growth across the EU on average, meaning our cost competitiveness position in relation to our trading partners is continuing to improve.

Taking account of both the recent falls in relative prices and more favourable exchange rate movements vis-à-vis key trading partners, Ireland’s real harmonised competitiveness (HCI) in February 2010 was 2.26% below the January 2005 level.

Further strengthening Ireland’s competitive position will foster economic growth. I am working with my colleagues in Government to further embed the improvements already achieved and to strengthen Ireland’s relative international competitiveness position.

Departmental Expenditure

91. **Deputy Noel J. Coonan** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the amount he anticipates that his Department will spend on converting Department titles on websites, headed paper, application forms, information booklets, wall charts and so on as a result of the recent changes in several Department titles; the length of time this will take; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18648/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): As the Deputy will be aware, the name of my Department was officially changed on 2nd May last. Every effort has been made to keep costs, which will be provided from within my Department’s existing resources, to a minimum. Where possible, work associated with the name change has been undertaken in-house, by the staff in my Department.

The vast majority of the tasks, associated with my Department’s name change, have already been completed, and any outstanding work will be completed over the coming weeks. It is not possible to give a final cost of the changes at this point.

Redundancy Payments

92. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the position regarding statutory redundancy payments in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18686/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Dara Calleary): My Department administers the Social Insurance Fund (SIF) in relation to redundancy matters on behalf of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. There are two types of payment made from the SIF — rebates to those employers who have paid statutory redundancy to eligible employees, and statutory lump sums to employees whose employers are insolvent and/or in receivership/liquidation.

I can confirm that my Department received a lump sum claim for the individual concerned on 15 July 2009.

In instances such as this, where the employer does not formally wind the company up but goes into informal insolvency and is unable to pay the statutory redundancy entitlements, the Department seeks from the employer evidence of inability to pay the entitlements to the employees. This involves requesting a statement from the company’s Accountant or Solicitor attesting to the inadequacy of assets to make the redundancy payments and, the latest set of financial accounts for the company. The employer is also asked to admit liability for the 40% liability attaching to the company arising from the redundancy payments. If this information is provided to the Department, the employees are paid their redundancy entitlement from the Social Insurance Fund. Upon payment, the Department pursues the company for the 40% share that the company would ordinarily have been expected to pay to the employees. In the present instance, some but not all of the necessary documentation has been provided and my Department is in contact with the employer’s solicitor in relation to an outstanding issue. If this is resolved to satisfaction, it should be possible to authorise the claim for payment shortly.

If the necessary supporting documentation required from the employer is not provided to my Department, the employee will be advised by my Department to take a case to the Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) against the employer to seek a determination establishing the employee’s right and entitlement to redundancy. Once such a determination is available, the Department is then in a position to make the payment to the employee concerned. Should the outstanding documentation be provided by the employer during the period while the case is

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pending a hearing before the EAT, this would allow the claim to be processed by my Department in the usual way.

Job Losses

93. **Deputy Kieran O'Donnell** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the discussions he has had with a company (details supplied) regarding their restructuring plans and implications for jobs at the Limerick plant in Castlemungret; when he first became aware of the restructuring proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18691/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): My Department was notified by Enterprise Ireland on the 4th May of the proposed redundancies in Irish Cement, a subsidiary of the CRH group, and my officials have informed me that a voluntary redundancy package is being negotiated with the Unions involved. Irish cement has plants in Platin, County Louth and Castlemungret, County Limerick and the redundancies will be shared across both plants. The company will maintain a core work force in both plants with full employment for the remaining employees. The agency will continue to monitor the situation and keep me up to date on developments.

County Enterprise Boards

94. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation if he will clarify the financial situation with city and county enterprise boards, especially Limerick City Enterprise Board which cannot issue grants to viable business start-ups due to lack of funding, with less than half of the calendar year completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18742/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): The 2010 financial allocation to Limerick City Enterprise Board, and to each of the other 34 individual Enterprise Boards, is derived from the final allocation set out for my Department in the Revised Estimate as published on 18 February 2010. The 2010 budget allocation for the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) is €28.3m of which €14.994 is allocated for Capital Expenditure. This compares to a 2009 capital allocation of €14.229 which, however, was supplemented by an additional €6m made available under the Department's capital carryover process. No such carryover provision was available for 2010.

Exchequer funding is allocated between the 35 CEBs by the Central Coordination Unit (CCU), based within Enterprise Ireland, on the basis of a standard allocation to each CEB as well as an allocation that is determined mainly by population but which also takes account of issues such as local unemployment trends, capacity to spend, existing commitments and regional spread.

I have asked for a report from Limerick CEB on the exact level of demand for funding and I will review the situation when this information is available.

Redundancy Payments

95. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the costs of redundancy rebates awarded to an airline (details supplied) for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18743/10]

97. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the costs of redundancy rebates awarded to a company (details supplied) for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18747/10]

98. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the costs of redundancy rebates awarded to a company (details supplied) for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18748/10]

99. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the costs of redundancy rebates awarded to a company (details supplied) for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18749/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Dara Calleary): I propose to take Questions Nos. 95 and 97 to 99, inclusive, together.

I regret to advise the Deputy that I am precluded, by virtue of data protection considerations, to provide the Deputy with the company specific information he has requested. It has always been, and continues to be, my Department's policy and practice not to disclose details of redundancy rebate payments made in the case of specific companies.

For the Deputy's information, I set out in Tables 1 and 2 respectively the number of claims received by my Department in the years 2002 to 2009 and the amount of monies paid out of the Social Insurance Fund in those years.

Table 1: Actual Statutory Redundancies for years 2002 to 2009 and up to end April 2010

Year	Number of Redundancy Claims
2002	24,432
2003	25,769
2004	25,041
2005	23,156
2006	23,684
2007	25,459
2008	40,607
2009	77,001
2010	23,593*

*Provisional figures.

Table 2: Expenditure on Statutory Redundancies for years 2002 to 2009 and up to end April, 2010

Year	Expenditure on Statutory Redundancy
	(€000)
2002	53,978
2003	88,933
2004	152,162
2005	149,172
2006	166,483
2007	183,328
2008	193,711*
2009	336,404*
2010	159,002*

*Provisional figures.

96. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the delay in the payment to employees of a company (details supplied) in Dublin 7. [18745/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Dara Calleary): My Department administers the Social Insurance Fund (SIF) in relation to redundancy matters on behalf of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. There are two types of payment made from the SIF — rebates to those employers who have paid statutory redundancy to eligible employees, and statutory lump sums to employees whose employers are insolvent and/or in receivership/liquidation.

I can confirm that my Department received a number of lump sum claims for the former employees of the company concerned on 12 February, 2010. These claims await processing. In respect of lump sum payments paid directly to employees, such as in this instance, the Section is, in general, processing claims dating from September 2009. In the interest of fairness and equity to all claimants, claims are dealt with in order of date of receipt.

The impact on business of the severe economic circumstances currently pertaining has resulted in an unprecedented increase in the level of Redundancy Payment claims lodged with my Department. This has impacted significantly on the capacity to maintain the customer service targets that previously obtained. The scale of the challenge on the Redundancy side is evident from the statistics that show incoming redundancy claims in 2009 amounted to 77,001 which represents a threefold increase over the level of claims lodged in 2007 and earlier years. In 2007, claims received were of the order of 25,000.

Efforts continue to be made by my Department to deliver more acceptable turnaround processing times for Redundancy payments given the difficulties that this gives rise to for both individual employees and the business community. Measures already taken in the Department in 2009 to alleviate the pressures on the Payments area include:

- almost **doubling the number of staff** through reassignment to a current level of 52 full time equivalents;
- prioritisation of the Department's **overtime budget** towards staff in the Section to tackle the backlog outside normal hours;
- establishment of a **special call handling facility** in NERA to deal with the huge volume of telephone calls from people and businesses concerned about their payments.
- Better quality information relating to current processing times on the Department's website;
- Engagement with the Revenue Commissioners to facilitate the **offset of redundancy rebate payments** by employers against existing outstanding tax liabilities which those employers owe to the Revenue Commissioners.

The backlog and waiting times remain at unacceptable levels. However, improvements are evident. I should point out that my Department has, in 2009, processed 50,664 claims, up 70% on 2008. During the period 1 January 2010 to 30 April, 2010, 23,593 claims were received and 27,592 were processed. In the year to date, inroads have been made on the backlog of claims on hand, which reduced from 41,168 at the end of January to 36,333 at the end of April 2010.

Responsibility for the payment of redundancy and insolvency payments is due to be transferred to the Department of Social Protection. The intention is to transfer by Government order, the payment functions arising under the Redundancy Payment and Insolvency Payment schemes. In transferring the functions between Departments, it is the intention that this will operate seamlessly and without any adverse impact on the service levels being experienced by individuals or the business community awaiting payment of redundancy claims.

Questions Nos. 97 to 99, inclusive, answered with Question No. 95.

100. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the cost of redundancy rebates in 2009; the breakdown per employer when the total payment exceeded €0.5 million; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18751/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Dara Calleary): My Department administers the Social Insurance Fund (SIF) in relation to redundancy matters on behalf of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. There are two types of payment made from the SIF — rebates to those employers who have paid statutory redundancy to eligible employees, and statutory lump sums to employees whose employers are insolvent and/or in receivership/liquidation.

I can confirm that in respect of redundancy rebate claims in 2009, an amount of €247.89m was incurred by way of expenditure from the Social Insurance Fund in 2009. I regret that I am unable to provide the Deputy with the employer specific information he has requested as it is the Department's custom and practice not to release company specific information of this nature. However, I can advise the Deputy that in total, 33 companies received in excess of €0.5m by way of redundancy rebate payments from the Social Insurance Fund in 2009.

Work Permits

101. **Deputy Noel Ahern** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation if he will clarify the case of employment permit system for foreign workers in this country; if he will allow foreign workers to own their work permit in order that they can change employer; if he will grant this for a limited number of long stay workers who are here for five, seven or for ten years; if he will allow transfer for work permit to a new employer free of charge when an employer goes out of business or lays off workers; and if he will allow transfer in the case of a person (details supplied) who is here ten years, has a valid permit, has an offer of employment and so on. [18814/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Dara Calleary): It is current Government policy to issue new work permits for highly skilled, highly paid positions or for non-EEA nationals who are already legally resident in the State on valid employment permits or where there is an officially recognised scarcity of workers of a particular type or qualification. There are no restrictions on non-EEA nationals changing employer after a period of one year. The Department already facilitates those who wish to change employers with new employment permits. Last year, it issued almost 1,500 employment permits in respect of employees changing to new employers.

A fee is charged for the processing of an Employment Permit on a sliding scale, from €500 to €2,250, based on the duration of the Permit. Spouses/Dependants of principal Work Permit holders who were resident in the country prior to June 2009, charitable organizations, unlimited permits (where a Permit holder has spent five or more years with one employer) and non-EEA Nationals married to EEA Nationals are exempt from these fees. Full details of all fees applicable are set out on my Department's website at www.deti.ie. Fees may be refunded to the applicant if the application is refused or withdrawn prior to the issuing of the permit.

However, a properly controlled employment permit system requires that permits be issued to a specific employee for a specific job with a specific employer. To do otherwise would not only risk abuse of the employment permit system but would make it much more difficult to ensure that employers observed the employment rights of employees.

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In addition, the previous Minister of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, An Tánaiste Mary Coughlan TD, in conjunction with the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, announced on the 28th August 2009 that it will not be necessary for those who have been working lawfully and who have held an employment permit for 5 consecutive years to have an employment permit to remain in employment. On presentation of the relevant documentation to the Immigration Authorities they will now be facilitated with a the appropriate endorsement.

In the specific case raised by the Deputy, the person concerned may attend Garda National Immigration Bureau headquarters at Burgh Quay, or his local Immigration Officer, to ascertain his eligibility to obtain a the appropriate endorsement which may then entitle him to full access to the labour market without recourse to a Work Permit.

Industrial Development

102. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the schemes used by his Department or its agencies to attract companies of a certain sector to the Dublin Docklands area; the former schemes that are no longer in existence which were used to attract sector specific companies since the Dublin Docklands regeneration project began; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18839/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): At present the Industrial Development agencies under the aegis of my Department use a range of schemes to attract internationally-traded Financial Services operations to all parts of the country. The schemes used are the same ones as are used to promote investment and employment in manufacturing or in other internationally-traded service operations.

The schemes available to Financial Services companies in the Irish Financial Services Centre in Dublin Docklands are the same, and at the same aid rates, as those available elsewhere in Dublin.

For the country as a whole, schemes fall into a number of categories. Regional aid is paid, in areas where it is allowed under EU State aid rules, in the form of capital or employment grants or in the form of preference shares, and the amount payable is linked to the level of investment or to the numbers to be employed in the operation. However, since 1 January, 2007, regional aid is no longer payable in Dublin, and therefore not in the IFSC. Other categories of aid are payable on a uniform basis across the country. These include grants to support Research Development and Innovation, Training grants, and SME supports such as to carry out market research or towards participation in trade fairs.

Therefore, the category of schemes no longer available in the IFSC, or elsewhere in Dublin, is regional aid. When the IFSC was originally established, regional aid was paid in the form of 10% corporation tax. When the 10% corporation tax rate was phased out, regional aid became payable in forms such as capital grants or employment grants. The rate for regional aid in Dublin fell to 17.5% in 2000 and to 0% from 1 January, 2007.

Departmental Funding

103. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation if he will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 13; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18858/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): My Department does not provide direct funding or grants to businesses but provides funding to a number of State Agencies, including the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) and Enterprise Ireland, through whom assistance is delivered directly to businesses. The CEB’s unique role positions them as a first point of contact for persons wishing to set up in business and therefore I would advise the person to contact their local CEB in the first instance to discuss the needs of his business with the relevant staff of the Board.

To be eligible for CEB grant support an enterprise must be in the commercial sphere, must demonstrate a market for the proposed product/service, must have a capacity for growth and new job creation and must not employ more than 10 people. CEBs can provide both financial and non-financial assistance to a project promoter. The forms of financial assistance, which are available, subject to certain restrictions and conditions, include Priming Grants, Business Expansion/Development Grants, and Feasibility/Innovation. The CEBs give priority to enterprises in the manufacturing or internationally traded services sector and must always give consideration to any potential for deadweight and displacement arising from a proposed enterprise.

In addition, the CEBs deliver a range of non-financial supports to improve management capability development within micro-enterprises designed to help new and existing enterprises to operate effectively and efficiently so as to last and grow. The promoter is advised to contact their local CEB; the Dublin City Enterprise Board to discuss what options may be available to him and his business. The Board is located at 5th Floor, O’Connell Bridge House, D’Olier Street, Dublin 2. Phone No: 01 6351144 Fax No: 01 6351811 Email: info@dceb.ie. Website: www.dceb.ie

Employment Rights

104. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation his views on the fact that employers are allowed to claim an inability to pay agreed wage rates; and that the State will in effect be forced to subsidise them through the family income supplement. [19083/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Dara Calleary): Adjustments in the gross wages of employees in the private and public sectors have occurred as a consequence of the severity of the current economic recession. The recession is having a direct impact on the level of agreed pay settlements in almost all areas of the private sector and this has also been reflected in the provisions of the Employment Regulation Orders that have been agreed by the Joint Labour Committees that are responsible for determining statutory minimum wages to cover vulnerable workers in sectors such as agriculture, hotels, catering, and retail sectors.

There is currently no provision in legislation whereby an employer can plead inability to pay the wage rates agreed either under the Joint Labour Committee or Registered Employment Agreement systems.

The Family Income Supplement (FIS) scheme is administered by the Department of Social Protection and matters relating to the scheme are appropriate to my colleague the Minister for Social Protection.

FIS is designed for employees on low wages and not as a support for employers. Some employees on low wages, whether employed in the public or private sector, regardless or

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whether or not they are employed in sectors protected by statutory minimum wages, can avail of support under the FIS scheme, provided the eligibility criteria are met.

Family Income Supplement (FIS) is a weekly tax-free payment for families, including one-parent families, at work on low pay. It is designed to make up 60% of the difference between net family income and the income limit which applies to a particular family size in order to maintain a basic standard of living. The purpose of FIS is to support families on low earnings, providing an incentive for them to remain in employment. Adjustments in earnings may affect an individual's eligibility for FIS depending on their income levels and family circumstances.

European Council Meetings

105. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19124/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): The Council formations for which my Department has particular responsibilities are the Competitiveness Council and the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (ESPHCA).

Since my appointment as Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, there have been no meetings held of either the EU Competitiveness Council or the ESPHCA Council. The next meeting of the Competitiveness Council, which I intend to attend, is due to take place on 25th/26th May, 2010. The next meeting of the ESPHCA Council is due to take place on 7th and 8th June, 2010. Representation at this Council will be decided in the coming weeks.

The following Tables lists the number of Competitiveness Council and EHSPCA meetings and previous Ministerial attendees or otherwise for the last three years:

Competitiveness Councils May 2007 – March 2010

Date	Attendance
21 – 22 May 2007	Deputy Permanent Representative
25 June 2007	Minister Micheál Martin, T.D.
28 September 2007	Minister Michael Ahern, T.D.
22 – 23 November 2007	Minister Michael Ahern, T.D.
25 February 2008	Minister Micheál Martin, T.D.
29 – 30 May 2008	Tánaiste Mary Coughlan, T.D.
8 June 2008 (Special Council on European Institute of Technology)	Deputy Permanent Representative
25 – 26 September 2008	Deputy Permanent Representative
1 – 2 December 2008	Tánaiste Mary Coughlan, T.D.
5 – 6 March 2009	Tánaiste Mary Coughlan, T.D.
28 – 29 May 2009	Tánaiste Mary Coughlan, T.D.
24 – 25 September 2009	Minister Conor Lenihan, T.D.
3 – 4 December 2009	Deputy Permanent Representative
1 – 2 March 2010	Tánaiste Mary Coughlan, T.D.

ESPHCA Councils May 2007 – March 2010

Date	Attendance
30 May 2007	Minister Tony Killeen, T.D
5 December 2007	Minister Billy Kelleher, T.D.
29 February 2008	Minister Billy Kelleher, T.D.
9 June 2008	Minister Billy Kelleher, T.D.
2 October 2008	Minister Billy Kelleher, T.D.
16 – 17 December 2008	Minister Billy Kelleher, T.D.
9 – 10 March 2009	Minister Billy Kelleher, T.D.
8 – 9 June 2009	Deputy Permanent Representative (employment and consumer aspects)
30 November – 1 December 2009	Minister Dara Calleary T.D.
8 March 2010	Minister Dara Calleary T.D.

Job Creation

106. **Deputy Charlie O'Connor** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the action he has taken to create employment in the Tallaght region, Dublin 24; if his attention has been drawn to the need for such initiatives in view of the rise in jobless figures in Tallaght; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19219/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Enterprise Ireland continues to work closely with the other Government agencies and South Dublin County Enterprise Board towards job creation in Tallaght. Since 2008, Enterprise Ireland has approved €29 million approximately and made payments of €19,284,627 to client companies in the Tallaght and South Dublin region. In addition, the agency is offering a range of New Funding Supports this year including:

- The Job Expansion Scheme
- Lean Initiative Programme
- New Market Research Programme
- Key Manager Grants
- Continuation of the ESF

The objective of the **Job Expansion Scheme** is to help Enterprise Ireland client companies achieve increased employment through increased sales and international trade. This will be a competitive fund and three calls for proposals will be advertised during 2010. To promote Innovation and Competitiveness, Enterprise Ireland in 2010 will roll out a **Lean Initiative Programme**. This initiative will cover supports ranging from small consultancy supports to transformational organisational programmes to companies in established manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors. The **New Market Research Programme** provides grant aid for established companies planning a market research programme to develop new market opportunities. Also, the agency’s new **Key Manager Grant** is available to client companies. The grant provides grant support towards employing a key Manager. The grant provides support for up to a maximum duration of 1 year and the maximum salary is €80,000 with rates of 50% , 40% and 30% for small, medium and large companies respectively.

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During 2010, South Dublin CEB will continue to support enterprise development in the area through the provision of both direct and indirect assistance and will ensure that available funds are targeted to maximise entrepreneurial development.

Over the past 5 years, IDA Ireland’s focused strategy for South Dublin, including Tallaght, has been to promote the County as part of an integrated East Region with access to a population base of 1.5 million people. Tallaght and South County Dublin are well equipped to compete with other areas for potential foreign direct investment, with superb infrastructural facilities at Citywest and Grange Castle, and a third level Institute of Technology at Tallaght. Both of these business parks are easily accessible to the population of Tallaght and the environs.

Grange Castle Business Park, close to Clondalkin, is being developed by South Dublin County Council as a world-class business park. The pharmaceutical company Pfizer Inc (formerly Wyeth Biopharma) has established the world’s largest biopharma campus facility and invested €1.8 billion and currently employs approximately 1,300 highly skilled people. It is envisaged that Grange Castle Business Park will attract a cluster of pharmaceutical and biotechnology developments at the leading edge of technology. Planning Permission has also been approved for an Advance Integrated Circuit Manufacturing and Research facility at Grange Castle. This will be an invaluable tool for the future marketing of Grange Castle as a potential source of high quality and large-scale employment for the area. With a clustering of IT projects taking place at the National Digital Park, South Dublin has the potential to become home to a number of projects at the top end of the value chain, providing employment for highly trained and highly qualified workers.

Fiscal Policy

107. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the measures he plans to introduce for the farming sector to offset the increase in costs imposed on the sector by the carbon tax. [18777/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The application of carbon tax to Marked Gas Oil, which at times is referred to as ‘green diesel’ or ‘agricultural diesel’ came into effect from 1 May. The carbon charge in this instance is approximately 4 cents per litre and I do not intend any compensatory measures.

A number of Government Departments, including my Department are exploring options for how best to offset the impact of the carbon tax on low-income households. A number of options are being explored including improving the energy efficiency of low-income households which will help offset increases in fuel prices arising from carbon taxation.

Tax Code

108. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Finance if a person who receives a State disability pension is exempted from carbon tax on home heating oil; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18658/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I announced in the Budget that a carbon tax at a rate of €15 per tonne was introduced on fossil fuels. The tax was applied to petrol and auto-diesel with effect from midnight, 9 December 2009; and applied from 1 May 2010 to kerosene, marked gas oil (also known as ‘green diesel’ or ‘agricultural diesel’), liquid petroleum gas (LPG), fuel oil and natural gas. The application of the tax to coal and commercial peat is subject to a Commencement Order.

The only reliefs from the carbon tax are for those companies that participate in the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS).

A number of Government Departments, including my Department are exploring options for how best to offset the impact of the carbon tax on low-income households. A number of options are being explored including improving the energy efficiency of low-income households which will help offset increases in fuel prices arising from carbon taxation.

Flood Relief

109. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Finance the programme for the drainage of the Dunkellin River, Loughrea, County Galway; if this river will be drained in 2010; the steps the Office of Public Works have to take before drainage commences on this river; if the money is available for such drainage, the proposed cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18670/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Martin Mansergh): The Office of Public Works have commissioned consultants to carry out a Flood Study on the Dunkellin river and its tributaries. The study, which is expected to be completed in June 2010, will identify practical mitigation measures to reduce the flood risk in the catchment. A programme of works will then be drawn up and circulated to all stakeholders including the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Western Regional Fisheries Board and riparian landowners. The timescale and costings of mitigation works cannot be determined until, in the light of any observations, decisions have been reached on the proposals.

General Government Deficits

110. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance further to Questions Nos. 92, 103 and 116 of 28 April 2010, if the interim deficit reduction targets for 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 still apply; if they will be changed as a result of the EUROSTAT decision; if he expects they will make a similar determination regarding the money he plans to give to Anglo Irish Bank in 2010 and 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18727/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): As you are aware, the decision to reclassify the injection of €4 billion into Anglo Irish Bank has resulted in the General Government Deficit being re-calculated to be 14.3% of GDP. The underlying General Government Balance excluding this reclassification is 11.8% of GDP, which is broadly in line with the Budget day estimate. This decision was taken by the Irish authorities and communicated to Eurostat in the course of the transmission of statistical data at the end March 2010, and subsequently published by Eurostat as part of its notification of deficit and debt data for Member States for 2009.

The reclassification of the €4 billion to Anglo in 2009 is a once-off adjustment that only impacts on the 2009 General Government Deficit and does not affect the Budget day forecast for a General Government Deficit of around 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of GDP for 2010, nor does it affect the forecast deficit targets for subsequent years. In that context, Ireland's fiscal targets for the future years have not changed in light of these statistical returns.

The issuance of promissory notes to Anglo Irish Bank and the Irish Nationwide Building Society has been made to ensure that both institutions continue to meet their regulatory capital requirements. It is envisaged that the first payment of monies to either of these institutions will be in 2011, and further payments will then be made on a phased basis over the next 10 to 15 years. The issuance of these promissory notes has impacted fully on the General Government Debt in 2010. These recapitalisations have been made pending the agreement of the respective restructuring plans with the EU commission. Until these restructuring plans have been agreed,

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and the impact, if any, on the General Government Deficit is fully examined it is not appropriate to include these in any measure of the General Government Deficit. As such, they have been classified as financial transactions, and this decision can be reviewed when further information is available at a later stage.

Proposed Legislation

111. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance if he will amend the Freedom of Information legislation to include An Garda Síochána, the vocational educational committees, the National Treasury Management Agency and the newly established National Asset Management Agency; if not, the reason for the failure to include these bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18730/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Officials in my Department are currently examining the issues arising from the intended extension of Freedom of Information provisions to specific functions in An Garda Síochána.

The Vocational Education Committees will be brought in under the Act in the next extension to the Act which is currently being worked on by officials of my Department.

With regard to the National Treasury Management Agency I do not propose to extend FOI to this body for reasons of commercial sensitivity. In relation to the Agency's role as the State Claims Agency, most of its work is covered by legal privilege and it is considered that a partial application of FOI to the State Claims Agency would not be warranted.

NAMA has a commercial mandate to obtain maximum value for the taxpayer and, to achieve this objective it is required to enter into complex commercial negotiations with financial institutions and developers, the nature of which requires in many instances a high degree of commercial confidentiality and therefore it is not appropriate to extend FOI to this body.

112. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance if he will amend the Freedom of Information legislation to include the enforcement functions of the Health and Safety Authority; the road safety functions now carried out by the Road Safety Authority; the functions of the Land Registry and Registry of Deeds now performed by the Property Registration Authority and the proposed removal of the enforcement function of the National Employment Rights Authority; if not, the reason for the failure to include these bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18731/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The enforcement functions of the Health and Safety Authority includes investigations into the breaches of the Health and Safety Act and involves collaboration with An Garda Síochána in the prosecution of such breaches of the Act through the Courts. It is therefore not appropriate that this function should be covered by the FOI Act as disclosure of records in this area of activity could compromise such enforcement activities. All of the other functions of the HSA are covered by the FOI Act.

The Road Safety Authority is not currently under the FOI Act but will be considered for inclusion in the next extension to the Act which is being worked on by my officials.

The Property Registration Authority will be brought in under the Act as part of the above mentioned extension process.

The legislation setting up the National Employment Rights Authority as an independent body is currently being worked on. The proposed exclusion of its enforcement function from the FOI Act is a mirror of the provision contained in section 74 of the HSA Act to specifically

protect law enforcement records against disclosure. It is intended that all other functions of the body will come in under the Act.

Fiscal Policy

113. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance the reason self-catering apartments rented to tourists and university and college accommodation rented to tourists between college terms are not subject to local authority rates in the same way as hotels and bed and breakfasts; his plans to review and amend the Valuation Act on this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18733/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I should point out that bed and breakfasts are exempt from rates under the Valuation Act 2001. Self-catering apartments and university and college accommodation are deemed to be domestic premises under the Valuation Act 2001 and therefore not rateable.

The Act does provide for the rating of apart-hotels i.e. apartments used for the purposes of the trade of hotel-keeping. These units of accommodation are in the main apartments adjoining or adjacent to an hotel and are available for rent to customers in the same way as hotel bedrooms.

As the Deputy is no doubt aware, the Commission on Taxation has submitted proposals with regard to extending the rates base. All taxes, potential taxation measures and expenditure measures are constantly reviewed in the context of the annual Budget and Finance Bill process, and the Commission's recommendations will be further examined in that context.

Deposit Guarantee Scheme

114. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding the bank guarantee scheme for depositors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18778/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The existing statutory Deposit Guarantee Scheme ('DGS') covers retail deposits with all credit institutions authorised in Ireland (including credit unions) up to a maximum of Eur100,000 per qualifying depositor per institution. The DGS does not have an end-date and will continue to apply after 29 September 2010.

On-demand deposits over Eur100,000 and all corporate deposits are currently guaranteed until 29 September 2010 under the Eligible Liabilities Guarantee (ELG) Scheme. This date is subject to six-monthly approval by the European Commission under state aid rules as is the case with all European guarantee schemes. This Scheme is due to be reviewed by the Commission before 1 June 2010. Term deposits made with participating institutions after they joined the Scheme can be guaranteed for the full term of the deposit even if this extends beyond 29 September 2010, subject to a maximum term of 5 years.

A list of the institutions that have joined the ELG Scheme and the dates they joined can be found on the website of the NTMA (www.ntma.ie) who act as operators of the Scheme on my behalf and can also be accessed on my own Department's website.

Departmental Sick Leave

115. **Deputy Noel Ahern** asked the Minister for Finance the sickness arrangements in the public service; and if the practice (details supplied) is standard. [18805/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I refer to the position regarding the sick leave policy in the civil service, for which I have responsibility.

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

The decision whether sick leave is to be granted to an officer and whether it is to be with or without pay is a matter for the Head of the Department. The production of a medical certificate does not in itself entitle the officer to sick leave.

Full pay during properly certified sick absence, provided there is no evidence of permanent disability for service, may be allowed up to a maximum of six months in one year and half pay thereafter, subject to a maximum of twelve months' sick leave in any period of four years. Sick leave with pay at pension rate may be granted to an officer where the sick leave with pay allowable under the ordinary regulations has been exhausted. The payment of pension rate of pay is subject to the condition of a reasonable prospect of a resumption of duty, with an ability to render regular and effective service.

Tax Code

116. **Deputy Noel Ahern** asked the Minister for Finance the regulations regarding taxation of tax exiles; the rules regarding residency, the number of days which can be spent here per year, the Cinderella clause and so on; if the changes as per the Finance Bill 2010 are now in place; and if he will report on the matter specifically in relation to revised regulations in the UK; if our revised regulations are still more generous than UK rules; if the main differences will be outlined; if further revision of our regulations will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18813/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that there is nothing in Irish tax law which makes reference to 'tax exiles'. I am assuming that the reference by the Deputy to 'tax exiles' is a reference to Irish domiciled individuals claiming to be non-resident for tax purposes.

A person is regarded as resident in the State for tax purposes in a tax year if he or she spends:

- 183 days in the State in that year, or
- 280 days in aggregate in that tax year and the preceding tax year.

An individual who is present in the State for 30 days or less in a tax year will not be treated as resident for that year unless he or she elects to be resident. Also, for years up to and including 2008, a day will only count if the individual is present in the State at the end of the day, referred to as the Cinderella rule.

This rule for residence purposes was changed in Finance (No. 2) Act 2008. For tax year 2009 and subsequent tax years, an individual will be regarded as present in the State for a day if he or she is in the State at any time during the day, not just at midnight.

The taxation of individuals in the State is in line with that prevailing in most other OECD jurisdictions, that is to say:

- Individuals who are resident in the State for tax purposes (based on the number of days of presence in the State) are taxable here on their worldwide income; and
- Individuals who are not resident here for tax purposes pay tax here only on income arising in the State and on income derived from working here.

I presume the Deputy's reference to The Finance Bill 2010 changes relates to the Domicile Levy. This levy applies for the tax year 2010 and subsequent years with the first returns due to be filed by 31 October 2011. The levy applies where the following conditions are met:

- The individual is domiciled in and is a citizen of the State in the tax year;
- The world wide income of the individual for the tax year is more than €1,000,000;
- The individuals liability to income tax in the State for the tax year is less than €200,000; and
- The market value of Irish property on the valuation date, 31 December in the tax year, is greater than €5,000,000.

I understand that UK tax residence and ordinary residence rules rely heavily on Case Law, unlike the Irish position which is more clearly set out in Statute Law by reference to the number of days spent in the State in a tax year or a combination of tax years. The UK has a statutory 183-day “override” test: an individual who is present in the UK for more than 183 days in a tax year will be tax resident for that year, regardless of whether he or she may be non-resident under general case law-derived principles. I understand that, for 2008/09 onwards, a day’s presence in the UK is counted only if the individual is present at the end of the day (at midnight).

In relation to the Deputy’s query about a further revision of our regulations, it should be noted that, as with other areas of taxation, the rules are constantly kept under review.

117. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Finance if there are plans to abolish vehicle registration tax; if so, the date same will take effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18827/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have no plans to abolish VRT. In that regard it must be recognised that in Ireland VRT is an important source of revenue for the Exchequer; for example yielding around €1.3bn in 2006, €1.4bn in 2007 and €1.1bn in 2008. The receipts for 2009 at €375 million reflected the contraction in economic activity.

As the Deputy will be aware, it would not be possible to abolish VRT without raising the equivalent amount of money from other sources. The possibility of introducing widespread road pricing has at times been mentioned; however, any such measure is realistically still some way off. Increasing excise on petrol and auto-diesel has also been put forward. Abolishing VRT and collecting the same amount of revenue, that would have been raised in a normal year, from another source would, for example, require an excise, inclusive of VAT, increase on both petrol and auto-diesel of 25 to 30 cent per litre. There is no evidence that such measures would be any more agreeable to the public than VRT is, and indeed each bring their own, if different, set of problems and difficulties.

Tax Collection

118. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [18845/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the underpayment arose due to the fact that the taxpayer was in receipt of a Tax Credit for a number of years to which he was not entitled.

Payment was requested in full settlement, however the Revenue Commissioners are prepared to collect the arrears by reducing his other tax credits over a four-year period.

House Prices

119. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the amount that the price of houses would have to fall in order for the financial system to be at risk, according to the stress tests undertaken for the financial stability report in 2004; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18898/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Results on the two stress-testing exercised relating to the impact of house price decline on the banking system were reported in the Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland's (CBFSAI) Financial Stability Report 2004. The stress-testing exercise contained in the signed article in section 3 of the report examined how Irish banks would perform as a result of simultaneous moves in a number of risks relating to the Irish economy. The stress-testing exercise involved the CBFSAI presenting a range of economic indicators to the banks and asking them to interpret what effect these would have on their performance. In relation to house prices it was assumed that under the stress scenario that house prices growth would amount to 12 per cent in 2003 before declining by 2 per cent and 8 per cent in 2004 and 2005, respectively. The decline in house prices coupled with the other economic variables produced the broad findings that, at that point in 2004, the banks involved could weather the hypothetical scenarios.

Secondly the results of the stress test testing exercise formed the basis of an analysis of the first-round effects on the banking system of falling house prices which was contained in Box D in page 31-23 in section 1 of the Report. This looked at the issue of house prices in isolation. Using loan to value data collected as part of the stress testing exercise, banks' exposure to hypothetical house price falls was estimated. This involved making assumptions about potential defaults rates and declines in house prices. Based on the amount by which the mortgage book had been amortised relative to nominal house prices at the end of 2003, it was the assessment at the time that it would take a 40 per cent decline in house prices coupled with 50 per cent default rate to erode the stock of provisions. In terms of profits it would require the combination of house prices declining by 55 per cent and a default rate of 50 per cent before the banks involved in the stress test would record a loss.

The Deputy may wish to note that, as set out in the Financial Stability Report, there were important limitations inherent in the stress testing exercise. The exercise referred to in the Deputy's question contributed to the CBFSAI's analysis of financial stability at that time, which included a detailed examination of the health of the banking system and as highlighted in the Governor's statement in the report, the CBFSAI's central expectation, based on the CBFSAI's assessment of the risks facing both the household and non-financial corporate sectors, as well as the shock absorption capacity of the banking system, was that the banking system's state of good health would not be compromised over the medium term horizon.

Tax Code

120. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Finance the reason mortgage relief, as currently available, is not guaranteed for the full seven-year period; the further reason, in certain circumstances, that persons can be denied a payment for up to 11 months of the first year of their application; if he will investigate the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cork and ensure that the payment is guaranteed for a period of 84 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18914/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The position is that an individual's entitlement to mortgage interest relief is calculated by reference to a year of assessment, which is defined in the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 as a calendar year i.e. from 1 January to 31 December. It

should be noted that where an individual takes out a qualifying home loan during the year, the interest accruing on the day from which the qualifying home loan is taken out to 31 December of that year qualifies for one full year's tax relief. The individual is entitled to avail of the *full* annual ceiling at the appropriate rate. However, in some circumstances individuals may not benefit from the full relief as their interest repayments may not reach the annual ceiling; this situation can arise in any of the years in which there is an entitlement to relief.

I am advised by Revenue that in the case in question the first year of assessment for which the mortgage qualified for relief was 2004. Relief applies for the first seven tax years, 2004 to 2010 (inclusive), at the first-time buyer rate. Those whose entitlement to relief would otherwise expire in 2010 or after, will continue to qualify for relief at the appropriate rate until end 2017, as provided for in the Finance Act 2010. In the case in question, therefore, relief will apply from 2011 until 2017 at the non-first time buyer rate.

European Council Meetings.

121. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19126/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): As Minister for Finance, I engage frequently with European colleagues and in the present fast changing economic climate I am in frequent contact with European Ministerial colleagues and also with various European Commissioners that hold economic and /or financial dossiers, including the Commissioners for Economic and Monetary Affairs and for Internal Market and Services respectively. Finance Ministers of the sixteen Eurozone Member States meet in the Eurogroup on the eve of Economic and Financial Affairs Council meetings to discuss economic, monetary issues and other issues that relate to the euro area. Since my appointment in May 2008 there have been 24 Eurogroup meetings convened and I have attended 21 of them. Ireland was represented at senior official level, normally by the Irish Economic and Financial Committee (EFC) member at the meetings which I could not attend.

Ecofin usually meets monthly. Formal Ecofin Council meetings usually take place on Tuesdays, the day when meetings of the Cabinet generally take place in Dublin and, therefore there are times when I need to be in Dublin and cannot attend Ecofin meetings. In my absence, Ireland is represented at Ecofin by Ireland's Permanent Representative to the EU. Ireland's EFC member would also attend. Since my appointment in May 2008, there have been 25 Ecofin Council meetings convened of which I have attended 15. The recent informal Ecofin was convened by the Spanish Presidency in Madrid in April. Due to the sudden closure of Irish airspace which prevented anyone travelling from Dublin, Ireland was represented at this meeting by the Irish Ambassador to Spain.

Garda Stations

122. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 237 of 23 March 2010, the position regarding this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19160/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Martin Mansergh): Tender documents are scheduled to be available in late May 2010, following which competitive bids will be

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sought. The Office of Public Works expects to place a contract and to make substantial progress onsite in the second half of the year.

Departmental Contracts

123. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the contracts that have been signed between a company (details supplied) and his Department or State agencies under the aegis of his Department; the details of any such contracts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19167/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): My Department has not entered into any contracts with the company in question. In respect of bodies under the aegis of my Department I have been informed by the National Treasury Management Agency that it frequently enters into contracts related to debt management transactions with Goldman Sachs companies as market counterparties. In addition, the NTMA recognised Goldman Sachs International as a Primary Dealer in Irish Government bonds in February 2010. This brought the number of Primary Dealers to fourteen:

- Barclays Capital, London
- BNP Paribas, London
- Calyon, Paris
- Citigroup Global Markets, London
- Davy Stockbrokers, Dublin
- Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt and London
- Goldman Sachs International, London
- HSBC, Paris
- ING Bank NV, Amsterdam
- J.P. Morgan, London
- Nomura International plc, London
- Royal Bank of Scotland, London
- Société Générale, Paris
- UBS Limited, London

The National Pensions Reserve Fund's (NPRF) long-term strategic asset allocation is broken down for investment purposes into a number of investment mandates. In most cases the NPRF Commission has outsourced the management of these mandates to specialist investment management institutions. The contract for the Fund's North American Growth mandate was awarded to Goldman Sachs Asset Management International. This mandate represents 1.4% of the NPRF. The Fund also has an investment in a Goldman Sachs Asset Management currency pooled investment vehicle. This represents 0.2% of the NPRF.

Goldman Sachs has been engaged by the NTMA to provide advice in relation to certain aspects of the banking system functions delegated by the Government to the NTMA in March. Under the Central Bank of Ireland Act 1942 (as amended), the management of the Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland and the Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority is a matter solely for the Board of the Bank, the Regulatory Authority and the Governor and is not a matter in which I have a role. However, I will ask the Bank if it has recently engaged the company referred to and will revert to the Deputy in writing.

Financial Services Regulation

124. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will respond to the issues raised in correspondence (details supplied) by an organisation in County Cork. [19207/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The concerns outlined in the correspondence enclosed by the Deputy refer to the amendment to Section 35 of the Credit Union Act 1997 contained in the Central Bank Reform Bill 2010 which is receiving its second stage reading in Dáil Éireann at present. Section 35 imposes limits on credit unions in relation to longer-term lending. The restrictions contained in Section 35 of the Credit Union Act 1997 are an important asset and liability instrument which has protected the financial stability of the credit union movement over many years. The need for such a mechanism will be addressed in the forthcoming Strategic Review of the Credit Union Sector in Ireland but in the immediate future it is necessary to address ongoing issues with regard to Section 35 now. The matter was considered by my Department following consultation with the two credit union representative bodies — the Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) and the Credit Union Development Association (CUDA) — and with the Registrar of Credit Unions. I have decided that, in addition to extending from 20% to 30% the proportion of a credit union loan book that may be in respect of loans over five years, it is necessary now to give the Registrar of Credit Unions powers to require credit unions to have appropriate liquidity, provisioning and accounting requirements in place.

The Registrar of Credit Unions has advised the credit union representative bodies that he will take a balanced and proportionate approach on the implementation of the Section 35 requirements. There will also be transitional arrangements operated by the Registrar. In this regard, he has provided an outline to ILCU and CUDA of the type of transitional arrangements and clarifications that will be issued at the time of implementation. These cover matters such as timing of reporting, transitional provisions for minimum provisioning requirements, use of trial periods for rescheduled loans, circumstances where a full provision may not be required on a rescheduled loan provided that the loan is still performing and circumstances under which the level of provision held on a rescheduled loan can be reviewed. The transitional arrangements will help ease the position for credit unions up to the close of the financial year ending in September 2011. They will also allow time for credit unions to adjust to the new regime. The responsibility for provisioning for bad and doubtful debts remains with the board of directors of each credit union who must ensure that, in accordance with the provisions of the Credit Union Act 1997, the annual accounts give a true and fair view of the financial position of the credit union.

There is a balance to be struck between meeting members' needs to reschedule loans and ensuring the stability of the credit union sector overall. It is in the interests of all credit unions that the stability of the sector is safeguarded. I am satisfied that the proposals being brought

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forward in connection with the Central Bank Reform Bill 2010 are appropriate and will achieve this fundamental aim.

Pension Provisions

125. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding the introduction of a pension insolvency minimum guarantee scheme. [19314/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): In the document “Further Measures to Support National Recovery through Social Partnership” (June 2009), the Government tabled a number of proposals in relation to pensions including the establishment of a Pensions Insolvency Minimum Guarantee Scheme (PIMS), which would provide for minimum payments to those schemes participating in the Pension Insolvency Payments Scheme or PIPS, subject to an overall cap. The Government has made no decision about the implementation of this scheme. The PIPS has been introduced by the Government and is being run on a pilot basis for three years. The PIPS is a targeted initiative designed to provide special assistance to certain defined benefit pension schemes. The terms of the scheme are contained in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2009 and require, among other things, that the scheme be operated cost-neutrally for the Exchequer and be available to pension schemes that are winding-up in deficit with an insolvent employer. Where a pension fund is in deficit and the parent company is insolvent, pension trustees will have the option of buying annuities under PIPS — the Government will pay the pensions purchased by the capital sum paid into the Exchequer by the trustees. It is open to any pension scheme that meets the criteria to apply to participate. An explanation of PIPS, including details of the application procedure, is contained on the Department of Finance web site.

Tax Yield

126. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the total receipts to date from carbon tax; the projects on which these moneys were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19328/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the total receipts from the carbon tax for the period January to April 2010, in respect of petrol and auto-diesel only, is €53.1 million, i.e. €48.4 million from the carbon charge and an estimated €4.7 million in respect of VAT. It is estimated that the carbon tax, inclusive of VAT, will yield approximately €250 million in 2010. The revenue will, amongst other things, be used to boost energy efficiency, to support rural transport and to alleviate fuel poverty.

Urban Renewal Schemes

127. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the special tax designation for urban renewal throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19330/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that most of the area-based tax incentive schemes such as urban renewal schemes have been terminated. The most recent urban renewal scheme was the Integrated Area Scheme that was introduced by Finance Act 1998 and terminated on 31 July 2008. Under this scheme, tax relief is available in respect of the construction or refurbishment of residential accommodation, both owner-occupied and rented (i.e. section 23 relief), and of commercial premises that have been

certified by the relevant local authority as being consistent with the aims, objectives and criteria of that local authority's Integrated Area Plan.

The qualifying period originally terminated on 31 December 2002 but this termination date was extended on a number of occasions subject to certain conditions. For example, the final extension from 31 July 2006 to 31 July 2008 depended on the following conditions being met. In the case of commercial projects, a binding contract in writing, under which expenditure on construction work was to be incurred, had to be in place for the particular project on or before 31 July 2006. Work to the value of 15% of the actual construction costs had to be carried out on, or before, 31 December 2006, with compliance being certified by the relevant local authority on, or before, 30 March 2007. While local authority certification was not required in the case of residential projects, there was still a requirement for work to the value of 15% of the actual construction costs to have been carried out on, or before, 31 December 2006. In addition to these conditions, a limit has been placed on the amount of expenditure incurred after 31 December 2006 that could qualify for tax relief. This limit is 75% of the expenditure incurred during 2007 and 50% of the expenditure incurred between 1 January 2008 and 31 July 2008.

Construction work can continue on a building that had not been completed by 31 July 2008 but the expenditure attributable to any work that takes place after that date cannot qualify for tax relief. Tax relief can only start to be claimed after a building has been completed and the building leased or owner-occupied for the required purpose. There are no set dates by which a person has to acquire a tax incentive property in order for tax relief to start to be claimed.

The areas designated for the scheme (by Order of the Minister for Finance) are in line with recommendations made by a special Expert Advisory Panel appointed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and are based on the various Integrated Area plans prepared by local authorities. Set out below is a list of the cities and towns that were designated for the scheme. I would point out that only certain areas within those cities and towns were designated. If the Deputy needs information on the precise areas that were designated, details can be found in the relevant Statutory Instrument . Each Statutory Instrument contains a map of the relevant designated area. They are available at www.irishstatutebook.ie. Alternatively, the relevant local authority can provide information on any designated areas within its remit.

URBAN RENEWAL

A total of 78 Integrated Area Plans (IAPs) were submitted by local authorities under the Scheme and the Expert Panel recommended approval of 49 of these as follows. The sub-areas recommended by local authorities for designation have been reduced in many cases.

City	City
<i>Cork City Council</i> Blackpool/Shandon City Docks Area	<i>Galway City Council</i> 3 suburban LA estates
<i>Dublin City Council</i> Ballymun HARP Inchicore/Kilmainham Liberties/Coombe North East Inner City Millennium/O'Connell St	<i>Limerick City Council</i> 1 large central area <i>Waterford City Council</i> Periphery of commercial centre

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County — Towns	County — Towns
<i>Carlow</i> Carlow	<i>Louth</i> Drogheda, Dundalk
<i>Clare</i> Shannon	<i>Mayo</i> Ballina
<i>Cork</i> Bandon, Cobh, Mallow (N), Passage West(S)/Glenbrook	<i>Meath</i> Navan
<i>Donegal</i> Buncrana	<i>Monaghan</i> Monaghan
<i>Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown</i> Dún Laoghaire	<i>Offaly</i> Birr, Tullamore/Clara
<i>Fingal</i> Balbriggan, Nth. West Blanchardstown	<i>Sligo</i> Sligo
<i>Galway</i> Tuam	<i>South Dublin</i> North Clondalkin, Tallaght
<i>Kerry</i> Tralee	<i>Tipperary NR</i> Roscrea, Thurles
<i>Kildare</i> Athy, Kildare	<i>Tipperary SR</i> Carrick-on-Suir, Tipperary
<i>Kilkenny</i> Kilkenny	<i>Waterford</i> Dungarvan
<i>Laois</i> Portlaoise	<i>Westmeath</i> Athlone, Mullingar
<i>Limerick</i> Newcastle West	<i>Wexford</i> New Ross
<i>Longford</i> Longford	<i>Wicklow</i> Arklow, Wicklow

Tax Code

128. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Finance if a person may write off a particular expense (details supplied) against a tax liability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19344/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Under the provisions of the Tax Acts, a person in receipt of rental income is assessed to income tax on the net amount of the rents received (i.e. the gross rents less allowable expenses incurred in earning those rents). In computing the net amount of the rents received, only those deductions that are specified in section 97(2) of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 are allowable. The main deductible expenses are:

- Any rent payable by the landlord in the case of a sub-lease;
- The cost to the landlord of any goods provided or services rendered to a tenant;

- The cost of maintenance, repairs, insurance and management of the property;
- Interest on borrowed money used to purchase, improve or repair the property; and
- Payment of local authority rates in the case of rateable properties used for commercial purposes.

As payment of the new local authority charge for residential properties is not included on the list of allowable deductions, it is not an allowable expense in computing taxable rental income.

Health Services

129. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number and type of emergency beds at present available for young persons under 18 years who are out of home in Dublin and in the rest of the State; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

[18650/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): I regret that due to industrial action I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to your Parliamentary Question. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Asylum Applications

130. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of unaccompanied minors claiming asylum who arrive here and who are currently in secondary schools; the number of same who have been transferred from Dublin on reaching the age of 18 years; the number of same who are in secondary education and have to leave the relevant school due to the fact that they have been transferred from Dublin to other parts of the country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18982/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): My colleague, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, has provided the statement below, of asylum applications from unaccompanied minors from January 2000 to the end of March 2010.

Asylum applications from Unaccompanied Minors 2000-2010 (31/3)

Year	Applications Received
2000	302
2001	600
2002	288
2003	271
2004	128
2005	131
2006	131
2007	94
2008	98
2009	56
2010 (31/3)	11

I regret that due to industrial action in the Health Service Executive, I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to the remainder of this Parliamentary Question. If this matter

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remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Hospitals Building Programme

131. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Minister for Health and Children when she will approve the construction of the planned new hospital at the National Rehabilitation Hospital, Rochestown Avenue, Dún Laoghaire, County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18662/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The proposal by the National Rehabilitation Hospital to build a new and extended facility needs to be considered within the context of a national policy for the delivery of neuro-rehabilitation services. My Department and the Health Service Executive established a Working Group to develop a policy / strategy for the provision of neuro-rehabilitation services. Its terms of reference include the development of an appropriate policy framework for neuro-rehabilitation and a preferred model of care for the provision of neuro-rehabilitation services. It is expected that the Report of the Working Group will be finalised in Summer 2010.

In the current economic situation, there is a need to ensure that all developments are planned and implemented to give best value for money and with the most appropriate mix of national, regional and local services. Any proposal to further develop neuro-rehabilitation services must also be considered in the context of the current economic climate, available revenue and capital funding and competing priorities for limited funding.

Health Services

132. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Health and Children when consultation will take place with representatives of dentists regarding the recent curtailment of dental services to persons with medical cards; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18678/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Health Service Executive (HSE) has informed dentists of the changes to the Dental Treatment Services Scheme and will be providing ongoing clinical guidance and advice to individual dentists in relation to these changes. The HSE is currently in the process of appointing an Interim Oral Health Lead/Clinical Director. It is my intention to meet the Irish Dental Association after this appointment is made in order to discuss this and other issues.

Medical Cards

133. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18685/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Services for People with Disabilities

134. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her Department

offers a funding scheme in which a disabled person (details supplied) in County Mayo may pursue a third level course with an international correspondence school on a part-time basis from home; if her attention has been drawn to any other funding scheme that may be appropriate in this situation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18687/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I am unaware of any assistance available in the health sector appropriate to the case outlined by him. I understand from the Department of Education, that supports from that Department are not applicable to part-time or distance courses.

Hospital Staff

135. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of consultant rheumatologists here; the plans there are to appoint more; the waiting times for out-patient appointments for rheumatologists in each publicly-funded hospital; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18693/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I regret that due to industrial action I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to your Parliamentary Question. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

National Treatment Purchase Fund

136. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason a private company is used by the National Treatment Purchase Fund to arrange for CT scans to be carried out in St. Vincent’s Hospital, Dublin; the further reason the NTPF does not order the scans directly from the hospital; if this will be considered in order to save an unnecessary intermediary and the cost thereof; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18694/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The NTPF’s primary remit is to facilitate patients who have been waiting longest for treatment on hospital waiting lists. The Fund is obliged as a matter of policy, to source at least 90% of treatment from the private hospital system. The purchase of capacity from the public hospital system is to allow for activity in areas, such as paediatric surgery, which cannot be carried out in private hospitals, but this activity must not adversely affect core services. In 2009, the NTPF sourced 6% of its activity from the public hospital system.

In addition to arranging inpatient care, the NTPF has conducted a number of out-patient initiatives including arranging diagnostic procedures. The NTPF has such an arrangement in place with St Vincent’s University Hospital for the referral of some public patients for radiology investigations. These services are provided in a private clinic, in line with the Fund’s general approach to the purchase of services for public patients.

Patient Statistics

137. **Deputy Bernard Allen** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of persons discharged from acute hospitals in the Mid-Western Health Board area on a hospital by hospital basis and in each case the nursing homes these patients were discharged to on contract by the Health Service Executive; and the procurement practices in place to obtain the best rates possible from those nursing homes and the safeguards in place to ensure standards. [18705/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Health and Children (Deputy Áine Brady): The new Nursing Homes Support Scheme commenced on the 27th October 2009. The scheme was

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introduced in order to address the inequity in the treatment of public and private long-term nursing home residents and in order to alleviate the financial hardship being experienced by long-term residents in private nursing homes. The Nursing Homes Support Scheme is now the single system of financial support for long-term nursing home care and the HSE can no longer contract beds in private nursing homes for such care. The scheme applies to public, private and voluntary nursing homes and allows individuals to choose their own nursing home, subject to it being able to cater for their particular needs.

In order to participate in the scheme, private nursing homes must negotiate and agree a price for the cost of care with the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). Part of the NTPF's role in these negotiations is ensuring value for money for both the individual and the State.

In addition to the new Nursing Homes Support Scheme, on the 1st July 2009 new Care and Welfare Regulations for Residential Care Settings for Older People came into force. The Regulations underpin the *National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland* <http://www.dohc.ie/issues/nursing—home—inspection/standards.pdf> and enabled the Health Information and Quality Authority to commence an independent system of registration and inspection of all nursing homes from that date. Over 170 reports of inspections have been published to date.

The number of persons discharged from acute hospitals in the Mid-Western Health Board area on a hospital by hospital basis and the nursing homes to which they were discharged is a service matter. I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Hospital Appointments

138. **Deputy Bernard Allen** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a decision will be made on the request for an outpatient appointment at Cork University Hospital in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [18706/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The scheduling of patients for hospital treatment is a matter for the consultant concerned in each case and is determined on the basis of clinical need. Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant involved. However, the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) operates an out-patient referral programme in a number of hospitals for certain specialties. It is open to the person in question or anyone acting on their behalf to contact the Fund directly in relation to their case.

Medical Cards

139. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health and Children if, with regard to the primary care reimbursement service in Finglas, she will provide data in respect of the number of new medical cards issued and the number of applications renewed in respect of over 70 years and of individuals and families under 70 years of age for each of the past six month period back to the start of 2008. [18707/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Execu-

tive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

140. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the actual savings incurred to date in 2010 since the commencement of the centralisation of medical cards to the primary care reimbursement service in Finglas, north Dublin. [18708/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

141. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children further to Parliamentary Question No 141 of 28 April 2010, if she will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [18713/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): In the normal course of events, my Department would have asked the Health Service Executive (HSE), which has operational responsibility for the medical card and GP visit card benefits, to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to Parliamentary Question 17235/10. However, because of the current industrial action which is affecting the HSE, it was not possible for the Executive to supply the requested information to the Deputy. The current industrial action is not preventing the processing of medical card and GP visit card applications in the HSE.

Pre-school Services

142. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if children aged between three years and three years and two months will qualify for the free preschool childhood care and education scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18750/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): I have responsibility for implementing the free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, which was introduced in of January this year. Children will qualify for the scheme where they are aged more than 3 years and 2 months and less than 4 years and 7 months at 1 September each year. This means that children born between 2 February 2006 and 30 June 2007 will qualify for the free pre-school year in September 2010. The upper age limit does not apply where children are developmentally delayed and would benefit from participating in the pre-school year at a later age or where a child cannot start primary school until a later date due to the enrolment policy of the local primary schools.

The majority of children participating in the scheme would be expected to commence primary school between the age of 4 years and 3 months and 5 years and 6 months. The age range for eligibility under the scheme is designed to allow parents the opportunity to take up the free school place at a time that is more suitable to them. It is also necessary to the objectives of the scheme that the free pre-school provision is delivered within a structure which supports the best delivery of pre-school education. This requires a reasonably consistent age range of children attending and it is considered that the age range is appropriate.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

143. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she would put extra resources into the Health Service Executive to help them to clear the backlog of applications for the fair deal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18755/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Health and Children (Deputy Áine Brady): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Casemix Management Systems

144. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Health and Children the amount a hospital (details supplied) has been penalised or awarded under the Health Service Executive Casemix management system between 2005 and 2010 inclusively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18761/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

145. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Health and Children the amount a hospital (details supplied) has been penalised or awarded under the Health Service Executive Casemix management system between 2005 and 2010 inclusively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18762/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

146. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Health and Children the amount a hospital (details supplied) has been penalised or awarded under the Health Service Executive Casemix management system between 2005 and 2010 inclusively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18763/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Hospital Waiting Lists

147. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of persons waiting to receive a service, therapy, appointment or surgery under each category of service provided in a hospital (details supplied), both in patient and out patient; the average length of wait in each category in 2008,2009 and to date in 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18774/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Mental Health Services.

148. **Deputy Noel Ahern** asked the Minister for Health and Children the psychiatric services

currently operating on Dublin's northside; the structural or organisational changes that are taking place; the reason a person (details supplied) has been moved to a new team and location; if this was the result of their medical condition or category, location of their home address or other; and if it will be arranged that they will be allowed to continue with the existing team and location. [18815/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Vaccination Programme

149. **Deputy Noel Ahern** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will clarify her announcement on January 2010 regarding the HPV vaccination programme for girls currently in first year; if the programme will start before the summer or afterwards; if it applies to girls currently in first year; if it will be administered to girls now in first year who will be in second year in the Autumn and who may only be reached after the summer; and when the programme will proceed to next stage. [18826/10]

159. **Deputy Michael Noonan** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the anti cervical cancer vaccination programme will be introduced for girls in schools; the way that the programme will be phased; when the first phase will commence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18881/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 149 and 159 together.

The HPV vaccination programme for first year girls in secondary schools will, as promised, start before the end of this school term with the first schools being visited during the week of 17th May 2010 and the programme being commenced in the remainder of schools in September next. During this calendar year all girls currently in first year and those entering first year in September will be offered the vaccination. Those students who receive their first vaccination in school this May will be offered their second dose through HSE vaccination clinics in July and their third dose in school in the autumn. The programme will continue after this commencement phase with vaccine being offered to all girls in first year in secondary school each year.

Home Help Service

150. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support the case of persons (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [18831/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive, it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course. However, I would also recommend that you inform the family mentioned that it is open to them to contact their local health office directly to seek personal assistance / home supports, assistance towards the cost of clothing and to obtain an application form for the motorised transport grant.

Medical Cards

151. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason there is a delay in the approval and processing of a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 8; and the reason that correspondence from both this person and this Deputy has not been responded to. [18836/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

152. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be approved a medical card. [18849/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Hospitals Building Programme

153. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health and Children the cost of building the new Health Service Executive community nursing hospital in Ballincollig, County Cork, including the purchase of the site; when she expects it will be fully equipped; and the anticipated cost of the equipment. [18853/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Health and Children (Deputy Áine Brady): I regret that due to industrial action I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to your Parliamentary Question. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Hospital Services

154. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health and Children if it is the case that the new Health Service Executive community nursing hospital in Ballincollig, County Cork, which was built with public funds, is to be put out to tender to be run by a private operator as a profit-making business; and if so, when she anticipates that this will happen. [18854/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I regret that due to industrial action I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to your Parliamentary Question. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

155. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has adopted a general policy that hospitals built with public money will be handed over to private operators, or if this practice will cease when the public service recruitment embargo is lifted. [18855/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I have no plans to introduce a general policy of the type referred to by the Deputy. If he wishes to raise a particular issue or service in this regard I will respond further to him.

Health Services

156. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will have dental treatment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18867/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Children in Care

157. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will respond to an issue (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18870/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): The Independent Review Group on Child Deaths has commenced its work. It is intended that the Group will complete its work within a period of six months.

The HSE is in the process of validating details regarding the deaths of children in care over the last ten years. I would expect that the case referred to by the Deputy will be included as part of the validated list to be supplied to the Review Group. I will arrange to have the matter brought to the attention of the HSE.

Medical Cards

158. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a person (details supplied) in Dublin 12 who has a medical card must pay a €75 tax on a one-day hospital procedure; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18878/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I regret that due to industrial action I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to your Parliamentary Question. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Question No. 159 answered with Question No. 149.

160. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a decision will be reached on an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18892/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Health Service Staff

161. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the new general practitioner will take up his or her post in Aughrim, Ballinasloe, County Galway; if it will be in the terms of reference of employment to attend weekly at Aughrim Health Centre; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18894/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Health Services

162. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will reverse the changes made to the dental treatment services scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18897/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The decision to limit the funding available to the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) was made in view of the current position of the public finances and the 60% increase in expenditure in the DTSS over the past five years. The HSE has introduced measures to contain DTSS expenditure at the 2008 level of approximately €63 million. This reflects the imperative to achieve overall reductions in public expenditure while providing essential health services to patients. The HSE will monitor the ongoing effect of these changes from a clinical and budgetary perspective.

Health Service Allowances

163. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Health and Children if a person (details supplied) in County Cork is entitled to a mobility allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18913/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I regret that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive, it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course. However, I would also recommend that you inform the individual mentioned that it is open to them to contact their local health office directly to obtain an application for mobility allowance.

Hospital Services

164. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 17. [18976/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Pre-school Services

165. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [18977/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): I have responsibility for implementing the free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, which was introduced in January of this year.

As I pointed out the Deputy in my previous reply, children aged more than 3 years and 2 months and less than 4 years and 7 months at 1 September each year are eligible for the ECCE scheme. There is no provision under the scheme for children to avail of the free pre-school

year who are below the qualifying age. There is provision to make exceptions for children who are required to start primary school when they are older than 5 years and 7 months because of the local schools enrolment policies.

In the case referred to in details attached to your question, where a parent was granted an exception, the parent in question advised my Office that there was a particular high intake of children into the Junior Infants class in the local national school in September 2009. As a result and in the interest of spreading the high numbers more evenly, several parents, with the approval of the school, opted to start their children in the school from September 2010. Following consideration of the circumstances as outlined, it was decided to allow the exceptions on the grounds of the school's enrolment policy.

As stated in my previous reply, the child in question is not eligible to avail of the scheme in September 2010 but will be eligible in September 2011.

Medical Cards

166. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding patients diagnosed with cancer who have applied for medical cards; if there is a specific application process in place for such patients; if not, if she will be in a position to put in place such a process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18981/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): When the new arrangements regarding the centralising of the medical card and GP visit card application process to the Health Service Executive's Primary Care Reimbursement Service are completed, the Executive will be aiming for a turnaround time of 15 days or less for all medical card applications. Emergency applications will be dealt with immediately, with a card issuing within 24 hours.

I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the specific information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

167. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of nursing home applicants and residents that have declined to sign up for the nursing home scheme; the funding mechanism by which they are covered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18990/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Health and Children (Deputy Áine Brady): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

168. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of nursing home applicants and residents that have signed up for the nursing home support scheme; the amount that has been awarded by the State under the nursing home support scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18991/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Health and Children (Deputy Áine Brady): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Official Engagements

169. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health and Children, further to Parliamentary Question No. 117 of 31 March 2010, when she will reply to this question; the reason she is unable to answer a question regarding a meeting that she personally attended. [18993/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I met with a delegation from the Justice for Magdalenes group recently, together with officials from the HSE and from my Department. The HSE has undertaken to make enquiries regarding the various matters which have been raised by the group with regard to the role of the health boards. I will revert to the group on the completion of those enquiries.

Health Services

170. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason a person (details supplied) in Dublin 1 has not received the medical treatment they require; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19027/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Medical Cards

171. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19032/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Health Services

172. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health and Children if, in view of Health Service Executive Circular 008/10 in respect of cuts to the dental treatment services scheme, she will advise of the types of circumstances in which a person in need of denture repairs will be deemed to have a clinical emergency entitling them to reimbursement under the scheme. [19044/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Medical Cards

173. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will expedite an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19053/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Proposed Legislation

174. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans to amend the Medical Practitioners Act 2007; the discussions she has had regarding same with interested parties; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19086/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): It is expected that two minor technical amendments to the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 will be included in legislation later this year. The Medical Council recently wrote to my Department seeking certain amendments to the Medical Practitioners Act 2007. This matter is currently being considered. The Medical Practitioners (Professional Indemnity)(Amendment) Bill 2009, a private members Bill in the name of Deputy James Reilly, was debated at second stage in the Dáil in October 2009. I undertook at that time to examine the issues raised in the Bill relating to professional indemnity cover for medical practitioners and to revert to Deputy Reilly. I have since convened a group of interested stakeholders and consultations on the issues raised are ongoing.

Hospital Services

175. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason the statistics from the mid-west sexual assault treatment unit were not included in the annual report of the national sexual assault treatment units which she launched recently despite the fact that there were 40 forensic medical examinations carried out at the unit in Limerick; when the Limerick unit will be properly recognised and properly funded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19089/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I regret that due to industrial action I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to your Parliamentary Question. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Services for People with Disabilities

176. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that cutbacks in the funding to an organisation (details supplied) in County Limerick will affect the availability of services for adults with intellectual disabilities in the mid-west region; if she will address this shortfall in order that vulnerable people will have a service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19090/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Ambulance Service

177. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will ensure that upskilling for paramedics not just for advanced paramedics who work in the ambulance

[Deputy Jan O’Sullivan.]

service is provided on the same basis as EU norms; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19092/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I regret that due to industrial action I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to your Parliamentary Question. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Health Services

178. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on fears expressed in County Donegal for the safety of elderly people as a result of cutbacks in the home help service; the way she plans to protect the home help service throughout the country from the effect of budget cutbacks; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19093/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Health and Children (Deputy Áine Brady): I regret that due to industrial action I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to your Parliamentary Question. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

179. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [19104/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I regret that due to industrial action I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to your Parliamentary Question. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Census of Population

180. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if he will support the Irish Autism Action Group with the request on the census (details supplied). [19111/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): The Central Statistics Office (CSO) has statutory responsibility for the carrying out of the census of the population in Ireland. The CSO has advised my Department that it is not possible to include a specific question on autism or autistic spectrum disorder in the 2011 census questionnaire. The Department of Health and Children does not collect information on children identified with autism and aspergers on a national or international basis. Information pertaining to diagnosis is specifically excluded from the National Intellectual Disability Database as the database is not designed as a medical epidemiological tool. Accordingly the database does not record the incidence of autism or any other disability.

The other matter raised in the Sunday Tribune Newspaper in relation to the allocation of resources for autism and the collection of autism statistics is a matter for the Health Service Executive. However, I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Health Service Allowances.

181. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of

domiciliary care allowance applications in each of the five years up to 1 April 2009; the number of these that were declined; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19118/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive, it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

European Council Meetings.

182. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that she was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings she attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in her place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19128/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council normally meets in formal session on two occasions during each Presidency period of six months. Health matters are discussed in detail at one of these formal Councils. The following table gives the information requested by the Deputy.

Year	Number of EPSCO Councils	Number of EPSCO Councils (Health)	Number Attended by Minister	Number Attended by Officials in place of Minister
2007	3	2	1 (Minister represented by Minister of State at Department of Health and Children)	1
2008	4	2	2 (Minister represented by Minister of State at Department of Health and Children at one of these)	
2009	5	4*	3	1
2010 (to date)	1	0	n/a	n/a

*2 of these meetings were called specifically to discuss the Influenza Pandemic (H1N1) 2009.

Hospital Services

183. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health and Children the instance of exstrophy-epispadias complex here; if surgical correction of this condition is available here; if not, if she will explore the possibility of making such surgery available on an all-Ireland basis through co-operation with the health authorities in the Six Counties; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19209/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The figures available to my Department indicate an incidence rate of approximately 1 in 10,000 births over the period 2004-2008, but caution must be exercised in relying on these figures given the small numbers involved. The requirement for cross border co-operation will be considered conjointly by the Department of Health and Children and the HSE in the light of currently available services.

[Deputy Mary Harney.]

In relation to the availability of surgical correction of this condition here, I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Departmental Bodies

184. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Health and Children the professions which have completed registration to the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and qualify to use the title of a designated health and social care profession and where the determination of complaints relating to their fitness to practice has been completed under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005. [19210/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The ongoing regulatory programme undertaken by my Department has seen the introduction of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005, providing for statutory registration for twelve designated health and social care professional grades, as follows:

- Clinical Biochemists
- Dieticians
- Medical Scientists
- Occupational Therapists
- Orthoptists
- Physiotherapists
- Podiatrists
- Psychologists
- Radiographers
- Social Care Workers
- Social Workers, and
- Speech and Language Therapists

The structure of the system of statutory registration will comprise a registration board for each of the professions to be registered, a Health and Social Care Professionals Council with overall responsibility for the regulatory system and a committee to deal with disciplinary matters. Arrangements for the establishment of the first of these registration boards are currently being finalised.

Part 6 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005, entitled “Complaints, Inquiries and Discipline”, refers to issues concerning Fitness to Practice. The Act sets out the grounds on which a complaint may be made to the Council, i.e. professional misconduct, poor professional performance or a failure to comply with a term or condition of registration imposed under this Part etc. As soon as practicable after receiving a complaint, the Council shall refer the complaint to a preliminary proceedings committee for its opinion on whether there is sufficient cause to warrant further action being taken in relation to the complaint. Following this con-

sideration, the Act provides for steps to be followed if, in the opinion of the preliminary proceedings committee, the complaint does not warrant further action. If a preliminary proceedings committee is of the opinion that there is sufficient cause to warrant further action being taken there is the option to:

- (a) refer the complaint for resolution by mediation or other informal means, or
- (b) refer the complaint to a professional conduct committee or a health committee.

The Council may apply to the Court for an order directing a registration board to suspend the registration of a person against whom a complaint has been made if the Council considers that the suspension is necessary to protect the public until further steps are taken in relation to the complaint. It should be noted that this part of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 has yet to be commenced. Part 6 of the Act will need to be commenced in advance of the opening of the first register.

Medical Cards

185. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19211/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Suicide Incidence

186. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Health and Children the numbers of suicides in the first three quarters of 2009 and the corresponding figures for 2008. [19213/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): Data on mortality is compiled by the Central Statistics Office and published in the Annual and Quarterly Reports on Vital Statistics. The number of suicides in the first three quarters of 2008 and 2009 are shown in the following table:

Suicide Figures by Quarter

Year	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3
2008	75	95	109
2009	106	122	126

Note: 2008 and 2009 figures are by year of registration and are provisional.

The provisional figures presented for the 1st three Quarters of 2009 show an increase on the figures for the same period in 2008. However, the figures for 2008 were lower than previous years. Caution should be exercised in comparing the 2009 statistics with 2007 or 2008 as these figures are also provisional and will be subject to change following the outcome of Coroners' inquests.

General Medical Services Scheme

187. **Deputy Michael Noonan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason she removed cytamem solution from the list of eligible medicines under the general medical scheme;

[Deputy Michael Noonan.]

if her attention has been drawn to the hardship this has caused to persons with medical cards who are anaemic; if she will restore the medication to the list; if she will recommend an alternative generic substitute which medical card holders may obtain; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19214/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Health Service Executive has advised that there had been a supply shortage with Cytamen. Alternative arrangements for patients were put in place during this time. The supply issue has now been resolved and the drug is again available under the General Medical Service Scheme.

Hospital Waiting Lists

188. **Deputy Michael Noonan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the long waiting list for urologist services in the Mid-Western Health region; if her further attention has been drawn to the fact that only two urologists serve the region; the plans that the Health Service Executive has to make further appointments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19215/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I regret that due to industrial action I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to your parliamentary question. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Special Educational Needs

189. **Deputy Michael Noonan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the allocation made to a school (details supplied) in County Limerick is insufficient and that on their present spending profile funds will run out in October 2010; if her further attention has been drawn to the fact that further staff cutbacks are not possible; if she will provide the school with the necessary additional funds they require; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19216/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Health Service Allowances

190. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the hardship that will be incurred by persons using oxygen who now have had the financial allowance removed by her; when will the allowance be reinstated in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19318/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Health and Children (Deputy Áine Brady): I regret that due to industrial action I am not in a position to provide a substantive response to your Parliamentary Question. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Medical Cards

191. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding

a medical card application in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19319/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

192. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19320/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

193. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children if an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork was correctly assessed in view of their income; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19321/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

194. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19322/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

195. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19323/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

196. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19324/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

197. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19325/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

198. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19326/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

199. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Health and Children if a person (details supplied) in County Cork is entitled to a medical card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19347/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I wish to advise the Deputy that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, however, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course.

Health Services

200. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [19350/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I regret that due to industrial action affecting the Health Service Executive, it is not possible for the Executive to supply the information requested. If this matter remains of continuing concern to you, I would invite you to raise it with me again in due course. However, I would also recommend that you inform the individual mentioned that it is open to them to contact their local health office directly.

Pre-school Services

201. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there is an appeals process for children who fall under the three years three months rule to receive the early child care supplement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19353/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): I have responsibility for implementing the free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, which was introduced in January this year and which replaced the Early Childcare Supplement. This scheme provides for a free pre-school year for qualifying children before they commence primary school.

Children will qualify for the free pre-school year place when they are aged more than 3 years and 2 months and less than 4 years and 7 months on 1 September each year. This means that children born between 2 February 2006 and 30 June 2007 will qualify for the free pre-school

provision in September 2010. The upper age limit does not apply where children and developmentally delayed and would benefit from participating in the pre-school year at a later age or where children cannot enroll for primary school until they are more than 5 years and 7 months because of the local primary schools enrolment policies and parents can seek exemptions on either of these grounds. There is no provision to waive the lower age limit.

202. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health and Children the grants that are available for the provision of sessional pre-school facilities by persons who wish to provide same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19356/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): I have responsibility for implementation of the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010 (NCIP) which is a multi-annual programme to improve the availability and quality of childcare options, primarily through capital grant-aiding the construction and refurbishment of childcare facilities. As you are aware, following the review of Government expenditure last year, a decision was taken not to approve any further capital grant applications and to close the NCIP to new applications. As a result, while capital grant funding amounting to €30 million to meet existing NCIP commitments is continuing to be paid in 2010, no other capital funding is currently available to my Office. The position in regard to future capital grant funding will be reviewed later this year.

Port Capacity

203. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport if he will provide details of the national co-ordination of capital developments undertaken by various Irish ports with a view to ensuring that each port's plans are consistent with the overall national policy on ports and that the appropriate level of capacity is developed. [18780/10]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The provision of adequate and efficient port capacity is an important element of ports policy and my Department has commissioned a number of studies on the matter over the last decade. The Ports Policy Statement published in 2005 outlines that the provision and funding of port capacity is best driven by the commercial port companies themselves in response to the demands of the market. The Dublin Port Study carried out by my Department under the NDP and published in August 2009 provides the most recent analysis of future traffic and capacity projections at our commercial seaports. The study highlighted the need to develop significant additional port capacity by 2025 — 2030. Such is the nature of the expected future demand, the capacity required will necessitate the provision of significant developments, such as that envisaged at Dublin or Bremore, in addition to other projects around the State currently under consideration. My Department continues to monitor both the capacity situation at our ports and the continuing progress on the various development proposals at our ports.

204. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport the number of shipping movements through the Port of Waterford from 2005 to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19084/10]

205. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport the tonnage of cargo passing through the Port of Waterford from 2005 to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19085/10]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 204 and 205 together.

[Deputy Noel Dempsey.]

The Central Statistics Office publishes a comprehensive annual report entitled “Statistics of Port Traffic”. This report covers such matters as the number and size of vessels and the gross tonnage and type of tonnage handled at each port in the State, including the Port of Waterford. This report is available on the Office’s website, *www.cso.ie*, which includes archived reports dating back to 1998. The figures for the preceding year are usually published in July, and figures for 2009 should be available then. Figures for 2010 are not yet available. The Irish Maritime Development Office also publishes shipping traffic statistics on a quarterly basis and these are available on its website *www.imdo.ie*.

European Council Meetings

206. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Transport the number of Council of the European Union’s meetings that he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19132/10]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The details are:

Transport Council Date	
<i>2007</i>	
2nd October	Minister was represented by officials
29th/30th November	Minister was represented by officials
<i>2008</i>	
7th April	Minister attended
13th June	Minister attended
9th Oct	Minister of State attended
9th Dec	Minister of State attended
<i>2009</i>	
30th March	Minister of State attended
11th June	Minister was represented by officials
9th October	Minister was represented by officials
17th December	Minister attended
<i>2010</i>	
11th March	Minister was represented by officials
4th May	Minister was represented by officials

Citizenship Applications

207. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 13; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18671/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): A valid application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy’s Question was received in the Citizenship Division of my Department in September 2008. All valid applications are dealt with in chronological order as this is deemed to be the fairest to all applicants. The average processing time from application to decision is now at 26 months. More complicated cases can at times take more than the current average, while an element of straight

forward cases can be dealt with in less than that timescale. Additional resources have been allocated to the Citizenship Division of my Department in order to reduce backlogs and provide a better quality service to all applicants. This has had a positive impact on processing times and has enabled certain categories of applicant to be dealt with more expeditiously. These include refugees, spouses of Irish citizens and minors.

Officials in the Citizenship Division inform me that processing of the application is at an advanced stage and the file will be submitted to me for a decision in due course. The length of time taken to process each application should not be classified as a delay, as the length of time taken for any application to be decided is purely a function of the time taken to carry out necessary checks. There is a limit to the reduction in the processing time that can be achieved as applications for naturalisation must be processed in a way which preserves the necessary checks and balances to ensure that it is not undervalued and is only given to persons who genuinely satisfy the necessary qualifying criteria.

208. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding an application for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18832/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): A valid application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Division of my Department in July 2007 and I decided in my absolute discretion to grant a certificate of naturalisation. The person in question was informed of this decision in a letter issued to him on 23 April, 2010. A certificate of naturalisation will issue to the person concerned on receipt of documentation requested to finalise his application.

Garda Recruitment

209. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if successful candidates to join An Garda Síochána who have been called and have passed their medical and physical tests can be expected to be called for training; if so, when this is likely to occur; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18669/10]

219. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when the next recruitment round for An Garda Síochána will take place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18835/10]

221. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when advertising will commence for the next intake of gardaí; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18865/10]

225. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the most recent available figures relating to the strength of An Garda Síochána; his views on the consequences which the current moratorium on Garda recruitment may have on the force when replacing the numbers of gardaí retiring; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19034/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I propose to take Questions Nos. 209, 219, 221 and 225 together.

At the latest date for which comprehensive figures are readily available, there were 14,523 fully attested members of An Garda Síochána with a further 229 recruits in training. The Garda Commissioner is closely monitoring the levels of Garda strength around the country, taking

[Deputy Dermot Ahern.]

into account the level of retirements and recent attestations of student. I have consulted with the Garda Commissioner and my colleague the Minister for Finance on when a resumption of Garda recruitment might be necessary so as to keep Garda numbers up to approved levels. My priority is to maintain Garda operational strength and, therefore, I am planning to commence recruitment to the Force by the end of the year. A recruitment drive will be necessary to compensate for retiring members and to keep Garda numbers up to approved levels and I expect an advertisement to be published in the media in the coming months. I am informed by the Garda authorities that applicants selected by the Public Appointments Service and who have successfully undergone a Physical Competency Test, a Medical Examination and also Character Vetting will remain on a panel and are available to be offered positions as Garda Trainees in a future intake.

Garda Operations

210. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will support a matter (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [18674/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the location referred to is in the Raheny Garda District. I am further informed that local Garda management is not aware of any incidents of the type referred to by the Deputy having occurred at this location. Any such incident reported to An Garda Síochána will be subject to investigation. A member of the local Community Policing Unit is allocated specifically to the area referred to and regularly meets local residents. The area is subject to regular patrols by uniform and plain clothes personnel, including the Community Policing Unit, the Garda Mountain Bike Unit and the local Detective and Drugs Units, supplemented as required by the Divisional Crime Task Force and Traffic Corps personnel. Local Garda management closely monitors and keeps under review patrols and other operational strategies in place, in conjunction with crime trends and policing needs of the communities in the area, to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public. Current policing strategies are designed to prevent crime, public order offences and anti-social behaviour, and community policing is a central feature and core value of policing policy. This will ensure an environment conducive to the improvement of the quality of life for residents.

Departmental Correspondence

211. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if the information requested by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will be determined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18692/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I regret that the information requested by the Deputy is not readily to hand. I will write to the Deputy as soon it is available.

Commercial Rent Reviews

212. **Deputy Pádraic McCormack** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform his plans to abolish the upward only rent review clauses in existing leases; if this will be done retrospectively and the periods for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18712/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The Deputy will be aware that I have introduced legislation which ensures that, for business leases entered into on or after 28 February of this year, the inclusion of upward only rent review clauses is effectively prohibited. Similar action in relation to existing leases was not possible for legal and constitutional reasons. I am conscious of the difficulties which are being faced by those who are parties to existing leases where the traditional arrangement applies. The arrangement which has evolved over the years in relation to commercial rent reviews is that such reviews take place every five years on an upwards only basis. It is important to note that these arrangements are not mandated by any legislative requirement. Rather, they represent well settled practice in this area. I am strongly of the view that a flexible and pragmatic approach should be taken to rent reviews which arise in relation to existing leases. It is not in anyone's interest that vacancy rates increase to an unacceptable level because of a reluctance to offer sensible concessions to traders who are in difficulty.

Visa Applications

213. **Deputy Deirdre Clune** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will review the application of a person (details supplied) in County Cork for a six week extension to a working holiday authorisation; the reason there is a delay; when this person will expect to receive a response; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18714/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I have been informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that to date they have not received an application for further leave to remain in the State from the person mentioned by the Deputy. The Working Holiday Authorisation which is issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs is available to young people who wish to stay in Ireland for an extended holiday and who are afforded the opportunity to work casually in order to fund their stay. It is granted for the duration of one year and is non renewable.

Citizenship Applications

214. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding an application for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18717/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): A valid application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Division of my Department in November 2006 and I decided in my absolute discretion to grant a certificate of naturalisation. The person in question was informed of this decision in a letter issued to him on 29 October, 2009. A certificate of naturalisation was sent via registered post to the person in question on 25 February, 2010.

Deportation Orders

215. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding an application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18719/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The person concerned arrived in the State on 30 September 2007. She was given permission to remain in the State until 30 September 2008 and has remained in the State since that date without permission. In accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 19 November 2009, that the Minister proposed to make a Depart-

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ation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of submitting written representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against her. Representations have been received on behalf of the person concerned.

The position in the State of the person concerned will now be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be considered before the file is passed to me for decision. Once a decision has been made, this decision and the consequences of the decision will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

Asylum Support Services

216. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the person who is responsible for inspecting hostels (details supplied) to ensure conditions are satisfactory and quality of the food is also satisfactory; the number of these inspections that are carried out; if the hostels are advised of the date of inspection beforehand; and if the inspection team sees the preparation of the meals. [18797/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The Reception & Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department has responsibility for the accommodation of asylum seekers under the Government policy of direct provision and dispersal. As of 2 May, 2010, there are 6,337 persons residing in 50 centres located throughout the State under contract to RIA.

RIA engages independent external assessors, with expertise in areas such as fire safety and food preparation, to conduct comprehensive inspections of all centres at least once a year. These inspections are always unannounced. The inspectors look at all aspects of the accommodation centre in relation to the proprietor’s obligations under the contract. Reception, staff cover, menus, food preparation, facilities being provided, maintenance of the property and fire and safety issues are subject to inspection.

Further to the above, RIA has an internal Inspections Unit which also conducts inspections which, resources allowing, are carried out on a twice yearly basis. These inspections are also unannounced. While inspectors (both internal and external) do not oversee the preparation of meals, they are obliged to sample either the mid-day or evening meal. External inspectors inspect the food preparation areas and report their observations in relation to hygiene and good practice to RIA. Aside from the formal inspection regime outlined above, all centres are subject to other unannounced visits by RIA staff, including senior management, to ensure that standards are being maintained. The maintenance of standards is also facilitated by ‘clinics’ carried out in centres. This involves staff from RIA holding meetings with residents in centres on a one-to-one basis. These afford residents an opportunity to comment on accommodation and operating standards as well as facilitating discussion on other issues.

Any diminution in standards which comes to the attention of the RIA is immediately followed up. Proprietors are instructed to make any changes and improvements deemed necessary. Follow-up inspections are also arranged as appropriate. In cases where standards stipulated in the contract have not been met and the proprietor has not made sufficient efforts to remedy the situation, the contract may be terminated.

A number of asylum seeker accommodation centres have received the Excellence Ireland Quality Association mark, or equivalent. Although RIA welcomes the recognition of standards shown by the EIQA award, and notwithstanding the stringency of its own contractual requirements, it does not oblige operators to obtain it. The following table outlines the level of inspections and information clinics carried out on RIA centres over the past 3 years. The ratio between internal and external inspections during this period was 57% : 43% respectively.

Year	No. of centre Inspections completed
2007	100
2008	139
2009	145

In respect of the two centres specified by the Deputy in her question, inspections were carried out as per the following table.

	2010	2009	2008	2007
Centre 1 (HH)	None to date	2 × internal +1 × external	1 × internal +1 × external	1 × external
Centre 2 (GC)	1 × internal	1 × internal +1 × external	1 × internal +1 × external	1 × internal +1 × external

Residency Permits

217. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will approve an application for EU spousal recognition in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18833/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Immigration Division of my Department that the application by the person concerned for residence in the State based on EU Treaty Rights was reviewed and that a decision was issued by registered post to the person concerned on the 6th April, 2010.

Garda Recruitment

218. **Deputy Charlie O'Connor** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the rules, regulations and possibilities in respect of members of the Police Force in the United Kingdom transferring here under his jurisdiction; if any such transfers have taken place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18834/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): Under current regulations on admission and appointment to the Garda Síochána, recruitment to the Garda rank is open to all citizens of the EEA, although there is no provision for serving members in police forces in other States to apply directly for posts at higher ranks. Under an Intergovernmental Agreement on Police Co-operation between Ireland and the UK, however, provision is made for members from the Garda Síochána and the PSNI to apply for posts in the other Force at ranks above Inspector. Giving effect to this will require changes to the current Garda regulations, and my Department is in ongoing discussions on this with the Garda Commissioner, the Garda representative associations and the relevant authorities in Northern Ireland Office. Under this Agreement, personnel exchanges between the Garda Síochána and the PSNI are already in place, and a Garda Superintendent was recently seconded to the PSNI.

Question No. 219 answered with Question No. 209.

Citizenship Applications

220. **Deputy Seán Power** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when a decision will be made on the application for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18861/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): A valid application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Division of my Department in August 2009. All valid applications are dealt with in chronological order as this is deemed to be the fairest to all applicants. The average processing time from application to decision is now at 26 months. More complicated cases can at times take more than the current average, while an element of straight forward cases can be dealt with in less than that timescale.

The length of time taken to process each application should not be classified as a delay, as the length of time taken for any application to be decided is purely a function of the time taken to carry out necessary checks. There is a limit to the reduction in the processing time that can be achieved as applications for naturalisation must be processed in a way which preserves the necessary checks and balances to ensure that it is not undervalued and is only given to persons who genuinely satisfy the necessary qualifying criteria.

Question No. 221 answered with Question No. 209.

Visa Applications

222. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the way an American citizen may remain in this country beyond the 90 day holiday visa granted on entry. [18868/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I would refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 176 on 29 April 2010 in which I stated that it is the policy of my Department not to extend a permission to remain to persons who are admitted for a period of 90 days or less on a short stay visit, save in very exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. The reason for that policy is that an extension of visitor's permission should not generally arise in circumstances where the person has accurately and fully disclosed their purpose for intending to come to the State at the visa application stage and/or to the immigration officer at the port of entry. Where exceptional and unforeseen circumstances arise, the person may contact their local immigration officer to seek to extend their permission to remain.

Where the person seeking a change of status is of a nationality that is not visa required, some additional latitude may be applied on a case by case basis where that person's circumstances have changed since their arrival in the State. If the Deputy has a particular case in mind he should advise that person to apply in writing to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service at 13/14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2 setting out their changed circumstances in detail.

Garda Operations.

223. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will support a matter (details supplied). [18869/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the area referred to is within the Coolock Garda District. I am

further advised that local Garda management is aware of difficulties being experienced in the locality and of illegal parking in the vicinity of the location referred to and is dealing with the matter. The area is subject to regular patrols by uniform and plain-clothes personnel, including the Community Policing Unit, supplemented by the District Garda Mountain Bike Unit and Traffic Corps personnel. The provisions of the Road Traffic Acts are fully enforced, with fixed charge penalty notices being issued or criminal proceedings initiated where appropriate.

Local Garda management closely monitors patrols, and other operational strategies in place, in conjunction with crime trends and policing needs of the communities in this area to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public. The situation will continue to be kept under review.

Legal Aid Service

224. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the guidelines for free legal aid; if student maintenance grant payments are included for the purpose of free legal aid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18872/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I have no responsibility in this matter. Under section 7(3) of the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995, I am precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any particular case with which the Legal Aid Board is or may be concerned. I understand that a detailed description of the means-testing regime is set out in the Legal Aid Board's leaflet on Financial Eligibility (Leaflet Number 13), which can be accessed through the Board's website, www.legalaidboard.ie, and can also be issued by the Board to potential applicants on request.

Question No. 225 answered with Question No. 209.

Residency Permits

226. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding an application for long-term residence in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19079/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): An application for long term residency from the person in question was received in my Department on 24 November 2008. A letter, requesting further documentation, issued to the person concerned on 29 April 2010. Processing of the application will continue on receipt of these documents. It is likely, therefore, that a decision will be reached on the application in the coming months.

Citizenship Applications

227. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when a decision will be made on an application for citizenship in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19114/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): A valid application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Division of my Department in June 2007. All valid applications are dealt with in chronological order as this is deemed to be the fairest to all applicants. The average processing time from application to decision is now at 26 months. More complicated cases can at times take more than the current average, while an element of straight forward cases can be dealt with in less than that timescale. Officials in the Citizenship Division inform

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me that processing of the application is ongoing and the file will be submitted to me for a decision in due course.

The length of time taken to process each application should not be classified as a delay, as the length of time taken for any application to be decided is purely a function of the time taken to carry out necessary checks. There is a limit to the reduction in the processing time that can be achieved as applications for naturalisation must be processed in a way which preserves the necessary checks and balances to ensure that it is not undervalued and is only given to persons who genuinely satisfy the necessary qualifying criteria.

Departmental Reports

228. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if any progress has been made in relation to a consultation paper (details supplied); the recommendations that have been made; and the recommendations that will be followed. [19117/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I understand that the Law Reform Commission intends to publish its Final Report on Personal Debt Management and Debt Enforcement by the end of 2010 and that shortly it will publish an Interim Report on some early initiatives that it has developed with the assistance of a Working Group.

European Council Meetings

229. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of Council of the European Union's meetings he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19129/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): Since my appointment as Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in May 2008 there have been 17 Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council meetings, nine of which I have attended. Minister of State Conor Lenihan attended two Council meetings on my behalf. In the remaining instances, I was represented by Ireland's Permanent Representative to the EU and senior officials of my Department. I regard the work of the Council as being of the highest importance and attend where possible, having regard to my overall official commitments at the time.

Citizenship Applications

230. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding an application for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; when a decision will be made on this application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19169/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): A valid application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Division of my Department in September 2007. All valid applications are dealt with in chronological order as this is deemed to be the fairest to all applicants. The average processing time from application to decision is now at 26 months. More complicated cases can at times take more than the current average, while an element of straight forward cases can be dealt with in less than that timescale. Officials in the Citizenship Division inform me that processing of the application is at an advanced stage and the file will be submitted to me for a decision in due course.

The length of time taken to process each application should not be classified as a delay, as the length of time taken for any application to be decided is purely a function of the time taken to carry out necessary checks. There is a limit to the reduction in the processing time that can be achieved as applications for naturalisation must be processed in a way which preserves the necessary checks and balances to ensure that it is not undervalued and is only given to persons who genuinely satisfy the necessary qualifying criteria.

Asylum Applications

231. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19204/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The person concerned applied for asylum on 7 November 2003. In accordance with Section 9 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended), he was entitled to remain in the State until his application for asylum was decided. His asylum application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

Arising from the refusal of his asylum application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 17 May 2005, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against him. Representations were submitted on behalf of the person concerned at that time and subsequently.

Following the consideration of his case under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), a decision was made to grant the person concerned permission to remain in the State, subject to certain stated conditions, for a six month period, to 5 January 2010 with this decision conveyed to the person concerned by letter dated 3 July 2009. The conditions included elements that the person concerned would obey the laws of the State and would not become involved in criminal activity.

Subsequently, it came to light that the person concerned had come to the attention of An Garda Síochána. Consequently, he was notified, by letter dated 4 January 2010, that the Minister proposed to revoke his permission to remain in the State. This communication advised the person concerned of his entitlement to submit a written response to this proposal with any such response to be considered before a final decision was taken. The person concerned, through his legal representative, has submitted a response to this proposal and a decision will be made in the near future as to whether the permission to remain granted to the person concerned will be revoked or renewed. Once a decision has been taken, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

Visa Applications

232. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 171 of 29 April 2010, the position regarding a visa application in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19212/10]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I refer the Deputy to my previous reply to Parliamentary Question Number 171 of 29 April 2010, the information

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provided in relation to visa application number 2947162 remains correct as stated. I am informed by the Visa Section of my Department that the person in question has made a new visa application under visa reference number 3760742. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a visa has been granted to the person referred to under this reference .

Passport Applications

233. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if a person currently working as an aid worker in the Sudan is entitled to a second Irish passport given that their current passport will expire in the near future and they believe that if they were to wait until the expiry date to apply it would be too late for them to travel home on leave by the time the passport was granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18655/10]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): A passport can be renewed before its expiry date. However, as it is currently not possible to guarantee a turnaround time for the processing of passport applications, because of the ongoing industrial action in the Passport Service, I have issued instructions and announced that passport applicants may submit a photocopy of the photograph page of any existing valid passport being renewed, with the application form and retain the existing passport. The person in question should make contact with the Honorary Consul General of Ireland in the Sudan to submit the passport application. When the new passport is produced and available for collection in Khartoum the applicant will then be asked to submit the old passport for cancellation.

The contact details are as follows:

Honorary Consul General of Ireland

DAL Food Division

No. 1/15 Block 4F, Industrial Area

Khartoum North

P.O. Box: 807, Khartoum 11111

Sudan

Telephone: +249-1-5511-7886

Fax: +249-1-8544-4847

Email: ireland.consulate.krt@gmail.com

Human Rights Issues

234. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if his attention has been drawn to the fact that thousands of Roma are being repatriated to camps in Kosovo from Germany, without a housing or medical programme being put in place; if he will raise this matter at the next EU Council of Ministers' meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19097/10]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): The Government takes a close interest in the situation of the Roma in Kosovo. The Taoiseach raised the living conditions of the Roma when he met with President Sejdiu and Prime Minister Thaci during his visit to Kosovo on 22 December 2008. My officials regularly pursue the issue at senior level within the EU both in Brussels and in Kosovo. An official of my Department met last October with the Head of Operations of the European Commission Liaison Office (ECLO) in Kosovo. This is the EU body charged with co-ordinating national and international efforts to secure long-term sus-

tainable solutions to the difficulties facing the Roma community in Kosovo. Our Ambassador in Budapest, who is accredited to Kosovo, followed up on the matter with the EU Presidency in Pristina last November. This issue was also discussed during the visit of EU Special Representative / International Civilian Representative (ICR), Mr Pieter Feith, to Dublin on 13 April.

As the Deputy is aware, not all EU Member States recognise Kosovo. Accordingly, there is no agreement between the EU and Kosovo on readmission of citizens. However, a number of Member States are working with the authorities in Pristina on a bilateral basis. The European Commission is helping the Government of Kosovo by strengthening its capacity to regulate and manage the readmission of its citizens. This includes addressing issues such as better allocation of resources as well as coordination between central and municipal levels.

My Department has been in touch in recent days with the Head of Operations at the European Commission Liaison Office (ECLO) in Pristina who has confirmed it is not the intention that Roma, recently returned to Kosovo, will be housed in the contaminated camps at Osterode and Cesmin Lug in North Mitrovice. These are currently in the process of being closed down in a project drawn up jointly by ECLO and USAID in cooperation with the Government of Kosovo. The project is being implemented by an NGO (Mercy Corps Scotland) on behalf of ECLO and USAID. The shared objective of ECLO and USAID is the complete closure of the Osterode and Cesmin Lug camps and the resettlement and reintegration of the 140 Roma families living there. ECLO and USAID have contributed €5m and €2.5m respectively to resolve this humanitarian problem. The project also includes provision for medical services and the treatment of children from the camps as well as access to education and other social services. The project started on 1 February and will be carried out over two and a half years.

The Deputy will also wish to be aware that Ireland has supported a broad range of projects to assist the Roma community in the Western Balkans region, including Kosovo. From 2005 to 2009, Irish Aid allocated €850,000 towards development and educational projects with the Roma community in Kosovo. In addition, Ireland contributed €200,000 to the World Bank's Roma Education Fund, which works in eleven countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including Kosovo.

Straitéis 20 Bliain

235. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pat Breen** den Aire Gnóthaí Eachtracha an bhfuil sé i gceist aige go mbeidh ról ag Gaeil thar sáile agus Ambasáidí na hÉireann i gcur chun cinn na teanga mar chuid den Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge; agus más ea, cén ról praiticiúil atá leagtha síos leis seo a chur i gcrích sa Straitéis; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [19112/10]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): Leagann Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge amach líon réimsí gníomhaíochta a rachaidh chun leasa na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta sna 20 bliain atá romhainn.

Ar cheann de chuspóirí na dréacht-Straitéise tá tacú le cur chun cinn is le múineadh na Gaeilge thar lear, trí mo Roinnse agus tríd an Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta. Ní leagann an Straitéis aon sainról síos do Mhisin Éireannacha agus dá bhfoirne; ach tá ról suntasach cheana féin ag na Misin Éireannacha i gcur chun cinn na Gaeilge, go háirithe trína ngníomhaíochtaí cur chun cinn cultúrtha. Mar shampla:

An Astráil: Bíonn ranganna Gaeilge ag club Gaelach Sydney do leibhéil éagsúla gach seachtain. Bíonn Scoil Geimhridh as Gaeilge acu gach bliain in Sydney freisin, rud a fhaigheann tacaíocht airgeadais i ndeontas ó leithroinnt chultúrtha bhliantúil ár nArd-Chon-

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salachta in Sydney. Osclaíonn Ambasadóir na hÉireann in Canberra agus Ard-Chonsal na hÉireann, ar a seal, an ócáid chónaithe seo a mhaireann thar an deireadh seachtaine. Fairis sin tá grúpa gréasán-bhunaithe, www.iorarua.com, atá gníomhach ag cur na Gaeilge chun cinn agus a dtacaíonn an Ard-Chonsalacht in Sydney leis.

An Bhreatain: Fóirdheonaíonn an Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta múineadh na Gaeilge do dhaoine fásta in Ollscoil Cambridge, Coláiste Ollscoile Mhuire in Twickenham agus san eagrais náisiúnta Coláiste na nGael. Bíonn Ambasáid na hÉireann i Londain i ndlúth-theagmháil leis na grúpaí sin agus bíonn ócáidí go rialta san ambasáid agus bronnadh Fáinní mar dhuaiseanna.

Éascaíonn an Ard-Chonsalacht i nDún Éideann cruinnithe agus imeachtaí i rith na bliana uile le heagrais Ghaeilge na hAlban, agus eagrais eile mar iad, le cuairteanna ó Éirinn nó/agus atá bunaithe in Albain. Bíonn ranganna Gaeilge agus gníomhaíochtaí a bhaineann le Gaeilge á n-eagrú in Albain, go háirithe faoi urraíocht Ollscoil Ghlaschú. Eagraíonn Ollscoil Dhún Éideann ranganna Gaeilge do dhaoine fásta.

An Bhulgáir: In 2008, chuir Ambasáid na hÉireann in Sóifia tús le Seachtain na Gaeilge tráth na Féile Pádraig. Tugadh léachtaí faoin nGaeilge i dtrí ollscoil Bhulgáir agus bronnadh ábhar foghlama Gaeilge.

An tSín: Aonad na hÉireann thar Lear i mo Roinnse a mhaoiníonn Cumann an Phobail Éireannaigh in Shanghai, agus úsáidtear cuid den airgead sin do ranganna cultúrtha ar a mbíonn ranganna Gaeilge.

Poblacht na Seice: Cuireann Lárionad an Léinn Éireannaigh in Ollscoil Shéarlais, Prág, cúrsaí Gaeilge ag leibhéal éagsúla ar fáil do mhic léinn. Agus na cúrsaí críochnaithe acu, seasann na mic léinn is fearr scrúdú idirnáisiúnta a eagraítear i gcomhar le hOllscoil na hÉireann, Maigh Nuad. Tugtar scoláireachtaí do na mic léinn is fearr torthaí chun dianchúrsaí samhraidh a dhéanamh i nGaeltachtaí Thír Chonaill nó Chonamara. Tugann an Ambasáid an oiread tacaíochta agus cabhrach agus is féidir don lárionad. Ó mo Roinnse agus ón Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta a mhaoinítear an lárionad.

An Ghearmáin: Bíonn Ambasáid na hÉireann i mBeirlín ag obair chun go bhfaigheadh na lárionaid acadúla a mhúineann Gaeilge an oiread cabhrach agus is féidir chun oideachas trí Ghaeilge a chothú is a éascú. Tá an Ambasáid ag obair go dlúth leis an Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta chun maoiniú ó Chiste na Gaeilge sa Roinn a áirithiú do raon leathan institiúidí agus ollscoileanna ina múintear an Ghaeilge sa Ghearmáin. Fairis sin, neartaíonn an Ambasáid scéim an Chiste, agus tacaíonn léi, le clár bronntaí leabhar (mar shampla, foclóirí Gaeilge agus acmhainní eile) agus le tacaí múinteoireachta (dlúthdhioscaí, cluichí, srl.) a fhaigheann sí ó fhoinsí comhpháirtíochta éagsúla in Éirinn (lena n-áirítear Foras na Gaeilge). Chomh maith leis sin thacaigh an Ambasáid le tionscnaimh neamhspleácha, amhail an scéim “Gaeltacht Europe” a bhfuil faoi naisc níos láidre a chothú idir chumann Éireannacha ar Mhór-Roinn na hEorpa a mhúineann an Ghaeilge.

Mhaoinigh an Ambasáid rannpháirtíocht údar Gaeilge mar chuid den tionscnamh “mionteangacha, mórlitríochtaí” ag Aonach Leabhar Leipzig le blianta beaga anuas. D’aistrigh sí téacsanna litríochta Gaeilge go Gearmáinis óna buiséad cultúrtha agus chlóg sí iad.

Fairis sin, oibríonn an Ambasáid go dlúth leis an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna chun mic léinn a roghnú do scoláireachtaí samhraidh Gaeilge.

Lucsamburg/an Bhruiséil: Múintear an Ghaeilge go caighdeán na hArdteiste/Baccalaureate Idirnáisiúnta sa Scoil Eorpach i Lucsamburg, agus i Scoileanna Eorpacha uile na Bruiséile (4 cinn), agus urraíonn Ambasáid na hÉireann i Lucsamburg duais don mhac léinn leis na torthaí Gaeilge is fearr sa Baccalaureate gach bliain. Chomh maith leis sin, tá Cumann Gaelach Lucsamburg thar a bheith gníomhach, agus tacaíonn an Ambasáid lena chuid imeachtaí go rialta, ina measc léacht bhliantúil le Gaeilgeoir aitheanta. Tacaíonn an Ambasáid agus Buan-ionadaíocht na hÉireann sa Bhruiséil le Seachtaine na Gaeilge gach bliain, agus leis an léacht bhliantúil faoin nGaeilge a bhíonn ar siúl sa Bhruiséil tráth na Féile Pádraig freisin.

Alba: Éascaíonn an Ard-Chonsalacht i nDún Éideann cruinnithe agus imeachtaí i rith na bliana uile le heagrais Ghaeilge na hAlban, agus eagrais eile mar iad, le cuairteanna ó Éirinn nó/agus atá bunaithe in Albain. Bíonn ranganna Gaeilge agus gníomhaíochtaí a bhaineann le Gaeilge á n-eagrú in Albain, go háirithe faoi urraíocht Ollscoil Ghlaschú. Eagraíonn Ollscoil Dhún Éideann ranganna Gaeilge do dhaoine fásta.

An tSualainn: Bíonn cúrsaí Sean-Ghaeilge, Meán-Ghaeilge agus Nua-Ghaeilge san Earnáil Cheilteach in Ollscoil Uppsala, príomh-lárionad léann na Gaeilge sna críocha Lochlannacha. Ní fada ó rinne an dámh athbhreithniú curaclaim chun an t-ábhar a dhéanamh níos tarraingtí agus níos so-rochtana do mhic léinn a bhfuil fúthu é a thógáil mar mhodúl nó mar ábhar breise le príomh-ábhar léinn eile. D'éirigh cuibheasach maith leis na hiarrachtaí sin agus mhéadaigh siad líon na mac léinn. Coinníonn Ambasáid na hÉireann i Stócólm dea-chaidreamh le Roinn na Ceiltise agus thug sí tacaíocht airgeadais chun a cuid gníomhaíochtaí a neartú. Thug an tAmbasadóir cuairt ar an dámh go minic chun bualadh leis an bhfoireann múinteoireachta agus leis na mic léinn, a fhaigheann cuirí go rialta chuig imeachtaí na hAmbasáide.

Na Stáit Aontaithe: Tá eagrais ealaíona Éireannach in Washington DC, *Solas Nua*, a eagraíonn ranganna Gaeilge. Tacaíonn Ambasáid na hÉireann in Washington agus Cultúr Éireann le *Solas Nua*. Is iomaí áit eile in SAM a mhúintear an Ghaeilge, go minic mar chuid de chlár sa léann Éireannach in ollscoileanna. Thacaigh Ard-Chonsalacht na hÉireann go mór leis an dá phríomhionad Éireannacha in Chicago, is tá múineadh na Gaeilge mar chuid den chlár sa dá cheann acu.

I Nua-Eabhrac, léirítear ard-mheas ar ról agus ar úsáid na Gaeilge san obair agus i ngníomhaíochtaí na Consalachta. Is féidir é sin a dhéanamh de bharr shaineolas na foirne Consalachta sa Ghaeilge. Reáchtálar gnó na Consalachta sa dá theanga agus bíonn fáil ar sheirbhísí agus ar fhoilseacháin iontu araon. Mar chuid de ghnó cultúrtha na Consalachta, eagraítear clár imeachtaí a thugann deis d'fhoireann na Consalachta agus do pháirtithe leasmhara eile araon an Ghaeilge a labhairt agus éisteacht lena mbíonn ar siúl as Gaeilge. Oibríonn an Chonsalacht i Nua-Eabhrac i ndlúth-chomhar le Roinn na Gaeltachta agus le Coimisiún Fulbright chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn i scéimeanna teangacha iasachta Fulbright na n-institiúidí rannpháirteacha, go háirithe NYU agus CUNY.

Is iomaí Ambasáid a thacaigh, go praiticiúil agus le maoiniú, le féilte áitiúla agus ócáidí cur chun cinn Éireannacha. D'éascaigh ambasáidí eile scannáin Ghaeilge a thaispeáint, chomh maith le drámaíocht, ceol agus filíocht na Gaeilge.

[Deputy Micheál Martin.]

Faoi láthair tá mo Roinnse ag scrúdú bealaí praiticiúla eile chun go dtacóidh Misin Éireannacha thar lear leis an nGaeilge.

Mar atá a fhios at an Teachta, tá stádas mar theanga oifigiúil oibre de chuid an AE ag an nGaeilge ó 1 Eanáir 2007. An comhaontú chun an stádas sin a thabhairt isteach, tugann sé maolú d’institiúidí an AE ón dualgas gach dlí agus téacs AE a aistriú go Gaeilge, faoi réir ag athbhreithnithe tréimhsiúla féachaint an gá leanúint leis an maolú sin. Is gá an maolú chuMar atá a fhios at an Teachta, tá stádas mar theanga oifigiúil oibre de chuid an AE ag an nGaeilge ó 1 Eanáir 2007. An comhaontú chun an stádas sin a thabhairt isteach, tugann sé maolú d’institiúidí an AE ón dualgas gach dlí agus téacs AE a aistriú go Gaeilge, faoi réir ag athbhreithnithe tréimhsiúla féachaint an gá leanúint leis an maolú sin. Is gá an maolú chun cabhrú leis na hinstiúidí AE an cumas is gá a thógáil chun na seirbhísí cuí a chur ar fáil as Gaeilge. Tá faoi Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge go gcealófaí an maolú sin go hiomlán uair éigin roimh an mbliain 2030, agus oibreoidh an Rialtas lena áirithiú go mbeidh líon imleor de dhaoine cáilithe ar fáil don éileamh earcaíochta is gá chuige sin. Tá obair ar siúl cheana féin in Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh, agus in DCU/Ollscoil Chathair Átha Cliath chun raon cúrsaí a chur ar fáil chun freastal ar na riachtanais sin, le tacaíocht an Rialtais.

European Council Meetings

236. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the number of Council of the European Union meetings he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19127/10]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): The Council of the European Union is a key decision-making institution of the EU, at whose meetings all EU Member States are represented. As Minister for Foreign Affairs, and in my earlier Ministerial portfolios, I have represented Ireland frequently at Council meetings. Between May 2007 and November 2009 there were twenty-seven meetings of the General Affairs and External Relations Council. Following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty there have been six meetings of the General Affairs Council and six meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council. Since May 2007 there have also been seven informal meetings of Foreign Ministers, the so-called “Gymnich” meetings. All of these are meetings which Foreign Ministers would normally attend.

Since becoming Minister for Foreign Affairs in May 2008 I attended eleven meetings of the General Affairs and External Relations Council, four meetings of the General Affairs Council, four meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council and four “Gymnich” meetings. My predecessor as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dermot Ahern T.D., attended eight meetings of the General Affairs and External Relations Council between May 2007 and May 2008 and two “Gymnich” meetings. On the occasions when I was unable to attend these meetings, Ireland has normally been represented by a Ministerial colleague of mine, almost always the Minister for State for European Affairs, Dick Roche TD. On three occasions over the last three years it was not possible for any Minister to attend one of these meetings. On each of these three occasions Ireland was represented by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the European Union.

In addition to Council meetings, it was the practice up until the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009 for Foreign Ministers to attend European Council meetings. Between May 2007 and May 2008 my predecessor as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dermot

Ahern T.D., attended three of these. Between May 2008 and November 2009 I attended seven European Council meetings.

Departmental Staff

237. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if he will support a matter (details supplied). [19352/10]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): The organisation in question was established to provide a specific service to civil and public servants. In 2001, the organisation had need of a person with specific expertise to fill a vacant position. A member of staff of my Department had the requisite skills and experience and it was agreed that the staff member would be seconded to the organisation with effect from October 2001. I am informed that the staff member concerned did not work in the Passport Office. The cost of salary is recouped from the organisation concerned and there is no net cost to my Department associated with this secondment.

Departmental Expenditure

238. **Deputy Noel J. Coonan** asked the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport the amount she anticipates her Department will spend on converting Department titles on websites, headed paper, application forms, information booklets, wall charts and so on as a result of the recent change in her Department's title; the length of time this will take; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18646/10]

Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Deputy Mary Hanafin): As stated in response to questions answered on the 31 March and 20 April 2010 on this subject, most of the resultant changes from the re-naming of the Department will be implemented in-house by the existing staff of the Department. These include work on the Department's website, changing email addresses and re-titling the Department's customer charter. Provision had already been made this year for the purchase of new headed paper which is required under the Department's Irish Language Scheme.

It is estimated that costs of approximately €15,000 may arise in relation to the purchase of new name plaques and signage. This amount is estimated based on the existing signage types in use. However, as part of the competitive tendering process to address the replacement of this signage, various alternative signage types and quotations will be considered and the final expenditure may be under this estimated amount. These costs will be met from within the Department's existing Vote.

National Archives

239. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport the measures she will take to ensure that the National Archives have adequate storage space; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18862/10]

Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Deputy Mary Hanafin): It is recognised that storage facilities in the National Archives are not ideal and my Department is working with the Director of the Archives and the Office of Public Works in order to provide both medium term solutions for collections storage and to plan for permanent solutions as the availability of resources permits. Space that has been vacated by the Land Commission is currently being fitted out as an additional storage area in the Bishop Street building for the National Archives.

European Council Meetings

240. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that she was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings she attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in her place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19133/10]

Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Since my appointment as Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport in March this year, there was one formal meeting of the Education, Youth and Culture Council which I was entitled to attend on 10th May 2010. I had planned to attend this meeting but unfortunately I was unable to do so due to pressing domestic tourism commitments relating to the volcanic ash disruption. Senior officials deputised on my behalf at this meeting. For the Deputy's information, I participated in an ad hoc video conference with EU Tourism Ministers on 28 April to discuss the impact on tourism business across the EU as a result of the volcanic ash disruption.

Departmental Expenditure

241. **Deputy Noel J. Coonan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the amount he anticipates that his Department will spend on converting Department titles on websites, headed paper, application forms, information booklets, wall charts and so on as a result of the recent changes in several Department titles; the length of time this will take; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18649/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As the Deputy will be aware, as part of the restructuring of Departments and agencies announced by the Taoiseach in Dáil Éireann on 23 March last to ensure greater coherence and produce more efficient delivery, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will become the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and will incorporate responsibility for social inclusion policy and family policy from the Department of Social and Family Affairs and for equality, disability, integration and human rights from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The formal transfer of responsibility for social inclusion policy and family policy from the Department of Social and Family Affairs to my own Department has now taken place and an Order has been made in this regard. The Order cites that my Department has responsibility for these functions with effect from 1 May 2010.

In relation to the transfer of responsibility for equality, disability, integration and human rights from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, my Department is continuing to liaise with the relevant Departments on this matter. I expect the formal transfer of these functions and consequent administrative and other arrangements arising on foot of the transfer of responsibilities to be finalised shortly.

In relation to the specific query regarding the costs associated with converting my Department's title on websites, headed paper, application forms, information booklets, wall charts and so on as a result of the recent changes, no such costs have arisen as the title of my Department has not formally changed as yet. The Deputy will appreciate, therefore, that at present it is not possible to provide the details requested by him in relation to the costs associated with renaming my Department. I can confirm to the Deputy, however, that all stationery currently held by my Department will be used to the greatest extent feasible. I have also directed my officials to ensure that any costs arising due to the name change of my Department are kept to a minimum and met from within existing resources.

Question No. 242 answered with Question No. 54.

European Council Meetings

243. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[19121/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I assume that the Deputy is referring to meetings of the Council of the European Union held under its various configurations. During the three year period referred to by the Deputy, my Department did not hold primary responsibility in respect of any of the Council's configurations.

Inland Waterways

244. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the date for the official opening of the Royal Canal from Dublin through to the River Shannon; if in this context it is the intention of Waterways Ireland to have at least seven people to act as patrol and supervising personnel along the stretch of canal from Killucan, County Westmeath through to the Shannon; if he will ensure that consideration is given to the many suitable candidates for such responsible positions who are available in counties Westmeath and Longford to take up such positions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19203/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): A date for the official opening of the Royal Canal is under discussion at present and will be announced in due course, following agreement with all the relevant parties.

In relation to the staffing matters raised, I understand that, in the first instance, Waterways Ireland is giving consideration to taking on up to 10 people on a temporary basis to assist in the initial commissioning of the waterway. The duties of such people would include assisting with the passage of boats through locks, as well as a range of other general duties.

Recruitment to Waterways Ireland is a matter for the Body itself, in compliance, of course, with relevant public sector requirements, and I have no direct role in such matters.

Community Development

245. **Deputy Ulick Burke** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the funding made available through the RAPID programme in Ballinasloe, County Galway from 2007 to 2009; the list of projects benefiting from these funds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19311/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): The RAPID leverage schemes were initiated in 2004 in order to support small-scale projects identified locally by the Area Implementation Teams in each of the RAPID areas. These schemes are co-funded by the relevant agencies and support projects that focus on estate management, graffiti removal, traffic calming, community closed-circuit television, health and sports facilities, and the provision of playgrounds. The table below sets out details of RAPID leverage funding by my Department in Ballinasloe from 2007 to 2009. Ongoing co-funding of projects approved under the schemes will continue in 2010, subject to resources.

[Deputy Pat Carey.]

I am satisfied that the impact of the programme has facilitated RAPID communities in Ballinasloe in taking greater ownership of local development, and has also enabled state organisations to work together to improve the quality of life for local people.

RAPID leverage funding by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in Ballinasloe from 2007 to 2009

	€
2007	
36314 — Ballinasloe Town AFC	48,000.00
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	45,000.00
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	3,525.98
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	8,694.27
Total	105,220.25
2008	
30381 — Ballinasloe GAA Club	36,000.00
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	17,500.00
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	5,000.00
Total	58,500.00
2009	
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	11,250.00
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	10,124.99
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	19,125.00
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	3,375.00
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	1,125.00
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	60,000.00
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	75,000.00
30381 — Ballinasloe GAA Club	33,000.00
31037 — Ballinasloe Rugby Football Club	19,500.00
45999 — Ballinasloe Show Ltd	21,000.00
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	5,007.38
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	6,250.00
16633 — Ballinasloe Town Council	15,000.00
Total	279,757.37

Grant Payments

246. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number and nature of applications for grant aid from his Department by the various voluntary or community based groups throughout County Kildare in 2010; the extent to which this compares with previous years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19333/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As the Deputy will be aware, my Department operates a wide range of grant programmes and schemes and details of these are available on my Department's website at www.pobail.ie. Some of the schemes are administered directly by my Department and others are administered on behalf

of the Department by various bodies and groups, where applications for funding are submitted directly to the bodies/groups in question.

In relation to the applications administered directly by my Department, under the Scheme of Community Support for Older People (CSOP), 9 groups from County Kildare applied for funding in 2009 and all were approved for funding. 10 applications from groups in County Kildare for funding have also been received under the CSOP to date in 2010. 9 of these applications were successful and 1 is currently being assessed.

In 2009, 9 groups from County Kildare applied for funding under the programme of grants for locally-based community and voluntary organisations (“Once-off Grants”) and 7 groups were approved for funding. No applications were received in 2010 and the scheme is currently closed to applications.

3 Community Development Projects in County Kildare were allocated funding under the Community Development Programme in 2009 and also under the new Local and Community Development Programme in 2010.

The Kildare Local Development Company, Cill Dara Ar Aghaigh Teo, was allocated €1.1 million for the delivery of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) in 2009. It has been allocated funding of €0.98 million for delivery of the new Local and Community Development Programme in 2010.

It should be noted that applications for funding for drugs initiatives in County Kildare are made to the South West Regional Drugs Task Force (RDTF).

Finally, for completeness, I wish to confirm to the Deputy that funding under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 is provided through integrated local development companies and that a total of €12.28 million has been indicatively approved for rural development purposes under this programme in County Kildare.

Departmental Funding

247. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if he is satisfied that all funding awarded by his Department in each of the past five years to date in 2010 has been drawn down and spent in accordance with the heading or sub-head under which it was awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19334/10]

248. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent of funding accruing to his Department in each of the past five years to date in 2010; the schemes on which such funding was spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19335/10]

249. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the quantified direct benefit accruing to the community through the various schemes operated by his Department in the past two years to date in 2010; the extent to which it is intended to extend or expand the most effective elements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19336/10]

252. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent of new schemes contemplated by his Department in 2010 to address issues arising from the current economic climate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19339/10]

253. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number, category and nature of applications for various forms of grant aid through schemes operated by his Department in each of the past four years to date in 2010; the extent to which all such payments and related activities have been drawn down, are pending or inconclusive in any way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19340/10]

254. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the precise extent and nature of expenditure by his Department under each heading directly or through bodies under his aegis in each of the past three years to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19341/10]

255. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of programmes and schemes currently operated by his Department; the extent to which such schemes are curtailed in comparison to previous years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19342/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 247 to 249, inclusive, and 252 to 255, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware from a number of previous replies, my Department operates a wide range of grant programmes and schemes and details of these are available on my Department's website at *www.pobail.ie*. The Deputy will also be aware that information in relation to funding/expenditure by my Department in each of the past five years is available in the published Annual Estimates Volumes and Appropriation Accounts. In addition, details of payments made from subheads part-funded from the National Lottery are listed on my Department's website. My Department's expenditure is subjected to yearly audits by the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office and, accordingly, I am satisfied that all expenditure is appropriate to the relevant subhead.

Against this background, the Deputy will appreciate that funding is provided each year to a very large number of individuals, groups, bodies and agencies. I do not consider that the allocation of staff resources that would be required to fully list and detail all of these allocations, as requested, could be justified, particularly in the context where a significant amount of the relevant information is already available on my Department's website or in the annual Appropriation Accounts that are laid before the Oireachtas. If the Deputy has a particular query regarding specific groups, bodies or agencies, I will, of course, be happy to provide the relevant information to the extent feasible.

With regard to 2010 allocations by comparison to 2009, the Government decided in the 2010 Budget, as part of its strategy to manage its way through the current severe economic crisis and to return the country to prosperity, to implement a series of reductions in spending on public services. Therefore, it is not possible to consider any new schemes at present. To the greatest extent possible, savings have been sought through efficiencies rather than through reductions in services. The individual breakdown of these reductions for my Department at a subhead level is provided in the Revised Estimates Volume for 2010.

Finally, in terms of evaluating the quantified direct benefit, or impact, of the different programmes, the Deputy should note that value for money reviews are underway or planned for a number of my Department's schemes, including the Rural Social Scheme, the Community Services Programme and the CLÁR/RAPID Programmes. The Rural Development Programme is also subject to ongoing evaluation, with a mid-term review scheduled to commence this month for completion by the end of 2010.

Other initiatives undertaken by my Department to ensure optimal benefits for expenditure, to reduce administrative overheads and to improve performance across the range of community programmes include: a Value for Money Review of the Local Development and Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP); removal of the Regional Support Agencies from the CDP programme; a cohesion process to amalgamate Partnerships and LEADER companies; and a review of CDP clusters.

Further to this work, the LDSIP and the Community Development Programme have been re-aligned and integrated as the new Local Development Community Programme, which came into operation on 1 January 2010.

Community Development

250. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs his plans for the operation and development of the CLÁR programme for the remainder of 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19337/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): In 2010, the CLÁR Programme will continue to provide funding and co-funding to Government Departments, State agencies and local authorities to accelerate investment in selected priority developments in rural areas that have suffered significant depopulation.

The anticipated spend for the Programme in 2010 is approximately €8m. The main areas where expenditure is likely are supports for water services and infrastructure, support for sports facilities and the development, refurbishment and improvement of health centres and facilities in CLÁR areas.

251. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs his plans for the operation and development of the RAPID programme for the remainder of 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19338/10]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): Through its focus on deprivation and social exclusion, the RAPID Programme will continue to address the impact of the economic downturn on vulnerable communities and to provide opportunities for social and economic recovery.

In order to ensure the continued relevance of the Programme, a review of RAPID area boundaries, based on an analysis of data from Census 2006 across a range of socio-economic and deprivation indicators, was undertaken to ensure that areas are appropriately targeting the most disadvantaged communities.

Following the review, the Government approved the inclusion of five new towns in the RAPID Programme in 2009 — Ballina, Dungarvan, Enniscorthy, Mullingar and Rathkeale. The review also proposed changes to the boundaries of some of the other 46 RAPID areas and I expect to bring proposals to Government in this regard in the coming weeks.

In 2010, funding of €5m has been allocated for the RAPID leverage schemes, whereby my Department co-funds with other Departments and agencies a range of small-scale local projects such as playgrounds, traffic measures, health facilities, CCTV and sports facilities. In this regard, I can assure the Deputy that my primary focus will continue to be to ensure that the front-line services provided by, or supported through, my Department, and especially those focused on the needs of the most socially deprived communities, are protected.

Questions Nos. 252 to 255, inclusive, answered with Question No. 247.

Social Welfare Appeals

256. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Social Protection the length of time it takes to determine an appeal for domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5; his plans to tackle the backlog that has developed. [18635/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned has been referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in the case. The person concerned will be notified when the necessary arrangements have been made.

There has been a 46% increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office in 2009 when compared to 2008, which in itself was 27% greater than the numbers received in 2007. There has been an increase of a further 46% in the number of appeals received in the first quarter of 2010. These increases have caused delays in the processing of appeals.

The average time taken to process all appeals (i.e. those decided summarily and by way of oral hearing) was 24 weeks. However, if allowance was made for the 25% most protracted cases, the average time fell to 15.8 weeks. This represents an increase of 2 weeks in the time taken to process appeals when compared to 2008, but must be seen in the context of an increase of 46% in the number of appeals received during 2009.

The processing time for appeals covers all phases of the appeal process including the submission by the Department of its comments on the grounds for the appeal, further examination by the Department's Medical Assessors in certain illness related cases, further investigation by Social Welfare Inspectors where required and circumstances may also arise where further information is sought from the appellant. I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that having regard to the various phases of the appeal process, the varying complexities of the matters appealed to them and the demand led nature of the workload, a definitive target time is not feasible.

To deal with the increased workload being experienced by the Social Welfare Appeals Office, two additional Appeals Officers were appointed during 2009. The possibility of assigning further additional resources on a temporary basis is currently under consideration.

In addition, changes have recently been made to processes in the Social Welfare Appeals Office with a view to achieving additional productivity. I am assured by the Chief Appeals Officer that she is keeping the outcome of these changes under continuous review to ensure the optimum throughput of appeals with full regard to due process in terms of the rights of appellants and adherence to the requirements of natural justice.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

257. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will reverse the changes made to the PRSI dental treatment benefits scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18897/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): This decision to limit the funding available to the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) was made in view of the current position of the public finances and the 60% increase in expenditure in the DTSS over the past five years. The HSE has introduced measures to contain DTSS expenditure at the 2008 level

of approximately €63 million. This reflects the imperative to achieve overall reductions in public expenditure while providing essential health services to patients. The HSE will monitor the ongoing effect of these changes from a clinical and budgetary perspective.

258. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) in County Cork has had their supplementary welfare allowance and rent allowance withdrawn; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18916/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Due to staff action currently being taken in the HSE, I regret that I am unable to provide the information sought by the Deputy.

Social Insurance

259. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Social Protection the legislative alteration that has brought about the situation whereby PRSI does not cover dental treatment and medical card; his views on whether PRSI should cover dental treatment and medical card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19091/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The current budgetary position necessitated the changes made to social welfare benefits, including treatment benefits, in Budget 2010.

From 1st January 2010, treatments available under the optical and dental elements of the scheme are limited to the free examination. There has been no change to the medical appliances element of the scheme. Over 2 million PRSI contributors are eligible for the free dental and optical examination and medical appliance benefit in 2010. In 2009 over 418,000 customers claimed a free dental examination at a cost of over €14 million. In addition 219,000 free eye examinations, at a cost of almost €5.5 million were also provided. There were also 7,500 treatments under the medical appliance scheme, at a cost of over €7.5million. Similar levels of applications can be expected this year. The continued provision of a free examination will allow people to have regular check-ups and help ensure the early detection of disease and other health issues.

Questions relating to benefits available under the medical card scheme are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Health and Children.

Departmental Expenditure

260. **Deputy Noel J. Coonan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the amount he anticipates that his Department will spend on converting Department titles on websites, headed paper, application forms, information booklets, wall charts and so on as a result of the recent changes in several Department titles; the length of time this will take; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18645/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The estimated cost of rebranding the Department in terms of stationery costs, website amendments, changes to signage, information booklets, etc. is €35,000 approx.

Amendments to application forms and information leaflets will take immediate effect following the annual print, which was deferred in this instance from April until May to take account of the change of name. There will be no extra cost for these changes.

In the case of other changes such as headed paper and envelopes, some of these will take effect immediately, and some will be on a phased basis over the coming weeks, spending on the levels of stocks to be used up.

Social Welfare Benefits

261. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the budget provided in 2010 for the back to school clothing and footwear allowance; and the anticipated start date for the scheme. [18680/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The back to school clothing and footwear allowance scheme (BSCFA) is administered on behalf of the Department by the community welfare division of the Health Service Executive (HSE). The scheme operates from between the beginning of June to the end of September each year. It is estimated 340,000 children will benefit from the scheme in 2010 at a cost of almost €83m.

Social Welfare Appeals

262. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18683/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Payment of invalidity pension, to the person concerned, was disallowed by a Deciding Officer following an examination by a Medical Assessor of the Department who expressed the opinion that he was capable of work. An appeal was opened and in the context of that appeal, his case was reviewed by a second Medical Assessor who also expressed the opinion that he was capable of work.

I am informed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that, in the light of this second medical opinion, that office decided to afford him an opportunity of setting out the complete and up to date grounds of his appeal. On receipt of his response the relevant departmental papers will be requested from the Department and the appeal will then be referred to an Appeals Officer for consideration.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister of Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

263. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18684/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that, following receipt of the grounds of appeal from the person concerned, the relevant Departmental papers and comments of the Department have been sought. On receipt of its response the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer for consideration. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister of Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

264. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will confirm receipt of an appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo. [18704/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that Office. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Social Welfare Services on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer for consideration. The Social Welfare

Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister of Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Pension Provisions.

265. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the non-contributory State pension application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18710/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): State Pension (Non-Contributory) is a means tested payment for persons over 66 years of age. All income is assessable as means and this includes cash income, income from employment/self-employment, private pensions, foreign pensions, the value of any property (excluding the claimant's own home) and the value of any investments, monies held in financial institutions and capital, which the claimant or his/her spouse may have.

The person concerned was 66 years on 22 September 2009. Her husband is a farmer and owns an 80 acre holding. In order to determine the level of income from the farm she was requested by the Social Welfare Inspector to provide recent accounts for the farm. The Inspector was referred to her husband's accountant who advised that the most recent accounts were in respect of the 2002 tax year.

Both the person concerned and the accountant were requested to provide an up to date statement of income and expenditure for the holding. This information was not provided and therefore it could not be established if she has an entitlement to State pension non-contributory. A decision advising her that her application was rejected as she failed to provide information to establish her means issued to her on 3 November 2009.

If the information sought by the Social Welfare Inspector is now provided her entitlement can be reviewed.

Proposed Legislation

266. **Deputy Pádraic McCormack** asked the Minister for Social Protection his plans to draw up an amendment to the Civil Registration Act 2004 which would allow Irish people who have died abroad to have their deaths registered here; his views on amending section 39 of this Act to allow this registration in Ireland where families produce the necessary proof of death abroad. [18711/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): It is intended to propose to make a number of amendments to the Civil Registration Act, 2004 and, in this context, I will review the current provisions in relation to the registration in this country of deaths of Irish people which occur outside the State.

Social Welfare Appeals

267. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will expedite an appeal against a decision not to award carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; if he will grant an early oral hearing; the reason in the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18715/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned has been referred to an Appeals

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Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in the case. The person concerned will be informed when arrangements have been made.

There has been a 46% increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office in 2009 when compared to 2008, which in itself was 27% greater than the numbers received in 2007. There has been an increase of a further 46% in the number of appeals received in the first quarter of 2010. These increases have caused delays in the processing of appeals. In order to be fair to all appellants, oral hearings are arranged in strict chronological order.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister of Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

268. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 287 of 27 April 2010, the reason this question submitted in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare was not accepted as an appeal; if this question will be accepted on appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18799/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Further to my response to PQ 16558/10 on 27 April 2010 in relation to the person concerned, I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having considered all the available evidence, disallowed the appeal on the grounds that he is not habitually resident in the state for social welfare purposes.

Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of the Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed by the Appeals Officer in the light of new evidence or new facts. If there is any new evidence or new facts pertinent to this case that was not brought to the attention of the Appeals Officer during the determination of this appeal, they may be submitted to the Social Welfare Appeals Office for further consideration.

Additionally, the Chief Appeals Officer has power under the Social Welfare Consolidation Act, 2005 to revise any decision where it appears to him that the Appeals Officer's decision was erroneous by reason of some mistake having been made in relation to the law or the facts. In making a request for such a review an appellant must set down the reasons why he or she believes a mistake was made having regard to the application of the law or the facts.

The Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 also provides that any person who is dissatisfied with either the decision of the Appeals Officer or the outcome of the review carried out by the Chief Appeals Officer may appeal that decision and/or outcome, as the case may be, to the High Court on any question of law.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister of Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Code

269. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 287 of 27 April 2010, if habitual residence grounds is part of a bilateral arrangement with the UK or US or other EU member states whereby applicants who satisfy this clause are otherwise deprived of payment on centre of interest grounds; the extent to which reference is made to such in any bilateral arrangements; if interim measures have

been put in place to meet the requirements of persons suffering hardship as a result; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18800/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): A claimant for any of the following social welfare payments must satisfy the habitual residence condition: jobseeker's allowance, one parent family payment, disability allowance, carer's allowance, widow/er's (non-contributory) pension, guardian's payment (non-contributory), State pension (non-contributory), blind pension, supplementary welfare allowance (except urgent or exceptional needs payments), domiciliary care allowance and child benefit.

The bilateral agreements on social security between Ireland and other countries apply only to contributory pensions and (in the case of the agreement with the United Kingdom) certain other contributory benefits. Therefore none of the schemes to which the habitual residence condition applies come within the scope of these agreements.

Arrangements for coordination of social security for employed and self-employed persons moving between EU/EEA Member States are governed by EU Regulations. These EU Regulations provide that special non-contributory cash benefits (such as jobseeker's allowance, disability allowance, etc.) are payable only under the legislation of the country of habitual residence. While, under the Regulations, there are some special rules for Child Benefit and for Supplementary Welfare Allowance, these only apply in the case of people who have established an attachment to the workforce in Ireland. I understand that the person concerned in this case has not worked here.

The determination of a person's habitual residence is made in accordance with Section 246 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 (as amended) which directs the deciding officer to consider all the circumstances of the case, including five specified factors which have been derived from European Court of Justice case law. These factors are:

- (a) the length and continuity of residence in the State or in any other particular country;
- (b) the length and purpose of any absence from the State;
- (c) the nature and pattern of the person's employment;
- (d) the person's main centre of interest, and
- (e) the future intentions of the person concerned as they appear from all the circumstances.

Supplementary welfare allowance payments under the urgent needs or exceptional needs provisions have never been subject to the habitual residence condition. I have no plans to introduce any further exceptions to the habitual residence condition, as the purpose of introducing this condition in the first place was to ensure that a person whose habitual residence is elsewhere or who has had no attachment, or insignificant attachment, to the work force since arrival in Ireland, does not receive ongoing support from the social welfare system.

Social Welfare Appeals

270. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding invalidity appeal in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18801/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Payment of invalidity pension, to the person concerned, was disallowed by a Deciding Officer following an examination by a Medical Assessor of the Department who expressed the opinion that she was capable of work.

[Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív.]

An appeal was opened and in the context of that appeal, her case was reviewed by a second Medical Assessor who also expressed the opinion that she was capable of work.

I am informed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that, in the light of this second medical opinion, that office decided to afford her an opportunity of setting out the complete and up to date grounds of her appeal. On receipt of her response the relevant departmental papers will be requested from the Department and the appeal will then be referred to an Appeals Officer for consideration.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister of Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

271. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when unemployment benefit will be awarded in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18803/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The jobseeker's benefit claim of the person concerned has been awarded with effect from 5 th April 2010. The first payment was made on 30th April 2010.

Pension Provisions

272. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow is entitled to an old age pension or free schemes on foot of contributions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18804/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): In order to qualify for a State Pension (Contributory), a minimum of 260 paid reckonable contributions is required, from either employment or self-employment.

The person concerned applied for State Pension (Contributory) in February 2010. His claim was disallowed on 25th February 2010 on the grounds that he does not satisfy the contribution condition as he only has a total of 109 paid contributions.

A completed application for Household Benefits was received in this Department from the person concerned on 18 March, 2010. A means test has been issued to him in respect of his wife. On receipt of the information requested a decision will be made on his application.

273. **Deputy Noel Ahern** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the entitlement to a widow's pension for a person who already has a State contributory pension in their own right; the reason both payments are not awarded even though contributions have been made for both; if this decision has ever been legally tested; if it has been examined by any internal or external group, task force, report and so on; and the recommendations and findings of same. [18806/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The social welfare system is primarily a contingency-based system, with entitlement based on defined contingencies, such as sickness, unemployment, old age or widowhood. Primary social welfare legislation provides that only one social welfare payment is payable at any one time. While it can happen that a person may experience more than one contingency at the same time — for example, an unemployed person may become sick — a general principle applies whereby even if a person experiences

more than one of the contingencies at any one time, he or she only receives one of those payments. This principle is common to social security systems across the world.

However, the legislation also provides that regulations may be made to enable more than one of the payments to be paid concurrently and, where applied, it is usually in the context of short-term benefits. For instance, persons in receipt of widows/widowers pension can, at the same time, receive short-term social insurance benefits such as illness benefit or unemployment benefit, at half rate.

In terms of the examination of the current process of single payments by any group or task force the most recent review of these schemes is contained in The report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes (June 2009) which recommends changes to the eligibility conditions of social welfare schemes to eliminate second welfare payments, so that claimants already in receipt of a primary weekly social welfare payment should not qualify for payment under another scheme. The Group also recommends that the Department of Social Protection includes explicitly the role of the *Widows'/Widowers' Pension* if it undertakes a future review of working-age social transfers in this context. No legal challenge has been undertaken to date in this regard.

Social Welfare Benefits

274. **Deputy Noel Ahern** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the entitlements to benefits of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9; if rent allowance and family income supplement will be awarded at same time as back to work scheme; and if all entitlements are awarded to this person. [18818/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The Back to Work Allowance (BTWA) scheme is designed to assist the long term unemployed, lone parents, people with disabilities and other social welfare recipients to return to the workforce. There were two strands to the scheme, the Back to Work Enterprise allowance for the self-employed and the Back to Work Allowance for employees. The Back to Work Allowance strand was closed to new applicants from 1st May 2009.

A person who qualifies for jobseeker's benefit may have immediate access to the Short Term Enterprise Allowance, provided they have 104 contributions paid or have established entitlement to statutory redundancy from their latest period of employment. It is payable at the same rate and for the same duration as jobseeker's benefit. The qualifying period required for access to the Back to Work Enterprise allowance scheme, for people on the live register, has been reduced from 2 years to 12 months provided a person has an underlying entitlement to jobseeker's allowance. If a person does not have an underlying entitlement to jobseeker's allowance they can access the scheme in accordance with the current qualifying conditions. The allowance is paid on a reducing scale over 2 years; 100% of a person's social welfare payment in year 1 and 75% in year 2.

A person receiving a back to work allowance as an employee may qualify for family income supplement. In these cases the social welfare payment is assessable as means. The claimant must be in employment as an employee, under a contract of service; self-employment does not qualify as employment in this context. The spouse or partner may however be self-employed and income from such self-employment is assessed in relation to the income condition.

The supplementary welfare allowance scheme provides for a weekly or monthly supplement to be paid in respect of rent to any person in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs. The supplementary welfare allowance scheme is administered by the community welfare service of the Health Service Executive on behalf of the Department.

[Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív.]

The purpose of the rent supplement scheme is to provide short-term support, to eligible people living in private rented accommodation whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation costs and who do not have accommodation available to them from any other source. A person participating on a back to work allowance scheme can continue to receive rent supplement subject to their satisfying the standard means assessment rules.

There is no record of an application for family income supplement from the person concerned. Due to staff action currently being taken in the HSE, I regret that I am unable to provide the information sought by the Deputy in relation to the entitlement to rent supplement from the person concerned.

Child Support

275. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the details of a person (details supplied) will be permanently updated on his Departments database. [18841/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Letters issue on a regular basis to parents who receive Child Benefit as part of the Department's ongoing customer service and control work. Parents are asked to verify that they continue to reside in Ireland, that they satisfy the conditions for Child Benefit and that all details held by the Department are correct. The record, relating to the person concerned has been updated on the Department's database following confirmation in March 2010 that she is now an Irish citizen.

Social Welfare Benefits

276. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a matter (details supplied). [18844/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The supplementary welfare allowance scheme (SWA) provides for a supplement to be paid in respect of mortgage interest to any person in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs. The scheme is administered by the community welfare service of the Health Service Executive on behalf of the Department.

The purpose of mortgage interest supplement is to provide short term support to eligible people who are unable to meet their mortgage interest repayments in respect of a house which is their sole place of residence. The supplement assists with the interest portion of the mortgage repayments only. Each application for mortgage interest supplement is determined by a community welfare officer taking account of the relevant legislative provisions and on the basis of the merits of each individual case.

Social Welfare Appeals

277. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason an appeal submitted by a person (details supplied) in County Mayo has not been registered as being received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office. [18848/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned has now been registered in that Office. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Social Welfare Services on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer for consideration. The Social

Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister of Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Pension Provisions

278. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18852/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The homemaker's scheme makes qualification for the state pension (contributory) easier for those who take time out of the workforce for caring duties. The scheme which was introduced in and took effect from 1994 allows up to 20 years spent caring for children under 12 years of age or incapacitated adults to be disregarded when a person's social insurance record is being averaged for pension purposes.

To be eligible for the homemakers scheme, a person must permanently live in the State, be aged under 66, have started insurable employment or self-employment on or after the age of 16 and before the age of 56, not work full-time, although a person can work and earn less than €38 gross per week, care for a child (under 12) or an incapacitated person on a full-time basis.

The scheme will not, of itself, qualify a person for a pension. The standard qualifying conditions, which require a person to enter insurance ten years before pension age, pay a minimum of 260 contributions at the correct rate and achieve a yearly average of at least 10 contributions on their record from the time they enter insurance until they reach pension age, must also be satisfied.

Homemaking periods through child benefit applications are automatically registered when a person submits their pension application.

The National Pensions Framework which was launched in March 2010 will introduce a system of homemaker's credits to replace the current disregard from 2012 and allow backdating to 1994 for the purpose of the averaging system that will continue until 2020. This means that people reaching pension age after the credits are introduced will have credits rather than disregards applied to their records to cover periods of care since 1994 (up to a maximum of 20 years).

Upon introduction of the total contributions approach in 2020, the maximum number of credits applicable for pension purposes will be 520 (i.e. 10 years). It is intended that a standard approach will apply to the various categories of people who receive credited contributions, including jobseekers and people with disabilities.

The person concerned is in receipt of child benefit and as such she is automatically entitled to the homemakers scheme. Her claim for child benefit is treated as an application to be registered as a homemaker. She will be registered as a homemaker for the periods that she spends providing full-time care to her children up until their 12th birthday providing she is not in full-time employment or in receipt of any social welfare credits. Homemaking periods through child benefit applications are registered when a person submits their application for state pension (contributory).

As the person concerned will not reach pension age until after 2020 her application for state pension (contributory) will be determined under the new system as outlined in the National Pensions Framework.

Social Welfare Code

279. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the rules governing the retention of secondary benefit have changed; and the eligibility of a person on a one parent family allowance to retain rent supplement after taking up a community employment scheme. [18856/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The conditions for those taking up either an employment or training opportunity were subject to a number of improvements in 2007 which included the replacement of the retention arrangements under the rent supplement scheme. Under the current arrangements a person participating on community employment (CE) scheme can continue to receive rent supplement subject to their satisfying the standard means assessment rules. Where a person has additional income in excess of the standard supplementary welfare allowance weekly rate of payment, the first €75 of such additional income together with 25% of any additional income above €75 is disregarded for means assessment purposes. This ensures that those returning to work or participating in training schemes are better off as a result of taking up such an opportunity.

Social Welfare Benefits

280. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 13; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18871/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Due to staff action currently being taken in the HSE, I regret that I am unable to provide the information sought by the Deputy.

281. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will explain the difference between the means test for a spouse claiming jobseeker's allowance and for a child and in particular the exclusion of a mortgage allowance from the spouse's means test and the application of a 60% assessment rate on residual income compared to 34% for a child; and if he will indicate the payment made under these means tests to a child and to a spouse where the earner has the average industrial wage and where the earner has twice the average industrial wage. [18885/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Jobseeker's Allowance is a means tested social assistance scheme operated by my Department. For means test purposes, account is taken of the income and assets of both the claimant and his or her spouse/partner including the earnings of the spouse. In the case of a single claimant aged under 25 years of age, account is also taken of the value of any benefit and privilege enjoyed by that person by virtue of residing with a parent or step-parent.

Where a spouse/partner has earnings from employment, earnings less PRSI contributions, pension contributions and trade union subscriptions are assessed as means. In addition, the first €20 per day is also disregarded, subject to a maximum of €60 per week and 60% of the balance is assessed where a claimant or a spouse/partner has income from employment.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) ceased to publish data on average industrial earnings a number of years ago. In the most recent report by the CSO on Earnings and Labour Costs, average weekly earnings per employee generally was €691.27 in Quarter 3 of 2009 (preliminary estimate). Where the spouse or partner of a jobseeker's allowance claimant was earning this amount (average weekly earnings in the workforce generally) or twice this amount, there would

be no entitlement to jobseeker's allowance as the means assessed would exceed the maximum level of entitlement under the scheme. This is based on a couple with no dependent children.

No account is taken of mortgage repayments in calculating means for social assistance schemes generally, including jobseeker's allowance. This would be inappropriate given that there is a specific social assistance scheme, the mortgage interest supplement scheme, which provides, subject to certain conditions, support for people who have difficulty meeting their mortgage repayments and whose means are insufficient to meet their needs. The mortgage interest scheme takes into account all of the person's income, including social welfare income when calculating levels of entitlement. Accordingly, the net effect of disregarding mortgage interest repayments in calculating means for jobseeker's allowance purposes would be to reduce the level of entitlement to mortgage interest supplement as the income of the person would be higher due to a higher level of jobseeker's allowance being in payment. Mortgage Interest Supplement is not payable to people in full time employment.

Where a single claimant aged under 25 years of age is living with a parent or step-parent in the family home, an assessment is made of the yearly value of any benefit and privilege enjoyed by that person by virtue of residing with a parent or step parent. The value of the benefit and privilege assessed is based on the level of the parents' income.

Parental income includes income from all sources including most social welfare payments. Deductions are allowed for income tax, pension levy, income levy, PRSI, superannuation/PRSA contributions, private health insurance contribution, union dues and rent/mortgage payments. An additional €600 per week is disregarded in the case of a two parent family and 34% of the balance is assessed as the weekly value of the benefit and privilege enjoyed. This means test differs substantially from the means test for jobseeker's allowance (and other social assistance schemes) where a claimant and/or his or her spouse is in employment. The purpose of the benefit and privilege arrangements is to assess a value of the benefit derived by claimants under the age of 25 from residing in the parental home having allowed for reasonable parental personal outgoings including rent or mortgage repayments.

Where parental income was equivalent to average weekly earnings (€691.27), no means would be assessed as net family income after tax and PRSI would be less than €600 per week. Assuming no other means, jobseeker's allowance at the maximum rate applicable to the claimant's age would be payable. If parental income was equivalent to twice average weekly earnings, means of €126 per week would be assessed. This calculation is based on the (parental) couple having no dependent children, no rent or mortgage repayments and being a single earner PAYE household.

In this instance, jobseeker's allowance would not be payable in the case of an 18 to 22 year old as means would exceed the maximum rate of jobseeker's allowance payable while jobseeker's allowance of €40 per week would be payable in the case of a 22 to 24 year old inclusive. In this regard, it should be noted that a minimum payment of €40 per week is payable where a person assessed with the value of benefit and privilege has an underlying entitlement to a rate of jobseeker's allowance of less than €40 per week.

282. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) is entitled to rent relief. [18895/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Due to staff action currently being taken in the HSE, I regret that I am unable to provide the information sought by the Deputy.

Free Travel Scheme

283. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason funding can

[Deputy Martin Ferris.]

not be made available to private transport providers in order to subsidise the cost of bus travel for persons attending cancer care treatment from the Kerry region. [18902/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The current free travel scheme operated by the Department provides free travel on the main public and private transport services for those eligible under the scheme. These include road, rail and ferry services provided by companies such as Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann, as well as Luas and services provided by over 90 private transport operators.

The free travel scheme is based on using spare capacity on existing conventional public transport services. The scheme is not intended to support specialist hospital transport.

Social Welfare Benefits

284. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the case of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18979/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Due to staff action currently being taken in the HSE, I regret that I am unable to provide the information sought by the Deputy.

285. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will expedite a decision. [19048/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The person concerned applied for a Disability Allowance on 6 April 2010. Her claim was assessed by a medical assessor from this Department and she was found to be not medically suitable for Disability Allowance. The person was also assessed with weekly means of €459.13 from her husband's salary. As this exceeds the statutory limit of €385.70 per week for payment of Disability Allowance in this case and as she was found not medically suitable for Disability Allowance, the person's claim has been refused.

A letter has issued to her 10 May 2010, advising her of this decision and of her right of appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office, D'Olier House, D'Olier Street, Dublin 2, within 21 days.

286. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of a weekly payment of the supplementary welfare allowance. [19076/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): There are currently 41,332 recipients of a basic weekly supplementary welfare allowance payment. This includes 3,846 individuals who are in accommodation supplied by the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform and receive a direct provision allowance which is paid under the basic supplementary welfare allowance scheme.

Social Insurance

287. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of employers availing of the employers' PRSI exemption as announced in Budget 2010; and the number of employees covered. [19088/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Full details of the Employer Job (PRSI) Incentive Scheme, including the application procedure, will be announced shortly. It will be administered by the Department of Social Protection. The scheme will run for the calendar year 2010 only. However, any qualifying employment created in 2010 will be eligible for the scheme, which will be structured so that employment created prior to the launch can participate for 12 months forward from the time of launch and employment created later in the year will participate for 12 months to the corresponding date in 2011.

European Council Meetings

288. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19130/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): From the beginning of 2007 there have been ten meetings of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council of the European Union. It is the practice for the Employment and Social Affairs items to be taken on one day of this two day meeting, and Health and Consumer Affairs to be taken separately on the other. In relation to the former, the subject matter covers topics which span the interests of a number of Irish government departments — Social Protection; Enterprise, Trade and Innovation; and Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Representation at the Council is decided on the basis of the items to be discussed, and it is often the case that Ministerial attendance from this Department is not considered necessary.

During the period in question Minister Hanafin attended two meetings of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, with officials from this Department attending five others.

Social Welfare Benefits

289. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when he will make the adjustment in social welfare payments to compensate for recipients having to pay carbon tax after losing the fuel allowance. [19205/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources which has overarching responsibility for the energy portfolio has convened an inter-departmental/agency group on Affordable Energy to coordinate and drive Government policy in this area.

This group will make recommendations as to the precise package of measures including any income support measures that should be put in place to assist those at risk of fuel poverty. The work is being carried out in the context of the Affordable Energy Strategy which is due to be finalised for Government consideration by the end of June 2010. This will allow for any proposed measures to be implemented when the heating season starts again at the end of September 2010.

290. **Deputy Ulick Burke** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will receive their rent subsidy; the rate of payment that will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19312/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Due to staff action currently being taken in the HSE, I regret that I am unable to provide the information sought by the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

291. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the way a partnership to qualify for State pension will be recognised in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19332/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): No application for commercial partnership status has been received in the case of the person mentioned (details supplied). However, the Department will now initiate a commercial partnership insurability investigation and a local Social Welfare Inspector will be in touch with the person shortly to arrange an interview.

Social Welfare Code

292. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the projected saving in each of the next five years arising from his decision to restrict the one-parent family payment to parents where the youngest child is less than 13 years. [19346/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The current duration of the One-Parent Family Payment, whereby a lone parent can receive the One-Parent Family Payment until their child is 18 — or 22 if in full-time education — without any requirement for them to engage in employment, education or training, is not in the best interests of the recipient, their children or society.

My Department has undertaken a comprehensive review of the One-Parent Family Payment and developed proposals that are designed to: prevent long-term dependence on welfare and facilitate financial independence; recognise parental choice with regard to care of young children but with the expectation that parents will not remain outside of the labour force indefinitely; and include an expectation of participation in education, training and employment, with supports provided in this regard.

To meet these social policy objectives, I will be introducing changes to the One-Parent Family payment in the forthcoming Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2010. For new customers, from early 2011, it is proposed that the One-Parent Family Payment will be made until the youngest child in the lone parent family reaches age 13 years. For existing recipients of the payment there will be a phasing-out period to enable them to access education and training and to prepare them for their return to the labour market.

The estimated savings that will arise from the implementation of this provision will be mainly long-term and will amount to €1.1 million in 2011, €5.5 million in 2012, €12.5 million in 2013, €20.7 million in 2014 and €26.2 million in 2015.

Social Welfare Benefits

293. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason basic welfare supplement allowance was suspended in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19349/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Due to staff action currently being taken in the HSE, I regret that I am unable to provide the information sought by the Deputy.

Defence Forces Property

294. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary

Question No. 172 of 21 April 2010, the status of the relevant properties including whether they are for sale or if they have been handed back to the Office of Public Works. [19098/10]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): The properties referred to are Rockhill Military Post, Letterkenny, Lifford Military Post, Connolly Barracks, Longford, Monaghan Barracks and Magee Barracks, Kildare.

These properties are owned by the Department of Defence and the Office of Public Works has no role in their management. The current position in relation to Rockhill Military post is that it is being prepared for public sale although an agreement is in place with another Government agency for the purchase of part of the lands. Lifford Military post is under negotiation with another Government agency. An agreement is in place to dispose of part of Connolly Barracks, Longford to a Government agency and some interest has been recorded in the remaining portion of the barracks. An agreement for sale is also in place in relation to Monaghan Barracks. Magee Barracks has not been made available for sale yet.

European Council Meetings

295. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Defence the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19122/10]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): There is no separate Defence Minister's Council. However, twice a year — once during each presidency — Defence Ministers attend the General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting, which comprises Foreign Ministers of the member States — now called the Foreign Affairs Council following the coming into effect of the Lisbon Treaty. Since January 2007, there have been seven such meetings, four of which have been attended by the Minister for Defence. The other three were attended by a senior official from the Department.

Defence Forces Training

296. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Defence if there are more joint training exercises planned and the cost in the context of the Defence Forces allocation to participate in the Nordic Battlegroup in 2011. [19355/10]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): The Nordic Battlegroup 2011 has not undertaken any joint training exercises to date. The Nordic Battlegroup 2011 will be on standby for 6 months commencing on the 1st January 2011 and it is the intention that the Defence Forces will participate in two (2) joint training exercises in advance of the standby period. The first exercise, entitled 'Initial Effort', will take place during the period 18-31 October 2010 while the second exercise, entitled 'Joint Action', will take place during the period 08-21 November 2010.

These joint training exercises will both take place in Sweden and the projected total cost for the involvement of Irish Defence Forces personnel has been estimated at approximately €800,000.

State Airports

297. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Defence the respective sizes of both the proposed public safety zones and the existing red zones contained in the South County Dublin development plan as well as the ratio of the said public safety zones to the red zones expressed

[Deputy Pat Breen.]

as a percentage in respect of each of runways 05, 11, 23 and 29 at Casement Aerodrome in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19357/10]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): The area of the Public Safety Zone for Runway 05 is 3.21 hectares, for Runway 23 is 1.6 hectares, for Runway 11 is 3.65 hectares and for Runway 29 is 2.68 hectares. A comparison of these areas with the Red Zones is not practical due to the contours of the land encapsulated by these Zones. I have arranged for the deputy to receive visual representations of the Safety Zones comparing them to the Red Zones.

Grant Payments

298. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government when a hen harrier scheme payment will be awarded in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19025/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Payments are made on the basis of approved farm plans. I understand that the applicant's plan is currently with his farm planner for finalisation. When the final plan is submitted, the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department will process the application and, if in order, payment will be made.

Water and Sewerage Schemes

299. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the amount of money owed to each local authority in respect of outstanding unpaid claims by the local authorities for costs incurred in progressing projects under the water services investment programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18663/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Validated claims under the Water Services Investment Programme for recoupment of expenditure to the value of €6.3 million, as set out in the following table, are currently being processed for payment to the local authorities involved this month.

County/City Council	Claims for payment
	€
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	1,789,244
Galway County	637,896
Limerick City	3,500,000
North Tipperary	94,668
Roscommon	176,375
Westmeath	102,780
Total	6,300,963

I refer to the reply to Question No 908 of 19 January 2010 in relation to the processing of claims to validation. As indicated in that reply, additional claims are on hands relating to final accounts for completed schemes. These require greater time to examine and validate for payment, but generally represent a small proportion of annual spending.

Litter Pollution

300. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local

Government if any statutory authority exists to provide statutory marine environmental protection monitoring obligations regarding beach litter from shipping traffic in Irish coastal waters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18673/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Under the Litter Pollution Acts 1997 to 2009, local authorities are responsible for the prevention and control of littering in their functional areas. While the legislation does not place specific obligations, in relation to beach litter from shipping traffic in Irish coastal waters, on local authorities, the authorities, as a matter of course, take appropriate actions, including the deployment of environmental enforcement teams and specialist back-up if required, to deal with any litter deposited on beaches that may present an environmental hazard.

There is also legislation in place governing the management of ship generated waste under International and EU law. Ireland is a party to the MARPOL Convention, an International Convention which provides for, among other things, prevention of pollution of the sea by garbage from ships. This Convention is in force in national law under the Sea Pollution Act 1991. Annex V of the Marpol Convention provides that Ships and Ports must have proper procedures and facilities in place for the management and disposal of garbage.

Under EU law, Ireland manages the reporting and discharge of ships' wastes, which include garbage, for shipping traffic in EU waters. Directive 2000/59/EC on port reception facilities for ship-generated waste and cargo residues, transposed into national legislation under the European Communities (Port Reception Facilities for Ship-Generated Waste and Cargo Residues) Regulations 2003, provides that ships must report, to their port of destination, whatever garbage is on board for discharge at that port. Ports must provide garbage reception facilities for ships, so as to eliminate the discharge of garbage from ships at sea.

My Department is in the process of transposing the Marine Strategy Framework Directive into Irish law. The purpose of the Directive is to establish a framework within which Member States must establish objectives aimed at achieving or maintaining good environmental status in the marine environment by 2020 at the latest. One of the criteria to be developed for the initial assessment of good environmental status is litter in the marine environment and it will be the responsibility of each Member State to establish standards for this criterion by 2012. This will, in turn, lead to the definition of specific measures to be applied (if required) in marine waters, by the appropriate authorities.

Water and Sewerage Schemes

301. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government when the second phase of the Newport water scheme will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18695/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The Newport Regional Water Supply Scheme is included as a scheme to start construction during the period of the Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012, a copy of which is available in the Oireachtas Library. My Department has already approved the funding to enable North Tipperary County Council to award the contract for this Scheme; accordingly, the timing of the commencement of the contract is a matter for the Council.

My Department requested local authorities, including North Tipperary County Council, to submit applications earlier this year setting out their borrowing requirements to progress their water services projects in 2010, and a decision on those applications, including in respect of the Council's share of the Newport Scheme costs, will issue to the relevant local authorities shortly.

Urban Designation

302. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if in view of the significant increase in population in the Drogheda area he will introduce legislation, if necessary, to grant Drogheda city status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18696/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Significant population growth occurred in many large towns during the last intercensal period; Drogheda's experience during this period was not atypical.

Drogheda Town Council has a considerable range of functional responsibilities. I have no plans to designate Drogheda as a City Council. However the issue of town government is among a broad suite of local government matters which are being considered in the context of the finalisation of the White Paper on Local Government.

Planning Issues

303. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the position regarding a small child care business with fewer than ten children based in a private home, which now intends to relocate into a planned extension of the house; the circumstances under which the local authority might grant a relaxation or dispensation in accordance with section 4 of the Building Control Amendment Act of 2009 requirement to secure a Disability Access Certificate, in view of the fact that the cost of installing an adult disabled toilet for this small child care business will make the project cost prohibitive and would be unnecessary as none of the customers are adults; if any guidelines have been issued to local authorities on this; his reasons in making provision for local authorities to grant a relaxation or dispensation as the local authority cannot offer any guidance to the applicant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18732/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Article 20 D of the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2009 sets out the requirements for a Disability Access Certificate (DAC). The DAC, which is issued by the Building Control Authority, came into effect on 1 January 2010 and indicates compliance with Part M of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, currently Part M 2000. Guidance has been issued by my Department to the Building Control Authorities in the form of two Circular Letters dated 10 September 2009 and 16 November 2009 respectively.

A DAC is required in respect of certain categories of works or buildings, including buildings where there is a material change of use, which includes a material alteration. The underlying philosophy on which the requirements of Part M is based is that buildings should be accessible and usable by everyone, whether working in or visiting a building, including people with disabilities. Part M requires adequate provision of accessible sanitary conveniences where sanitary conveniences are provided in a building.

The granting of a dispensation or relaxation from the requirements of the Building Regulations, including Part M, is a matter for the relevant Building Control Authority.

Water and Sewerage Schemes

304. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the amount of capital funding provided to local authorities from 2002 to date in 2010 to prevent leakages in the water distribution system; the percentage this amounts rep-

resents of the total capital investment in water infrastructure over the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18764/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):

The Water Services Investment Programme has focused over the past ten years on improving the quality and capacity of water services infrastructure to meet the needs of the growing population and economic demand, and to address environmental compliance. The upgrading of existing water mains and the provision of new mains have arisen both in the context of new or upgraded infrastructure in water supply projects financed under the general Water Services Investment Programme as well as projects undertaken under the Water Conservation Sub-Programme.

Total Exchequer expenditure from 2002 to date in 2010 on the provision of water supply infrastructure has been €1.622 billion, of which some €155.2 million has been spent on water conservation works, representing almost 10% of the total spend.

Most local authorities have completed or are close to completing the initial phases of their water conservation programmes, which involved putting water management and active leakage control systems in place to monitor water use and tackle water losses throughout the supply networks. This provides the platform for intensive investment in mains rehabilitation which is a key priority under my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012, which provides for the commencement of contracts involving network rehabilitation with a value of some €320 million over the next three years. A copy of the Programme is available in the Oireachtas Library.

EU Directives

305. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the steps he has taken to reverse the derogation it currently has from the European Union in relation to domestic water charges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18765/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):

Article 9 of the Water Framework Directive requires Member States to have in place water pricing policies to provide adequate incentives for users to use water services efficiently. Article 9 also states that a Member State shall not be in breach of the Directive if it decides, in accordance with established practices at the time of adoption of the Directive, not to apply the provisions of Article 9 for a given water use. The Government's Water Pricing Policy at the time of the adoption of the Directive in October 2000, which required local authorities to recover the cost of providing water services from the users of these services, with the exception of households using the services for domestic purposes, was considered to be consistent with the requirements of Article 9.

The renewed Programme for Government contains a commitment to introduce charges for domestic water use in a way that is fair, significantly reduces waste and is easily applied. It will be based on a system where households are allocated a free basic allowance, with charging only for water use in excess of this allowance. I will be bringing proposals to Government on this matter in the coming weeks.

Architectural Heritage

306. **Deputy Charlie O'Connor** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the actions he is taking to preserve and protect the historical 1916 site at 14 to 17

[Deputy Charlie O'Connor.]

Moore Street in Dublin 1; if he will appreciate the clear interest by many in this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18857/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I refer to the Adjournment taken in the House on 21 April, 2010. I have, in the meantime, given consent under the National Monuments Acts to the proposed works to protect and maintain the fabric of the buildings. The position is otherwise unchanged.

Local Authority Staff

307. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if only engineers holding a civil engineering degree level eight National Framework of Qualifications can be appointed to water services operations management roles in local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18860/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Section 160 of the Local Government Act 2001, enables me to declare appropriate qualifications for a specified employment under a local authority or for such of the employments as belong to a specified class, description or grade. While qualifications have not been declared for Water Services Operations Management, the above-mentioned legislation also enables a local authority, with my consent, to fix the qualifications for any employment as necessary.

National Heritage Areas

308. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will provide a map of the proposed area of the Hill of Tara World Heritage Site; the reason he did not conduct a transboundary consultation for the UNESCO nomination since Eamhain Mhacha is one of the royal sites of Ireland; if he will demand that a transboundary environmental impact assessment is performed on the N2 Slane by-pass due to the cross-Border nature of the road and that a world heritage site is at stake; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Ireland and the UK are bound by the ESPOO convention and EU directive; and if he will make a statement on the N3 Slane by-pass's proximity to Brú na Bóinne. [18887/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The Tara Complex has been included in Ireland's new Tentative List of potential nominees to the World Heritage List submitted to UNESCO as part of the Royal Sites of Ireland series.

The proposed nomination of the Tara Complex as part of the Royal Sites of Ireland series will require the preparation of comprehensive nomination documentation including a management plan for the property. Consideration of the land area involved will take place at that stage. Consultation with the relevant stakeholders including the local community will be an important part of the process.

A nomination to the World Heritage List takes considerable time to prepare and each property nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List is subject to evaluation by UNESCO, normally, over an 18 month period.

It is a matter for the United Kingdom authorities to decide whether to include Eamhain Mhacha (Navan Fort — the royal site for the kings of Ulster) in County Armagh in the United Kingdom Tentative List. In this regard, my Department has been in contact with the United Kingdom Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in relation to the possibility of the inclusion of Eamhain Mhacha on the United

Kingdom Tentative List. If Eamhain Mhacha is included on this Tentative List then my Department will discuss further the possibility of a transnational Royal Sites of Ireland serial nomination to the World Heritage List with the relevant United Kingdom and Northern Ireland authorities.

Council Directive No. 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, as amended by Council Directive No. 97/11/EC, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Environment Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (the 1991 ESPOO Convention) are reflected within various legislative provisions. As regards the preparation and submission of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) by a road authority it is a matter for that authority to send a copy of the EIS to the transboundary State concerned, where applicable.

My role as Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in relation to development applications is confined to that of statutory consultee under the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, where a proposed development may impact on the natural or built heritage. In the context of my role as statutory consultee within the planning process, Meath County Council notified my Department of its application to An Bord Pleanála for approval in relation to a proposed road development consisting of a bypass of the village of Slane. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared for the proposed N2 Slane bypass road project. A submission was made to An Bord Pleanála by my Department following consideration of the EIS. The consideration of any submissions or observations made and the final decision on this development application is a matter for An Bord Pleanála.

A letter was also sent, on behalf of my Department, to the Director of the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO, bringing to his attention the submission of my Department to An Bord Pleanála.

Turbary Rights

309. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he has presented the interdepartmental working group report on turf cutting to Cabinet; when he plans to publish the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18896/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I expect to bring proposals to Government shortly regarding turf-cutting in Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation and Natural Heritage Areas. I will then be in touch with affected individuals and representative groups in regard to the position.

Local Authority Staff

310. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the number of permanent and temporary staff employed by each local authority at the end of 2007, 2008 and 2009 and in total for the end of each of those years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18989/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The number of permanent and temporary staff employed across all 34 local authorities at end of December 2009 was 30,564 and 1,691 respectively, compared to 31,897 and 3,166 at end of December 2008, and 31,427 and 3,564 at end of December 2007. A breakdown by authority is provided in the following table.

[Deputy John Gormley.]

Local Authority	December 2007		December 2008		December 2009	
	Permanent	Temporary	Permanent	Temporary	Permanent	Temporary
Cork City	1,422	115	1,422	71	1,384	36
Dublin City	6,484	391	6,795	137	6,375	105
Galway City	424	94	434	101	428	60
Limerick City	510	44	515	40	511	18
Waterford City	381	76	387	77	356	54
Carlow	317	46	318	40	310	21
Cavan	457	32	462	18	429	17
Clare	808	94	768	140	738	90
Cork	2,376	240	2,414	229	2,284	80
Donegal	973	263	983	210	958	50
Dun Laoghaire	1,226	59	1,190	52	1,128	68
Fingal	1,523	77	1,521	68	1,445	45
Galway	884	191	870	196	840	95
Kerry	1,148	153	1,157	191	1,141	84
Kildare	877	202	910	185	900	47
Kilkenny	563	58	565	51	551	17
Laois	374	51	390	48	385	21
Leitrim	313	23	312	18	292	11
Limerick	744	65	735	59	712	27
Longford	330	41	339	43	303	27
Louth	681	60	710	24	679	13
Mayo	1,093	137	1,115	182	1,064	113
Meath	632	129	642	158	628	75
Monaghan	429	44	433	22	422	12
Offaly	454	57	459	40	453	25
Roscommon	526	53	527	55	519	32
Sligo	524	69	527	60	498	32
South Dublin	1,279	182	1,285	188	1,240	163
Tipperary North	450	134	465	98	461	43
Tipperary South	677	41	680	27	645	9
Waterford	526	57	530	71	530	36
Westmeath	483	82	481	56	461	27
Wexford	787	98	791	72	757	48
Wicklow	752	108	765	139	737	90

Legislative Programme

311. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his plans to publish climate change legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19028/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I refer to the reply to Question No. 12 of 22 April 2010, which sets out my current position on this matter.

Housing Grants

312. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if income from a post leaving certificate grant is included when calculating rental liability for local authority housing, under the differential rental scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19075/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran): The making and amending of rent schemes is the responsibility of local authorities as an integral part of their housing management functions, subject to broad principles laid down by my Department in Circular letter HRT 3/2002 of 6 March 2002. Therefore, decisions on whether or not to disregard particular sources of income for the purposes of calculating rents is a matter for each individual local authority to consider in accordance with their own rents scheme.

Notwithstanding this, in the context of new provisions introduced by the enactment of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, I intend to make regulations in 2010 which will more clearly set out the matters that may be included in a local rents scheme.

Waste Management

313. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 362 and 370 of 30 March 2010 and Parliamentary Question No. 221 of 29 April 2010, if batch testing of the discharged effluent is taking place; the toxicity concentrations that were found; the frequency of the batch testing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19078/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): My Department does not hold the information sought. The conditions applying to a waste licence and the enforcement of such conditions, including in respect of testing, are solely matters for the Environmental Protection Agency and are not matters in which the Minister has a role.

Section 60(3) of the Waste Management Act 1996 precludes the Minister from exercising any power or control in relation to the performance, in particular circumstances, by a local authority or the EPA of a function conferred on it.

Water Metering

314. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No 17 of 22 April 2010, if he will confirm whether the imposition of charges will not precede the completion of the intended metering installation works to all households. [19094/10]

315. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No 17 of 22 April 2010, if he will confirm the costs he intends to impose on each household for the installation of a meter, that is aside from any charge for water. [19095/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I propose to take Questions Nos. 314 and 315 together.

I will shortly be bringing proposals to Government on the approach to the metering of households on public supplies. These proposals will give effect to the commitment in the renewed Programme for Government to introduce charging for domestic water use in a way that is fair, significantly reduces waste and is easily applied. It will be based on a system where

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households are allocated a free basic allowance, with charging only for water use in excess of this allowance. I will provide further details on these matters following their consideration and approval by Government.

Water and Sewerage Schemes

316. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 951 of 3 November 2009, the position regarding funding for Cooraclare sewerage scheme, County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19106/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012, a copy of which is available in the Oireachtas Library, provides for the development of a comprehensive range of new water services infrastructure in County Clare. While provision is made to commence contracts to the value of some €38 million in the county during the period of the programme, it was not possible to include the Cooraclare Sewerage Scheme amongst the priority contracts and schemes selected for inclusion.

The new Programme aims to prioritise projects that target environmental compliance issues and support economic and employment growth as envisaged in the Government's policy document Building Ireland's Smart Economy — A Framework for Sustainable Economic Revival. A key input to the development of the Programme was the assessment of needs prepared by local authorities, including Clare County Council, in response to my Department's request to the authorities in 2009 to review and prioritise their proposals for new capital works in their areas. These were subsequently appraised in the Department in the context of the funds available and key criteria that complemented those used by the authorities. Inevitably, through this process, certain projects that had been proposed had to give way to others that are more strategically important at this time.

European Council Meetings

317. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19125/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Since June 2007, the EU of Environment Ministers Council has met formally on thirteen occasions. I attended eleven of these meetings in person. Ireland was represented on one occasion by a Minister of State and on a further occasion by the Deputy Permanent Representative to the European Union.

Waste Management

318. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the reason the new Environment Protection Agency code of practice on wastewater treatment and disposal systems serving single house guidelines cannot consider alternative engineering solutions to the water treatment issues when T value is more than 90; if he will review this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19163/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):

The Code of Practice to which the Question refers was prepared and published by the Environmental Protection Agency and my Department has no specific function in this regard. However, it is my intention that the Code of Practice will be called up into Technical Guidance Document H (TGD-H) of the Building Regulations which is currently under review. The public consultation process in this regard ended on 8 March 2010. Submissions received are now being considered by my Department, in consultation with the Building Regulations Advisory Body, with a view to having the amended Part H/TGD-H finalised later this year.

Part H and Technical Guidance Document H set out the requirements and guidance for Drainage and Waste Water Disposal, including septic tanks. A septic tank installed in accordance with TGD-H is deemed to comply with the Building Regulations. Implementation of the EPA Code of Practice on Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems is a key step for Ireland in addressing a recent ECJ Judgement (C188/08) which found that Ireland was in breach of Article 4 of the EU Waste Directive (2006/12/EC) which requires all EU Member States to take measures to ensure that waste is recovered or disposed of without endangering human health and without using processes that could harm the environment. For the purposes of the Directive, waste includes wastewaters from septic tanks and other waste water treatment plants from single houses.

In this regard, the EPA Code of Practice on Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems lays down the technical standards to comply with Ireland's duty of care under Article 4 of the Waste Directive, but in particular to ensure that the disposal of waste via wastewater systems for single dwellings does not give rise to public nuisance, health risk or damage to the natural environment. There is no provision in the Directive for a derogation from the requirements of Article 4. Recent EPA statistics indicate that in relation to the 440,000 on-site wastewater systems in Ireland, as many as 120,000 may be giving rise to surface water pollution and 25,000 to groundwater pollution, therefore there is considerable urgency in setting both the technical standards for new build and inspection and maintenance regime for existing systems to improve the situation described above.

I accept that the Code of Practice sets higher standards with regard to the design, installation and maintenance of on-site wastewater treatment systems. I also accept that such standards will pose engineering and planning challenges in certain parts of the country where soil and geological conditions create very difficult drainage conditions. However, such standards are justified because they will ensure that discharges from on site wastewater treatment systems can be effectively disposed of without damaging the environment and water quality in particular.

For more challenging sites, the Code of Practice sets out a number of potential solutions, including innovative designs of wastewater treatment systems and the consideration of discharges other than to otherwise sodden or otherwise unsuitable ground conditions, that can be used to ensure that development on suitable sites can proceed while protecting the environment. My Department will work with local authorities with a view to ensuring that future county development plans, taking account of river basin management plans and other water quality legislation, address this issue pro-actively so that rural communities continue to provide for their housing needs in tandem with protecting water quality.

Urban Renewal Schemes

319. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local

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Government the special tax designation for urban renewal throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19331/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):

Tax designation for urban renewal is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Finance.

State Airports

320. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 534 of 13 May 2008, the reason for the delay on the part of his Department in finalising draft planning guidelines on public safety zones around Dublin, Cork and Shannon Airports in view of the fact that the emergency risk management report on this matter was published on 8 March 2005; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19348/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Ciarán Cuffe): I am advised that the designation of public safety zones around Dublin, Cork and Shannon Airports requires primary legislation. The mechanism by which these legislative changes can be introduced is under consideration by my Department in consultation with the Department of Transport and the Office of the Attorney General.

It has been the practice since 1968 to limit development in areas known as “red zones” around the 3 state airports of Dublin, Cork and Shannon, for reasons both of air navigation safety and public safety. In 2000, my Department and the Department of Transport jointly commissioned Environment Resource Management (ERM) Consultants to review the issue of public safety on the ground around the major airports, based on up to date scientific practice. In assessing this matter, ERM used recent advances in risk modelling techniques.

The impact on land-use was investigated by ERM Consultants with the assistance of the County Councils of Clare, Cork and Fingal, and the City Council of Cork. It was found that there would be no changes required to existing land-use around Cork, Dublin and Shannon airports, and only minor alterations required to relevant city/county development plans.

I understand that development objectives and designations for the proposed public safety zones around the 3 state airports have been incorporated into the development plans and where applicable local area plans of the relevant local authorities, in anticipation of legislation being introduced.

Alternative Energy Projects.

321. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when he will announce the promised renewable energy feed in tariff which is vital to the survival and the development of the biomass industry here. [18709/10]

322. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when an announcement will be made on the renewable energy feed in tariff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19029/10]

323. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if grant support will be offered for Miscanthus based heat plants on commercial scale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19030/10]

324. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans in respect of renewable energy feed; if a REFIT price will be set in respect of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19045/10]

325. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to introduce a scheme of grant aid to support for Miscanthus based heat plants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19046/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 321 to 325, inclusive, together.

The Government has set the targets for the contribution from renewable energy sources to electricity at 40% by 2020. The 40% electricity target is consistent with the new EU target addressed to Ireland in the Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC, which requires Ireland to increase the contribution from renewable sources to 16% of all energy consumed (encompassing electricity, transport and heating) by 2020. Reflecting the need to support the development of biomass, I announced in February 2008 a Renewable Energy Feed In Tariff (REFIT) for biomass of 12 cent per kilowatt hour.

Under the auspices of the Renewable Energy Development Group, which is chaired by my Department, the Bioenergy Working Group is currently finalising a Bioenergy Road Map to 2020, which will underpin the contribution of bioenergy, including biomass to Ireland's Renewable Energy target for 2020. The Working Group is reviewing the current REFIT for the various categories of biomass Combined Heat and Power plants, having regard to the particular challenges for the sector and I expect that work to be finalised within the next few weeks.

The Miscanthus Pilot Demonstration Programme is a newly launched programme funded under the Renewable Energy Research Development and Demonstration Programme, which provides assistance for the deployment of renewable heating systems fuelled by miscanthus in commercial, industrial, services and public sectors and also community organisations and Energy Supply Companies (ESCOs), in Ireland. The programme, which was launched on 30th April 2010, is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

The use of miscanthus as a fuel to date is very limited in Ireland, due to a number of issues including limited experience with its use as a boiler fuel. The Miscanthus Pilot Demonstration Programme is intended to support the establishment of a number of exemplar boiler sites, between five and 15 depending on the mix of size ranges and costs submitted. These exemplar sites will serve to provide important information on the supply chain logistics and suitability of miscanthus as a boiler fuel in an Irish context, as well as providing a solid basis for creating market confidence.

Telecommunications Services

326. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of the 78 schools identified under the 100mbps post primary schools project that have received high speed broadband to date; if he will provide a list of the 78 schools which have had their broadband infrastructure upgraded by the project to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19103/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): Some 74 of the 78 post primary schools have had 100Mbps broadband connections delivered. The

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remaining four connections are scheduled to be completed in the coming days. The table below sets this information out in detail.

Roll Number	School Name	Location	Circuit Complete
60010P	Loreto Secondary School	Co. Dublin	Yes
60122D	Coláiste Bríde	Dublin 22	Yes
60261R	St. Benildus College	Co. Dublin	12 May
60263V	St. Joseph's College	Co. Dublin	Yes
60731F	St. Dominic's College	Co. Dublin	Yes
60792C	Presentation Secondary School Warrenmount	Dublin	Yes
60902G	St Pauls Secondary School Greenhills	Dublin	Yes
61140K	St Leos College, Dublin Road	Carlow	Yes
61560J	St Kierans College Secondary School, College Rd	Kilkenny	Yes
61661P	Salesian College, Celbridge	Kildare	Yes
61730I	Colaiste Naomh Mhuire	Kildare	Yes
61820J	Loreto Secondary School	Wicklow	Yes
61920N	St. Flannans College	Clare	Yes
62692I	Christ King Secondary School	Cork	Yes
62830R	St. Eunans College	Donegal	Yes
62840U	Letterkenny	Donegal	Yes
62861F	St. Columbas College	Donegal	Yes
62960H	St. Joseph's Patrician College	Galway	Yes
63040Q	Presentation College Secondary School Headford	Galway	Yes
63100I	Calasanctius College	Galway	Yes
63210P	Our Ladys Bower Secondary School	Co. Westmeath	Yes
63610I	Good Counsel College	Co. Wexford	Yes
63710M	Mercy Secondary School, Ballymahon	Co. Longford	Yes
63841E	St. Marys Diocesan School	Drogheda, Co. Louth	Yes
63900R	St. Vincents	Co. Louth	Yes
64250J	Presentation Secondary School	Limerick	Yes
64990D	St. Angela's School	Waterford	Yes
65170Q	Summerhill College Sligo	Sligo	Yes
65630B	Killina Presenation Secondary School	Co. Offaly	Yes
68067P	St. Nathy's College	Co Roscommon	Yes
68068R	Colaiste Iosagain	Laois	Yes
68070E	Mercy Secondary School	Kerry	Yes
70041J	Collinstown Park Community College	Co. Dublin	Yes
70260V	St. Macdara's Community College	Dublin	Yes
70342A	Ballyfermot College of FE	Dublin	Yes
70420R	Carlow Vocational School	Co. Carlow	Yes
70700A	Maynooth Post Primary School	Co. Kildare	Yes
71103K	Colaiste Choilm	Co. Cork	Yes
71120K	Cork College of Commerce	Co. Cork	Yes
71244F	Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada	Co. Donegal	Yes
71300M	Gairmscoil Einne	Galway	Yes
71370K	Colaiste Ghobnait	Galway	Yes
71410T	Athlone Community College	Westmeath	Yes

Roll Number	School Name	Location	Circuit Complete
71630K	Enniscorthy Vocational College	Wexford	Yes
71761C	St. Olivers CC	Louth	Yes
71770D	O Fiaich College	Co Louth	Yes
71840V	Colaiste Chiarain	Limerick	Yes
71950F	St. Peter's College, Dunboyne	Co Meath	Yes
71960I	Dunshaughlin Community College	Co. Meath	Yes
72210Q	Beech Hill College	Monaghan	Yes
72230W	St. Declans Community College	Co. Waterford	12 May
72241E	St. Pauls Community College	Waterford	Yes
76060U	Davitt College	Mayo	Yes
76062B	Castleknock Community College	Dublin	Yes
76073G	Castletroy College	Limerick	Yes
76079S	Colaiste Phobail Cholmcille	Donegal	Yes
76087R	Cavan Institute	Cavan	Yes
81002K	Mount Temple Comprehensive School	Dublin	Yes
81014R	Crescent College Comprehensive S.J.	Limerick	Yes
81017A	Trinity Comprehensive School	Dublin	Yes
91315O	Coolmine Community School	Dublin	Yes
91325R	Malahide Community School	Dublin	Yes
91332O	St. Marks Community School	Dublin	12 May
91338D	St. Aidans Community School	Dublin	Yes
91339F	Hartstown Community School	Dublin	Yes
91344V	Pobalscoil Rosmini	Dublin	Yes
91388S	Carrigaline Community School	Cork	Yes
91406R	Carndonagh Community School	Donegal	Yes
91408V	Pobalscoil Chloich Cheannfhasha	Donegal	Yes
91447I	St. Caimin's Community School	Clare	Yes
91492N	Gorey Community School	Co Wexford	Yes
91494R	St. Louis community School	Mayo	Yes
91496V	Carrick Community School	Leitrim	Yes
91497A	Cashel Community School		12 May
91498C	Gort Community School	Galway	Yes
91500J	Loreto Community School	Donegal	Yes
91501L	Moate Community School	Westmeath	Yes
91510M	St. Colmcilles Community School	Knocklyon, Dublin 16	Yes

327. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide an update on the provision of broadband in Leitrim village; when will the Eircom exchange have broadband enabled to enable residents to get fixed line broadband from Eircom. [19109/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): Prior to the commencement of the National Broadband Scheme (NBS) a detailed mapping exercise was carried out to help determine those areas that would be included in the scheme and those who, by virtue of being already substantially served by existing broadband suppliers, were to be excluded.

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EU State aid and competition rules govern how states can intervene in areas where there are existing service providers operating. Accordingly, the NBS is prohibited from providing a service in served areas where to do so would give rise to an unacceptable level of market distortion.

The mapping exercise found two broadband suppliers already active in the area of Leitrim village and consequently the locality was excluded from the Scheme. I understand both these operators are still active in the area.

The enabling of Eircom exchanges is a matter for that company and therefore I am not in a position to intervene in the matter.

European Council Meetings

328. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19120/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): Since I came into office on the 14th June 2007 there have been fifteen EU Council meetings that I have been entitled to attend. Of those I have attended eleven meetings. The other four meetings were attended by officials of my Department.

Grant Payments

329. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to Parliamentary Question No 225 of 25 March 2010 when a decision will be made on an application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18642/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The person named submitted an application for the Single Payment Scheme 2009 which was received, in my Department, on 20th November 2009. Under the Terms and Conditions of the Single Payment Scheme 2009, all applications received after 9th June 2009 incur a 100% late penalty. An appeal in connection with this 100% late penalty is currently being dealt with by the Agriculture Appeals Office.

As far as the application for grant-aid by the person named under the Farm Waste Management Scheme is concerned, the first and second instalments of grant-aid were paid to him in 2009 and 2010 respectively.

Bovine Movement Certificates

330. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the specific procedure and interaction between a County Clare farmer and his Department regarding the issuing of a movement certificate for bovine animals from a restricted herd in view of the fact that the district veterinary office no longer operates from Ennis, County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18652/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Following the closure of the District Veterinary Office, Ennis, my Department have written to all herdowners who

were previously dealt with from that office and advised them that their files will now be administered from the District Veterinary Office, Limerick.

In view of this change, herdowners based in County Clare who require movement permits should contact the District Veterinary Office in Limerick and provide details of the animals for which permits are required. These permits will be processed in the Limerick office and issued by post. Alternatively, herdowners can arrange to collect passports for the animals concerned from the Limerick office. The passports will be stamped “For Slaughter Only” and can be brought directly to the factory on the day of collection.

Forestry Inventory

331. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if a national forestry inventory programme will be carried out in 2010; if so, if he will state the number of persons who will be employed on same; if new employment will be created; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18656/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): In 2007, the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food completed a National Forest Inventory in Ireland. This inventory involved a detailed field survey of Ireland’s forests and woodlands. The purpose of the National Forest Inventory is to record and assess the composition and condition of the entire forest estate, both public and private, at national level.

To facilitate the collection of this information the Department recruited professional foresters and the field data collection was completed in November 2006. Data processing and analyses were then undertaken and completed in November 2007. The next stage of the inventory is due to commence shortly and will revisit the same locations to assess changes in the forest estate when compared to the first stage. It is intended to recruit four to six professional foresters on contract to undertake field data collection under the next phase of the National Inventory.

Equal Opportunities Employment

332. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the policy for the employment of persons with disability in his Department; if there are any vacancies at the moment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18657/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): My Department is an equal opportunities employer. In accordance with the Code of Practice for the Employment of People with Disability in the Irish Civil Service my Department is committed to providing the supports necessary to enable staff with disabilities to participate fully in the workplace.

However, as the Deputy will be aware, due to the moratorium on recruitment and promotion in the public service, the Department is precluded from the filling of posts generally without the express sanction of the Minister for Finance.

Grant Payments

333. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when an application for sucklers grant will be awarded in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18676/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The person named had 14 animals for consideration under the 2009 Suckler Welfare Scheme. It is a condition of this Scheme for herds of more than 10 cows that a graduated weaning practice be implemented.

[Deputy Brendan Smith.]

The calves must be weaned in at least two separate groups with each group being removed at a minimum interval of at least five days. The applicant did not comply with this condition and, therefore, is not eligible for payment under the Terms and Conditions of the Suckler Welfare Scheme.

Aquaculture Licences

334. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to Parliamentary Question No. 846 of 20 April 2010, the timeframe for the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18722/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): As indicated in previous replies the area for which the licences are sought is a designated Special Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive and a Special Protection Area under the EU Birds Directive (Natura 2000 site).

In the case of aquaculture sites located within Natura 2000 areas my Department, in conjunction with the Marine Institute and the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is engaged in a comprehensive programme to gather the necessary baseline data appropriate to the conservation objectives of these areas. This process is ongoing. The comprehensive data collection programme together with the setting of appropriate conservation objectives will enable all new and renewal applications to be appropriately assessed for the purpose of ensuring compliance with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives.

The area in question remains part of the package of prioritised areas under assessment. This package is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to expediting data collection.

My Department continues to make every effort to expedite the determination of all outstanding cases having regard to the complexities of each case and the need to comply fully with all national and EU legislation.

Installation Aid Scheme

335. **Deputy Charles Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the position regarding an installation aid application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18828/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): My Department has no record of having received an application under the Young Farmers' Installation Scheme from the person concerned. As the Deputy will be aware, the Scheme was suspended for new applications on 14 October 2008.

Grant Payments

336. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a payment under the suckler cow welfare scheme; if this person will receive partial payment. [18847/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The person named applied for 17 animals in 2009 under the Suckler Welfare Scheme.

It is a condition of this Scheme that for herds of more than 10 cows the calves must be weaned in at least two separate groups with each group being removed at a minimum interval of five days. In correspondence received on the 12th March 2010 the herd owner stated that

he was not aware of the graduated weaning process at the time of weaning and that all animals were weaned in the same shed.

A copy of the Terms and Conditions of the scheme would have been provided to the herd owner when the application form issued to him and it is the responsibility of the herd owner to familiarise himself with the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme. In addition, the herd owner attended the training course provided in relation to operation of this Scheme. Therefore, as this condition was not adhered to payment cannot be made to the applicant.

Cereal Sector

337. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if concerns have been raised with his Department regarding the threat of rust fungus in wheat here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18882/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The Rust fungus is a common disease of cereal production in Ireland and is one of many cereal diseases that producers have to contend with on an annual basis. Disease pressures in cereal production in Ireland is generally higher than most other European countries due to our climatic conditions.

In the case of Rust, its incidence and threat will vary from year to year, from crop to crop and also between different regions. Where there is an incidence or threat from the disease, it can be controlled very effectively with the appropriate crop management strategy including the use of approved fungicides. Teagasc has carried out and continues to carry out extensive research in this area including fungicide strategies/programmes to give optimal control of disease in cereal crops. Information and advice on all aspects of cereal disease control is available from the Teagasc Advisory Service’.

Grant Payments

338. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the REP scheme payment and suckler cow grant will be awarded in respect of a person (details supplied in County Cork. [18888/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Payment will issue to the person named within ten working days.

339. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the forestry premium will be awarded in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [18889/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): I understand that the relevant payments have now been made to the person in question.

340. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the extent of payments outstanding in respect of various farm payments, on a county basis as at the 30 April 2010; the reason for the delay; when it is expected that all payments will be brought up to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18911/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Payments under the Single Payment Scheme, Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, Suckler Cow Scheme, Upland Sheep Scheme and Annual Forestry Premium are up — to-date. Payments under the on — farm investment schemes are also up — to —date including grants under the Farm Waste Management Scheme which are being paid on a phased basis.

[Deputy Brendan Smith.]

The following are details of payments currently outstanding in respect of existing Schemes:

REPS

EU Regulations require that detailed administrative checks be carried out on all REPS applications before any payment can be made. In 2008 and 2009, queries arose in the course of checks on a significant number of applications. The queries arose under a range of issues including area measurement and nutrient management plans. Where queries arose, my Department sought to resolve these issues as quickly as possible so that payments could be made with the minimum of delay. In many cases, however, it was necessary for officials to contact farmers directly about their applications, and a significant number of farm plans had to be sent back to applicants to be amended in line with the terms of the scheme. Amended plans are being processed for payment without delay.

The payments outstanding under this scheme are outlined on a county basis as follows:

Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS)

County	No. of Payments outstanding	Value
		€
Carlow	50	310,000
Cavan	459	2,845,800
Clare	213	1,320,600
Cork	1,623	10,062,600
Donegal	351	2,176,200
Dublin	23	142,600
Galway	927	5,747,400
Kerry	1,267	7,855,400
Kildare	77	477,400
Kilkenny	150	930,000
Laois	122	756,400
Leitrim	299	1,853,800
Limerick	260	1,612,000
Longford	144	892,800
Louth	57	353,400
Mayo	930	5,766,000
Meath	235	1,457,000
Monaghan	335	2,077,000
Offaly	171	1,060,200
Roscommon	255	1,581,000
Sligo	329	2,039,800
Tipperary (Nr)	139	861,800
Tipperary (Sr)	263	1,630,600
Waterford	176	1,091,200
Westmeath	127	787,400
Wexford	212	1,314,400
Wicklow	65	403,000
Totals	9,259	57,405,800

Organic Farming Scheme

In relation to the Organic Farming Scheme 329 applications have been approved to date for payment of the first phase of 75% in respect of 2009. Out of these, payment has been authorised and is due to issue shortly in respect of 214 applications. The remaining applications approved for the 75% payment in respect of 2009 are expected to be processed by the end of May 2010. Payment of the second phase of 25% in respect of 2009 has not yet been approved because not all participants have submitted evidence of their farming activity in 2009, which is necessary before these payments can be cleared. It is not possible to provide details by county.

Scheme of Installation Aid

It is not possible to compile a list of payments outstanding under this scheme at short notice and details will issue separately to the Deputy.

Bank Account Details

Some 164 farmers have not received scheme payments due to them from my Department as they have not yet supplied the necessary bank account details required to issue their payments electronically. This payment method is mandatory under EU Commission requirements since October 2008 and all of the affected farmers have been written to in relation to this matter.

Animal Welfare

341. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food his plans to review his decision to exempt all commercial dogs being transported out of Ireland to the UK from having a pet passport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18915/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The EU 'Pet Passport' regime was introduced in 2004 to protect EU citizens from rabies. To travel between Member States **all** dogs and cats must have a pet passport certifying vaccination against rabies. However Ireland and the UK have been free of rabies since 1903 and have operated a common rabies free travel zone for many decades. Under the EU regime there is thus no requirement to vaccinate dogs and cats travelling between Ireland and the UK against rabies and consequently we do not require passports for such dogs and cats.

342. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if authorised dog transporters have been checked to ensure that dogs commercially exported to continental Europe have pet passports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18975/10]

345. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the number of spot checks that were made on authorised dog transporters from 2005 to 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19050/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): I propose to take Questions Nos. 342 and 345 together.

Eight transporters of live dogs are authorised by my Department under Council Regulation (EC) No 1 of 2005 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97 and S.I. No. 675 of 2006 [European Communities (Animal Transport and Control Post) Regulations 2006].

The number of spot checks carried out on authorised dog transporters is set down as follows:

[Deputy Brendan Smith.]

Year	Checks
2005	26 checks
2006	46 checks
2007	88 checks
2008	79 checks
2009	27 checks

Passports are not required in respect of the transport of dogs to Britain. The vast majority of dogs, leaving Ireland, travel to Britain.

Pet passports are not generally checked by our staff as they exit the port for the continent; as that would be the remit of the receiving country. All pet passports are subject to border checks as dogs arrive in this country from abroad.

Grant Payments

343. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their payment under REP scheme 4; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19033/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An adjusted plan was required from the person named and it was received on 22 March 2010. My officials are currently processing the application and they will be in touch with the person named shortly.

Animal Welfare

344. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the number of pet passports that have been issued from 2005 to 2009, inclusive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19049/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Number of Pet Passports issued by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food 2005-2009:

Year	Number of passports issued
2005	3,063
2006	4,538
2007	4,697
2008	4,965
2009	4,734

Question No. 345 answered with Question No. 342.

Grant Payments

346. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive payment under the suckler cow scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19073/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The person named applied for 24 animals in 2009. Payment issued on 26 January 2010 in respect of 9 calves. A number of queries arose during the validation process in relation to the remaining animals and

an official from my Department will make direct contact with the applicant with a view to resolving these queries.

European Council Meetings.

347. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that he was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings he attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in his place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19119/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): There have been 42 meetings of the EU Council of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers in the 3 plus years since January 2007. I, or my predecessor, Tánaiste Mary Coughlan TD, attended all except three of these meetings, in many cases along with the relevant Minister of State. Minister Tony Killeen (then Minister of State for Fisheries and Forestry) represented Ireland in my place at one Council meeting devoted almost entirely to fisheries, and Ireland was represented at official level at two meetings.

Forestry Industry

348. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the financial assistance in place to assist forestry owners who have lost trees as a result of bog fires; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19161/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): There is no financial assistance in place to assist forestry owners who have lost trees as a result of fire. In 2009 all forestry owners were strongly advised by my Department to insure their plantations against fire and windblow.

Crop Losses

349. **Deputy John Cregan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the level of moneys available under the lost crops compensation scheme; and the way that this compensation will be distributed. [19171/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Following on from a preliminary assessment, by my officials, of the crop losses caused by the severe weather conditions, I announced, on 3rd February 2010, the introduction of a limited scheme of financial assistance for certain potato and field vegetable growers who could demonstrate that they had suffered significant losses of their produce due to these severe frosts. Affected growers had to supply the Department with details of the crops involved and the extent and amount of the losses which they had incurred.

Officials of the Department then completed on-farm inspections to verify that those crops, which are the subject of the claim for assistance, were present in the fields at the time of the inspection and to assess the extent of the damage caused by the frost. An analysis of the financial data submitted by each applicant is currently being undertaken and eligibility for assistance will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

The Scheme of assistance is being administered in full compliance with EU State Aid Rules [Commission Regulation (EC) No 1857/2006]. This confines aid to the actual losses experienced by growers and is conditional on more than 30% of the crop having been destroyed. It also sets out how the aid is to be calculated. This requires that aid is calculated on the basis of sales from the average of the 3 previous years' production minus sales value of this year's production. Aid is then calculated at 40% of this difference and is further reduced by 50% if the applicant

[Deputy Brendan Smith.]

does not have crop insurance. In addition, there is provision in the Scheme for the Department to apply a sliding scale to the amount of aid provided.

Pension Provisions

350. **Deputy John Cregan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if a permanent part-time employee employed at a vocational education committee second level college who paid widow's and orphan's contributions and superannuation during the course of their employment has, on retirement, an entitlement to a pension; if the duration of the employment has a bearing on same; and if it is deemed that there is no pension entitlement, can this employee receive a refund of contributions made. [18664/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Superannuation schemes in Vocational Educational Committees are administered by each Vocational Educational Committee, while my Department has responsibility for the regulation of these schemes. In order to have an entitlement to superannuation benefits at retirement a member must have 2 years of scheme membership. Where a member has less than 2 years service a refund of contributions less tax at the standard rate may be made. On retirement members are entitled to claim a gratuity and an annual pension both of which are calculated based on the amount of pensionable service and pensionable remuneration at retirement.

Educational Projects

351. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the recent public sector pay cut to contract researchers in higher education institutions, are being viewed by the European Commission as a breach of contract in respect of that body's funding of the Marie Curie fellowships in Irish universities; if her attention has further been drawn to the fact that no more funding for these scholarships will be forthcoming from the EU Commission; the steps he will take to remedy this problem; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18726/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I am not aware of any proposal from the Commission to cease funding for these scholarships. The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (no. 2) Act 2009 has determined the criteria for reducing the pay of public servants with effect from 1st January 2010. In this Act, a "public servant" is defined as a person who is employed by, or who holds any office or other position in, a public service body. A public service body is defined as one which receives direct or indirect funding and to which a public service pension scheme exists, or applies, or may be made.

Under the terms of the Act, universities are considered to be public service bodies. The Act does not distinguish between those employees who are members of a public service pension scheme and those who are not. Nor does it distinguish between those whose salaries are wholly paid from monies provided by the Exchequer and those whose salaries are funded from other sources.

The position is that all persons employed by a university, regardless of how their salaries are funded and irrespective of whether or not they are members of a public service pension scheme, are by definition public servants within the meaning of the Act. I understand that the researchers referred to by the Deputy are those in receipt of Marie Curie Fellowships from the European Commission. Although their salaries are funded by the European Commission, these researchers are hosted by a university and have their employment contract with that institution. It is for this reason that the pay reduction has been applied to the Marie Curie Fellows in the same way as it has to all other researchers and employees of these institutions. Section 6 of the Act contains provision to allow the Minister for Finance to exempt either certain public ser-

vants, or classes or groups of public servants from the operation of the Act, either entirely or to such extent as the Minister considers appropriate in the event where exceptional circumstances exist.

I am aware that representations have been made for an exemption to be provided in the case of Marie Curie researchers. The Deputy will be aware, however, that any consideration in this case must take into account the wider implications of such an exemption for other staff in the institutions and across the public sector.

FÁS Training Programmes

352. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 82 of 25 March 2010 and the subsequent reply from FÁS (details supplied) which restates the existing position, her views on changing the existing practice whereby trainers are paid only at the end of the contract period and are consequently precluded from unemployment benefit or assistance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18776/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): My colleague the Minister for Labour Affairs and for Public Service Transformation set out in his reply to the Deputy on 25th March 2010 that the matter in question is a day-to-day staffing one for FÁS as provided for in the Labour Services Act, 1987. I understand that FÁS, at the request of the said Minister, has since written directly to the Deputy on this matter.

353. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) in County Cork who was offered a place on a FÁS course at a time when the offer of a place automatically meant entitlement to a training allowance now finds that having voluntarily given up their previous employment to pursue this course that the regulations have changed and FÁS will no longer pay them a training allowance; if in the circumstances he will arrange for payment of the allowance in this case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18912/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The individual case referred to by the Deputy is a day-to-day matter for FÁS as provided for under the Labour Services Act, 1987.

Following the December 2009 Budget the payment of FÁS training allowances is now aligned to a person's entitlement to supports for jobseekers and Department of Social Protection rules. Consequently, where a trainee is entitled to a welfare payment at the commencement of his or her training course he/she will receive a FÁS training allowance for the duration of the course. If a trainee is not entitled to a welfare payment at the commencement of the training course then he or she will not receive a training allowance.

354. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of public sector bodies which have applied for and been approved for the FÁS work placement scheme in 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18985/10]

355. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of private sector employers who have applied for and been approved for the FÁS work placement scheme in 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18986/10]

356. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of applicants who have been placed and commenced work under the FÁS work placement programme; the location of these placements on a county basis; the FÁS areas at which

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work placements need to be filled in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18987/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 354 to 356, inclusive, together.

The Work Placement Programme provides up to 9 months work experience for up to 2,000 unemployed individuals, including graduates. 153 Public Sector bodies applied and were approved for the Work Placement Scheme in 2009. 752 Private Sector employers applied and were approved for the Work Placement Scheme in 2009.

As at 7th May 2010 there have been 919 placements on the Work Placement Programme. There are currently 1,589 vacancies for places under the programme.

I have outlined in the tables below the location of these placements by county and the FÁS areas at which work placements need to be filled.

The location of these placements by county

FÁS Region	Areas/Counties	Number of Placements Commenced
Dublin Central	Baggot Court, D'Olier House, Parnell Street, Ballyfermot, Cabra	204
Dublin North	Baldoyle, Balbriggan, Swords, Blanchardstown, Coolock, Finglas	81
Dublin South	Rathfarnham, Crumlin, Tallaght, Clondalkin, Tallaght, Dun Laoghaire, Loughlinstown	87
Midlands	Kildare, Laois, Longford, Offal, Westmeath	53
Mid West	Clare, Limerick, Tipperary	73
North East	Cavan, Louth, Meath, Monaghan	58
North West	Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo	36
South East	Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary South, Waterford, Wexford, Wicklow	90
South West	Cork, Kerry	135
West	Galway, Mayo, Roscommon	102
Total		919

The FÁS areas at which work placements need to be filled

FÁS Region	Areas/Counties	Number Of Available Placements
Dublin Central	Baggot Court, D'Olier House, Parnell Street, Ballyfermot, Cabra	192
Dublin North	Baldoyle, Balbriggan, Swords, Blanchardstown, Coolock, Finglas	120
Dublin South	Rathfarnham, Crumlin, Tallaght, Clondalkin, Tallaght, Dun Laoghaire, Loughlinstown	167
Midlands	Kildare, Laois, Longford, Offal, Westmeath	174
Mid West	Clare, Limerick, Tipperary	123
North East	Cavan, Louth, Meath, Monaghan	177
North West	Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo	104
South East	Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary South, Waterford, Wexford, Wicklow	193
South West	Cork, Kerry	153
West	Galway, Mayo, Roscommon	183
Total		1,589

FÁS are continuing to promote the programme including with employers representative bodies.

357. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of persons in receipt of each of the FÁS participation allowances. [19315/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I am investigating the feasibility of providing this information and will reply to the Deputy substantively in the matter as soon as possible.

Educational Disadvantage

358. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if she will seek a further extension of time for applicants of the DARE and HEAR schemes operated by the CAO in view of the fact that many schools did not fully inform pupils of entitlements under the scheme and the categories of persons are known to be less likely to have access to information services particularly in view of the fact that the aim of the schemes is to stop disadvantaged children from being left behind. [18636/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a third-level admissions scheme for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The scheme is operated by a number of higher education institutions and not by my Department. Admissions to the institutions are regulated by the institutions themselves. The Deputy may wish to contact the Irish Universities Association in this instance.

Special Educational Needs

359. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the provision of a laptop to assist the educational needs of a child (details supplied) in County Kildare suffering from dyslexia and Asberger's syndrome; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18638/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): As the Deputy will be aware, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENO) for allocating special needs supports to schools to support children with special needs. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support. SENOs also make recommendations to my Department where assistive technology is required and my Department has no record of receiving a recommendation for a laptop for the child in question.

All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

I have arranged for the details supplied by the Deputy to be forwarded to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply.

In relation to the provision of speech and language therapy services, the Health Service Executive (HSE) provides for these services and the Deputy may wish to contact my colleague, the Minister for Health and Children or HSE directly relating to his query in this regard.

Departmental Expenditure

360. **Deputy Noel J. Coonan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the amount she anticipates that her Department will spend on converting Department titles on

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websites, headed paper, application forms, information booklets, wall charts and so on as a result of the recent changes in several Department titles; the length of time this will take; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18647/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The costs associated with the change in title of my Department will be funded from my Department's administrative budget allocation. Arrangements are currently underway to effect the change to my Department's website title and associated stationary and these changes will be completed within the next few weeks.

My Department is mindful of the need to keep all costs in respect of the conversion to a minimum. Information in relation to all relevant costs will be compiled and forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Vocational Educational Committees

361. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if correspondence has been entered into with County Cork Vocational Education Committee on a specific matter (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18679/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I can confirm for the Deputy that my Department has corresponded with the CEO of Co. Cork VEC regarding this matter.

The CEO has furnished a detailed response, which is being considered by my Department.

Schools Refurbishment.

362. **Deputy Deirdre Clune** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if she will review the recent grant provided under the summer works 2010 grant scheme to a school (details supplied) in County Cork for installation of a rain water recycling system: the reason a grant was not provided for the full cost of the installation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18681/10]

364. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the shortfall of at least €5,000 in the grant provided for the installation of a rain-water recycling system under the summer works 2010 grants scheme in respect of a school (details supplied in County Cork; if she will review the grant in order to reduce this shortfall; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18689/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 362 and 364 together.

The school to which the Deputies refer applied for funding under the Summer Works Scheme 2010 for a toilet upgrade and to install a rain water recycling system.

I am pleased to inform the Deputies that funding has been approved for toilet upgrade works.

The school will be aware from the Governing Circular Letter that rain water recycling systems are not eligible for funding under the Scheme. Consequently, it was not possible to approve this part of the school's application.

Schools were, however, invited to apply for funding for identified water conservation measures as part of the Summer Works Scheme. The school in question has made an application in this regard.

It is intended that these applications will be processed separately and I hope to announce details of the successful applicants later this year.

Higher Education Grants

363. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if her Department offers a funding scheme in which a disabled person (details supplied) in County Mayo may pursue a third-level course with an international correspondence school on a part-time basis from home; if her attention has been drawn to any other funding scheme that may be appropriate in this situation; her plans to amend the higher education scheme to accommodate persons in such a situation when full-time education is not suitable; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18688/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Higher Education Grants Scheme operates under the Local Authorities (Higher Education Grants) Acts, 1968 to 1992. Under the scheme, an approved course is defined as a full-time undergraduate course of at least two years duration or a full-time postgraduate course of not less than one year duration pursued in an approved institution. There are no plans at present to extend the scope of the student support schemes to part-time courses.

The Fund for Students with Disabilities, which provides supports to students with disabilities attending full-time courses at third level, currently operates in line with regulations concerning the maintenance grant. Therefore the provision of support does not extend to those attending part-time courses.

The Higher Education Authority also provides institutions with recurrent funding to develop the necessary infrastructure and programmes of action which support wider access for people with a disability, mature students and young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Tax relief is available on third level tuition fees in respect of approved part-time courses in approved colleges. Further information in this regard is available from the Revenue Commissioners.

Question No. 364 answered with Question No. 362.

OECD Feasibility Studies

365. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the position of the feasibility study for the assessment of higher education learning outcomes; the Irish involvement in this study; the overall cost of the study and projects; and the size of the Irish contribution. [18690/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The OECD Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) feasibility study aims to assess whether it is possible to measure learning outcomes at the international level in order to provide relevant information to higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholders, including students and employers.

The feasibility study was launched with the participation of ten countries: Australia, Belgium (Flanders), Finland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Ireland is not a participant and the Department has not contributed any funds to the study.

Detailed planning for the feasibility study started in May 2008 and the original aim was to complete the study by 2012. I understand that the originally forecast cost of the study was in the order of €12.5 million.

Special Educational Needs

366. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills her views on whether in 2010 parents of children with additional special needs are happy to send their children to school to have only their care needs met with no thought given to their academic needs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18697/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Deputy will be aware that there has been unprecedented investment in providing supports for pupils with special needs in recent years and Special Education continues to be a key Government priority. Over €1 billion is being spent in supporting special educational provision this year.

There are now about 20,000 adults in our schools working solely with pupils with special needs. This includes over 10,000 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs); 8,600 resource and learning support teachers; over 1,100 special school teachers and hundreds of other teachers in special classes.

The purpose of this investment is to ensure that children with special educational needs have access to an appropriate education. The Deputy is aware that the class teacher is responsible for educating children with disabilities. In this task, they may be supported by the learning support teacher and/or resource teacher. In special schools and special classes, teachers are supported by lower pupil teacher ratios. SNAs are recruited specifically to assist in the care of pupils with disabilities in an educational context. SNAs and teachers have separate yet complementary roles. The duties of SNAs are of a non-teaching nature while teachers deliver education to the pupils.

My Department has also responded to the need to provide teachers with continuing professional development in special education. This has been a key priority in recent years. The establishment of the Special Education Support Service (SESS) to provide expert support, professional development and training opportunities in special education for school staff has been very significant. Last year alone 23,602 training places were provided through the SESS.

367. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the person responsible for drawing up the circular which sets out the criteria for the granting of special needs assistants; if it is the National Council for Special Education; if this criteria is in line with good practice in other jurisdictions; the research on which it is based; the reason that it is focus care only; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18698/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): As the Deputy may be aware, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers, for allocating special needs supports to schools to support children with special educational needs. The qualifying criteria for the allocation of special needs assistant (SNA) support is outlined in my Department's Circular Letter 07/02 which was drawn up at that time by the Principal Officer of the Special Education Section of my Department. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

SNAs are recruited specifically to assist in the care of pupils with a disability. It is not reasonable to draw a direct parallel between the role of the SNA in Ireland and other support personnel funded in schools in other jurisdictions due to the different approaches taken in catering for the care needs of pupils with disabilities in various jurisdictions.

My Department's policy is that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, should be educated by fully qualified teachers. Accordingly, in addition to class teachers, my

Department funds Learning Support and Resource Teachers to provide additional tuition for children with learning and special educational needs. The pupil teacher ratio is reduced in special schools or special classes.

The Deputy may be aware that my Department is currently carrying out a Value for Money and Policy Review of the SNA Scheme. This is a comprehensive review of the rationale for the scheme and it is expected to be completed in 2010.

I wish to confirm for the Deputy that my Department is very supportive of the SNA scheme. It has been a key factor in both ensuring the successful integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream education and providing support to pupils enrolled in special schools and special classes. SNA support will continue to be made available to schools which have enrolled pupils who qualify for such support.

368. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills her views on whether the needs of a child with additional needs can be met through the three or five hours access to a resource teacher each week; her views on the way such children cope the other 25 hours of the week; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18699/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I consider that the level and range of supports in schools funded by my Department does enable pupils with special educational needs have access to an appropriate education.

The primary responsibility for educating children with special educational needs rests with the class teacher. In carrying out their responsibilities, the class teacher may be supported by the learning support teacher and/or resource teacher. In special schools and special classes, teachers are supported by lower pupil teacher ratios. It is a matter for the individual school to use its professional judgement to determine how it uses the resources made available to them to intervene at the appropriate level with pupils with special educational needs.

My Department has recommended that each school should adopt a whole-school approach to meeting the special educational needs of its pupils. My Department has provided a range of advice to schools on the matter of whole-school planning by means of various publications.

For example, Circular SP ED 02/05 advises schools in relation to the organisation of teaching resources for pupils who need additional support. Schools are advised in the circular to establish a staged approach to assessment, identification and learning programme planning for pupils with special educational needs. Guidance for schools is provided in the circular for each step of the staged process. The circular outlines that each school should adopt a whole-school approach to meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs. The circular also sets out advice for schools on the development of whole-school policies and procedures for learning support.

Further advice has issued to schools in relation to planning for pupils with special educational needs including the Learning Support Guidelines, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) booklet 'A Continuum of Support' and 'Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines'.

Schools should use the guidance in the documents that have been provided to develop policies and procedures to suit the circumstances of the school and the needs of the pupils. It is open to schools to seek advice of their NEPS psychologist to seek further guidance and advice in relation to the establishment of whole-school procedures.

My Department has also responded to the need to provide teachers with continuing professional development in special education. This has been a key priority in recent years. The establishment of the Special Education Support Service (SESS) to provide expert support,

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professional development and training opportunities in special education for school staff has been very significant. Last year alone 23,602 training places were provided through the SESS.

I want to take this opportunity to emphasise that children with special educational needs will continue to have access to an education appropriate to their needs.

369. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of children who have had their access to a special needs assistant reduced or cut; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18700/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): As the Deputy will be aware, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), for allocating resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

The review of SNA allocations being carried out by the NCSE, through its network of SENOs, is with a view to ensuring that the criteria governing the allocation of such posts are properly met. This is an exercise in identifying surplus posts which are in the system and which do not meet the current criteria — posts that have been retained when a pupil's care needs have diminished or where the pupil has left. At the same time, the NCSE is allocating additional posts where the criteria are met. The terms and criteria for the SNA scheme have not changed.

The NCSE has published its report on the Review of SNA Allocation to Schools April 2009 — March 2010 on its website www.ncse.ie. A copy is set out below for the Deputy's information. A small number of schools remain to be reviewed and the NCSE has indicated that these will be reviewed by the end of the current academic year. A final breakdown of the outcome of the review will be made available when all schools have been reviewed.

I wish to confirm for the Deputy that my Department is very supportive of the SNA scheme. It has been a key factor in both ensuring the successful integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream education and providing support to pupils enrolled in special schools and special classes. The SNA scheme will continue to be supported and the NCSE will continue to support schools, parents, children and teachers and resources will continue to be allocated to schools to meet children's needs in line with my Department's policy.

Report on NCSE Review of SNA Allocation to Schools April 2009-March 2010

1. Context

On 9 February 2009, the Secretary-General of the Department of Education & Science (DES) wrote to the Chairperson of the NCSE, Mr Sydney Blain, in relation to the allocation of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools. In her letter, she stated that an initial review of a number of schools, as part of the Department's SNA Value for Money and Policy Analysis Review had indicated that there were instances where the work being carried out by the SNAs did not reflect the basis for the allocation of the post and where the level of SNA resources in some schools was greater than the proper application of the criteria would allow. In this context, the NCSE was requested to arrange for its Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) to further review the SNA allocation in all schools with a view to ensuring that the criteria set out in the relevant circulars are properly met. The key circular, which sets out the care needs, which can be supported in a school setting, is DES Circular 07/02.

Following a discussion at a meeting of the Council on 11 February 2009, the Council agreed to arrange for SENOs to conduct such reviews and requested that the Boards of Management of each school be informed of the review by the Department. Accordingly DES Circular SP ED 0009/2009 issued to all schools in March 2009, informing them of the review.

The commencement of the review process at this time meant that the NCSE was effectively conducting a review of SNA resources currently engaged in schools in the 2008/09 academic year in conjunction with the resource allocation process for new enrolments in the 2009/10 academic year, during which over 12,000 applications for teaching and SNA supports would be received. In effect the review encompassed a review of current SNA resources together with the processing of those applications for additional SNA resources.

2. NCSE Process for the Review of Allocation of SNA Supports to Schools

In general, the process attached to the review built on the established processes attached to the allocation of SNA supports to schools. In mainstream primary and post-primary schools, the allocations process was well embedded and schools were familiar with the overall approach. However, given the scale of the review, it was agreed that there would be a greater capacity for parents to be involved in the review process with the SENO, either by phone or at meetings convened through the school.

In the case of special schools which cater for children aged between 4 and up to 18 years of age, the allocations process was less developed, primarily because these schools were established to provide exclusively for children with special educational needs (SEN). As the total number of children enrolled in these schools rarely changed to any great degree, the question of the need to apply to the SENO for additional resources did not always arise.

2.1 Mainstream Primary and Post-Primary Schools

Since January 2005, the responsibility for the allocation of SNAs to schools was transferred from the DES to the NCSE.

Each year the changes in the level of SNA support to schools is determined by

- The level of support required for children enrolling in the school or children currently enrolled who may now have identified significant care needs
- The level of support freed up as a result of children with sanctioned SNA support leaving the school
- The level of support freed up as a result of the diminishing care needs of some children with sanctioned SNA support still enrolled in the school.

In some cases access to SNA was adjusted from Full Time access to Part Time access or removed entirely because of the improvement in the development of independent living skills of the child. However this was viewed by some schools and parents as a *reduction* in the level of support provided to the child and not as a positive result in the recognition of diminishing care needs or the development of independent living skills.

In deciding the level of SNA support to be allocated to the school, the SENO would visit the school and examine the professional reports for each child with special educational needs, which have specified the care needs arising from the disability, together with the frequency and extent of the care needs as they arise in the school setting. This would enable the SENO to decide if the care needs described are eligible for SNA support under the provisions of DES

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Circular 07/02 and if the support required by the child can be met from within the existing school SNA resources or whether additional supports are required by the school. For example, a child whose care needs arise from behavioural issues, may be supported by an SNA who might also meet the care needs of a child who requires assistance with toileting.

The process would also permit the SENO to discuss with the Principal, teachers and SNA the manner in which the care needs of the child arise in the school and also the records the school has maintained e.g. incidence reports. Parents would also be in a position to contribute to this process, as appropriate.

Every school was requested to inform parents that the review was commencing and to invite them to contribute, should they wish, either by phone contact or by appointment during the review. In this regard, many parents participated in the review process.

Finally the SENO would observe the student in the classroom and schoolyard settings, as appropriate, in order to assist in the decision making process. In some schools, the view was taken that this stage of the process constituted the entirety of the SNA allocations process and statements such as “the SENO only observed the child for 20 minutes and made their decision” were articulated during the course of the review. In this context, it is important to note that this stage of the process is designed to underpin statements that are present in professional reports or statements made by school staff and does not in itself constitute the entire decision making process.

The outcome of the process enabled the SENO to determine to what extent a child with special educational needs, who also has identified care needs, may require access to SNA support on an individual basis or a shared basis, depending on the frequency and extent of the care needs. In this regard, it is important to note that the SNA is always working under the direction of the teacher in the class.

2.2 Special Schools

The review of special schools required the NCSE to take into account a number of factors, which did not apply in the mainstream sector, primarily the fact that *all* children enrolled would have special educational needs. Special schools are allocated SNA resources on a class ratio basis (e.g. two classes of 8 children with a Mod GLD would be allocated one SNA between them). In many of these schools, the number of pupils enrolled might remain static as the number of new entrants would match the number of pupils leaving the school therefore the baseline allocation of SNA support would remain unaltered. Consequently special schools may not have sought additional resources for new entrants through the NCSE unless particular circumstances applied in relation to an individual child.

However, given the policy of inclusion, which has applied in recent years, it was recognised by the NCSE that many of the children enrolled, would have significant care needs, as set out in professional reports and that an additional allocation of SNA support, over and above the baseline allocation, might be required to meet the care needs of individual or groups of children enrolled. Therefore in order to fully review the care needs of all children enrolled in special schools, the review of SNA supports was conducted by a team of 2-3 SENOs headed up by the SENO who is responsible for the allocation of resources to the school and was conducted over a number of weeks in stages, as set out below.

In August 2009, the NCSE wrote to all special schools informing them of the commencement of the review in the special schools sector and that the SENO for the school would be in contact with them shortly. The SENO then wrote to the school signalling the commencement of the review and that it would comprise of 3 discreet stages in special schools namely

- *Information gathering*: class lists for the 09/10 academic year and a profile of the current deployment of SNA supports throughout the school
- *Administration visit*: Documentation including the professional reports for each child enrolled, records relating to additional SNA posts sanctioned to the school, the timetable of SNA deployment and any relevant teacher/school reports for each student that verify care needs
- *Student observation and discussion with staff*: each student was observed in a classroom or school yard setting, as appropriate and discussions took place with the Principal, teachers, SNAs, where appropriate other individuals who work with the student and parents/guardians. In this regard, the school was provided with a letter for issue to all parents informing them of the review and inviting them to make contact with the review team.

3. Outcome of Review

Overall outcome

Of the 4,000 schools, which are recognised under section 10 of the Education Act, 1998, in the region of 900 schools do not currently have an allocation of SNA.

To date 2,913 out of approx 3,150 schools with an allocation of SNA, have been reviewed with the decisions having issued to the school. The remaining schools will be reviewed in April, after the Easter break but the outcome of the review of these schools will not materially impact on the overall outcome of the review. A final breakdown of the outcome of the review will be made available at the end of April.

It should be noted that the tables set out below refer to Whole Time Equivalent posts (WTE) and not individual SNAs.

Table 1: Overall Change in Number of SNAs in all Schools Reviewed (n= 2,913 schools)

	Number of SNAs
Prior to Review	8,821
Following Review	8,463
Overall Change	-358

Table 2: Number of Schools with a Change in Level of SNAs in Schools Reviewed (n= 2,913 schools)

	Number of Schools
No Change in Level of SNA	1,502
Decrease in Level of SNA	832
Increase in Level of SNA	579

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Outcome for Primary Schools

Table 3: Overall Change in Number of SNAs in Primary Schools Reviewed (n= 2,283 primary schools)

	Number of SNAs
Prior to Review	6,096
Following Review	5,801
Overall Change	-295

Table 4: Reasons for Change in Number of SNAs in Primary Schools Reviewed (n= 2,283 primary schools)

	Number of SNAs
SNAs Freed Up Because of Students Leaving	723
SNAs Freed Up Because of Diminishing Care Needs	534
SNAs Allocated to New Students	962

Table 5: Number of Primary Schools with a Change in Level of SNAs in Schools Reviewed (n= 2,283 primary schools)

	Number of Primary Schools
No Change in Level of SNA	1,182
Decrease in Level of SNA	663
Increase in Level of SNA	438

Outcome for Post-Primary Schools

Table 6: Overall Change in Number of SNAs in Post-Primary Schools Reviewed (n= 573 post-primary schools)

	Number of SNAs
Prior to Review	1707
Following Review	1656
Overall Change	-51

Table 7: Reasons for Change in Number of SNAs in Post-Primary Schools Reviewed (n= 573 post-primary schools)

	Number of SNAs
SNAs Freed Up Because of Students Leaving	197
SNAs Freed Up Because of Diminishing Care Needs	199
SNAs Allocated to New Students	345

Table 8: Number of Post-Primary Schools with a Change in Level of SNAs in Schools Reviewed
(n= 573 post-primary schools)

	Number of Post-Primary Schools
No Change in Level of SNA	294
Decrease in Level of SNA	153
Increase in Level of SNA	126

Outcome for Special Schools

A key factor in the review of Special Schools was that in most instances, the NCSE was not involved in the original allocation of SNA resources, unlike mainstream schools. Consequently this was the first detailed profile of SNA resources in these schools, obtained by the NCSE.

Table 9: Overall Change in Number of SNAs in Special Schools Reviewed (n= 57 special schools)

	Number of SNAs
Prior to Review	1,018
Following Review	1,006
Overall Change	-12

Table 10: Number of Special Schools with a Change in Level of SNAs in Schools Reviewed (n= 57 special schools)

	Number of Special Schools
No Change in Level of SNA	26
Decrease in Level of SNA	16
Increase in Level of SNA	15

370. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if she will defend the current practice of the special educational needs organisers who ignore the recommendations of other professionals regarding children with additional needs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18702/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): As the Deputy will be aware, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), for allocating resource teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

I wish to assure the Deputy that the SENOs do not ignore professional reports when determining the extent of supports to be provided for pupils with special educational needs. Consideration of such reports, along with a number of other issues, is an integral part of the determination process. However, the Deputy should note that responsibility for deciding on the quantum of educational resources to be allocated resides with the NCSE through the SENO.

The NCSE has outlined the processes involved in the consideration of applications for special needs supports in its Circular 01/05 which is available on www.ncse.ie.

The co-operation and co-ordination of the education and health sectors is critical in the planning and delivery of services to children with special educational needs. The NCSE circular

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03/08, which is also available on www.ncse.ie, clarifies the respective roles and functions of the NCSE and the HSE and their respective personnel in carrying out assessments of and sanctioning resources to support children with special educational needs.

Research Sector

371. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the progress made in implementing the draft framework document issued by the Working Group on Researcher Careers for the Higher Education Research Group in September 2009 in view of the absence of any viable career structure for contract research staff in higher education institutions; if her Department or the Higher Education Authority plan to implement the recommendations for a national researcher career structure in the short term; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18725/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): As the Deputy is aware, a working group was established under the auspices of the Higher Education Research Group (HERG) to focus on the development of a career structure for researchers in the higher education sector. The Group included representatives from higher education institutions, research funding agencies and relevant government departments. The Advisory Science Council report “Towards a Framework for Researcher Careers” was a key input to the considerations of the group. The working group has concluded its work and the report was presented to HERG in September 2009.

The report contains a range of recommendations in key areas, including structures, continuing professional development, recognition of skills, and performance appraisal. The report also assigned responsibility for these recommendations to appropriate stakeholders. The report has been referred to the higher education institutions and research funding agencies to be progressed and implemented, where appropriate, having regard to resource constraints.

School Designation

372. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills when the proper designation will be granted to a school (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18756/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): My Department is in receipt of correspondence from the school referred to by the Deputy and my officials will be in further contact with the school in this regard.

School Enrolments

373. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of pupils enrolled in junior infants classes in national school in Lucan, County Dublin, on a school basis in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18766/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): School enrolment data can only be provided at aggregate county level or at individual school level and is not available by local area, neighbourhood, suburb or town.

Overall enrolments figures for each primary school for the 2008/2009 academic year are available on my Department’s website at www.education.ie. This is the most recent year available for primary schools.

School Places

374. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of first year places in second level schools in Lucan, County Dublin, on a school basis in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18767/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): My Department is not involved in the allocation of school places. Enrolment in individual schools is the responsibility of the managerial authority of those schools and my Department does not seek to intervene in decisions made by schools in such matters. My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places.

From the returns made by schools to my Department in October the number of first years enrolled in post-primary schools in the Lucan area as at 30th September, 2009 were:

Roll No.	School	Number
60263V	St. Joseph's College	150
60264A	Coláiste Phádraig, CBS	133
70042L	St. Kevins Community College	75
70080T	Lucan Community College	143
76065H	Coláiste Cois Life	68
76097U	Adamstown Community College	70

If the Deputy requires enrolment data for any other school the officials of my Department will provide this to her on request.

Educational Disadvantage

375. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of national schools in the country that is part of Delivering Equality in Schools by school patronage in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18768/10]

376. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of national schools in the country that are part of home school liaison scheme by school patronage in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18769/10]

377. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of national schools in the country that are designated disadvantage by school patronage in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18770/10]

378. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of national schools in the country that are in the disadvantage area scheme by school patronage in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18771/10]

379. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of national schools in the country that are in the giving the children an even break scheme by school patronage in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18772/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Seán Haughey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 375 to 379, inclusive, together.

[Deputy Seán Haughey.]

DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan for educational inclusion was launched by the Minister for Education and Science in 2005. The DEIS action plan has replaced the range of pre-existing programmes in place in my Department to combat educational disadvantage in schools with concentrated levels of disadvantage. At present there are 678 primary schools included in the School Support Programme under DEIS.

The programmes replaced by DEIS include Giving Children an Even Break (GCEB), the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme (DAS) and Breaking the Cycle (BTC). While the inclusion of a school in DEIS is indicative of a significant level of disadvantage in that school, DEIS does not provide for a formal designation of disadvantage.

Officials in my Department are currently updating the register of Patrons provided for under Section 8 of the Education Act and are verifying the Register details directly with all school Patrons.

The document below sets out, in tabular form, details of primary schools in the country by patronage, that have been identified for inclusion under the DEIS action plan as per the current information held in my Department's register of Patrons. All of these schools participate in either the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (for urban schools) or the Rural Coordinator Scheme (for rural schools).

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
20015B	Gaelscoil Bhaile Munna	187 Bothar Choultraí, Baile Munna, Baile Atha Cliath 9, Dublin	An Foras Patrunachta
20055N	Gaelscoil Eois	Eanach Cille, Lios Darach, Co Mhuineachain, Monaghan	An Foras Patrunachta
20084U	Gaelscoil Bheal An Atha	Corraí Mhuireann, Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo, Mayo	An Foras Patrunachta
20220C	Gaelscoil Ui Earcain	Bothar Glas An Ein, Fionnghlas, B.A.C. 11	An Foras Patrunachta
00851C	Presentation Convent	Ballymakenny Road, Drogheda, Co Louth	Archbishop of Armagh
14651U	Castletown Rd Convent	Castletown Rd, Dundalk, Co Louth	Archbishop of Armagh
16469S	St. Nicholas Monastery NS	Philip Street, Dundalk, Co Louth	Archbishop of Armagh
17059E	Scoil Na Mbraithre Sn	Geata An Domhnaigh, Droichead Atha, Co Lui	Archbishop of Armagh
17949O	S N Padraig Naofa B	Bothar Brugha, Drogheda, Co Louth	Archbishop of Armagh
18001B	S N Naomh Lorcan	Omeath, Dundalk, Co Louth	Archbishop of Armagh
18098T	S N Bhríde C	Bothar Brugha, Drogheda, Co Louth	Archbishop of Armagh
19246N	S N An Tslanaitheora B	Ard Easmuinn, Dundalk, Co Louth	Archbishop of Armagh
19247P	S N An Tslanaitheora C	Ard Easmuinn, Dun Dealgan, Co Louth,	Archbishop of Armagh
19673J	St. Josephs N S	Avenue Road, Dundalk, Co Louth,	Archbishop of Armagh
19892V	Gaelscoil Dhun Dealgan	Muirtheimhne Mor, Dun Dealgan, Co Lu,	Archbishop of Armagh
20163Q	S.N Eoin Baiste	Fatima, Castletown, Dundalk, Co Louth,	Archbishop of Armagh
18347O	S N San Nioclas	Nicholas St, Dundalk, Co Louth,	Archbishop of Armagh COI
13210I	St. Josephs National School	Ballingarry, Thurles, Co Tipperary,	Archbishop of Cashel & Emly
14305B	Ballylanders N S	Kilmallock, Co Limerick,	Archbishop of Cashel & Emly
14791N	Cappawhite N S	Cappawhite, Co Tipperary	Archbishop of Cashel & Emly
15299O	Gaile N S	Holycross, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Archbishop of Cashel & Emly
15362S	S N Michil Naofa	Mullinahone, Thurles, Co Tipperary,	Archbishop of Cashel & Emly
16713D	Scoil Na Mbraithre	Doon, Co Limerick,	Archbishop of Cashel & Emly
16979S	Scoil Colmcille	Templemore, Co Tipperary,	Archbishop of Cashel & Emly
17665A	S N Gleann Guail	Thurles, Co Tipperary,	Archbishop of Cashel & Emly
17731K	S N Iosef Naofa	Templemore, Co Tipperary,	Archbishop of Cashel & Emly
18343G	S N Chaoimhghin	Baile Dhaith, Thurles, Co Tipperary,	Archbishop of Cashel & Emly
19356U	Killenaule N S	Killenaule, Thurles, Co Tipperary,	Archbishop of Cashel & Emly
00743W	Mater Dei Primary School	Basin Lane, James Street, Dublin 8,	Archbishop of Dublin

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
00984V	Glenealy 1 N S	Glenealy, Co Wicklow,	Archbishop of Dublin
02276E	An T Inbhear Mor B N S	Arklow, Co Wicklow,	Archbishop of Dublin
03917V	Naomh Padraig Boys	Cambridge Road, Ringsend, Dublin 4,	Archbishop of Dublin
05600C	Clochar San Dominic	Dunlaoghaire, Co Dublin,	Archbishop of Dublin
05933G	Georges Hill Convent	Georges Hill, Dublin 7,	Archbishop of Dublin
07246U	Sisters Of Charity N S	Ravenswell, Bray, Co Wicklow,	Archbishop of Dublin
07546J	Goldenbridge Convent	Goldenbridge, Inchicore, Dublin 8,	Archbishop of Dublin
09932B	Stanhope St Convent	Stanhope Street, Dublin 7,	Archbishop of Dublin
11578V	City Quay Boys N S	City Quay, Dublin 2,	Archbishop of Dublin
11776C	St. Laurence O Toole Junior Boys	Seville Place, Dublin 1,	Archbishop of Dublin
12448N	Gardiner Street Convent	Gardiner Street, Dublin 1,	Archbishop of Dublin
13165G	Kilberry N S	Athy, Co Kildare,	Archbishop of Dublin
13611D	Presentation Convent	Blackpitts, Dublin 8,	Archbishop of Dublin
14556D	St. Endas Primary School	St. Endas Primary School, Whitefriar St, Dublin 8,	Archbishop of Dublin
15056L	S N San Vinseann Cailin	North William St, Dublin 1,	Archbishop of Dublin
15253N	St. Patricks Girls NS	Cambridge Road, Dublin 4,	Archbishop of Dublin
15816I	St Vincents Inf Boys	North William Street, Dublin 1,	Archbishop of Dublin
16567S	St Brigids Convent N S	Haddington Road, Dublin 4,	Archbishop of Dublin
16695E	Scoil Na Mbrathar	North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7,	Archbishop of Dublin
16705E	Scoil Phadraig Naofa	St. John's Lane, Athy, Co. Kildare.	Archbishop of Dublin
16786H	St Brigids Convent N S	The Coombe, Dublin 8,	Archbishop of Dublin
16874E	S N Naomh Iosef G	Rathnew, Co Wicklow	Archbishop of Dublin
16964F	Scoil Mhuire Ogh 1	Loreto College, Crumlin Rd, Dublin 12	Archbishop of Dublin
16983J	S N Naomh Cillin	Robinhood Rd., Bluebell, Inchicore, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
16988T	Christ The King B N S	Cabra, Dublin 7	Archbishop of Dublin
16989V	Christ The King G N S	Cabra, Dublin 7	Archbishop of Dublin
17083B	S N Muire Gan Smal B	Inchicore, Dublin 8	Archbishop of Dublin
17104G	St Francis Junior NS	Priorswood	Archbishop of Dublin

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
17110B	Naomh Lorcan O Tuathail	Plas Seibhil, Baile Atha Cliath 1	Archbishop of Dublin
17117P	S N Cul Greine	Coolgreany, Gorey, Co Wexford,	Archbishop of Dublin
17279S	Scoil Muire	Haddington Road, Dublin 4	Archbishop of Dublin
17355I	Muire Na Dea Coirle G	Mourne Road, Drimnagh, Dublin 12,	Archbishop of Dublin
17356K	Muire Na Dea Coirle Inf	Mourne Road, Dublin 12	Archbishop of Dublin
17459U	Christ The King I G	Cabra, Dublin 7	Archbishop of Dublin
17464N	Fionnbarra Naofa B.N.S.,	Kilkieran Road, Cabra West, Dublin 7	Archbishop of Dublin
17465P	Dominican Convent Girls	Cabra, Dublin 7	Archbishop of Dublin
17466R	St Catherines Infant School	Cabra, Dublin 7	Archbishop of Dublin
17603B	Scoil Iosagain	Aughavannagh Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Archbishop of Dublin
17683C	Muire Og 2 Loreto Con	Crumlin Road, Dublin 12,	Archbishop of Dublin
17732M	Scoil Chiarain	Ascal Ui Choileain, Domhnach Cairne, Baile Atha Cliath 5	Archbishop of Dublin
17881G	Scoil Ui Chonaill	Nth Richmond Street, Dublin 1	Archbishop of Dublin
17893N	Sancta Maria C B S	Syngé St, Dublin 8,	Archbishop of Dublin
18137D	S N Naomh Feargal	Finglas West, Dublin 11	Archbishop of Dublin
18288B	Scoil Mhichil Naofa	Athy, Co Kildare	Archbishop of Dublin
18341C	Sn Louise De Marillac C	Drumfin Rd, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Archbishop of Dublin
18342E	Sn Louise De Marillac	Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Archbishop of Dublin
18360G	Scoil Bhreandain	Coolock, Dublin 5	Archbishop of Dublin
18361I	S N Caitriona C	Coolock, Dublin 5	Archbishop of Dublin
18362K	S N Caitriona Naionain	Coolock, Dublin 5	Archbishop of Dublin
18386B	Marist National School	Clogher Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Archbishop of Dublin
18464S	Naomh Peadar N S	Bray, Co Wicklow,	Archbishop of Dublin
18477E	Scoil Na Mbrathar	Francis Street, Dublin 8	Archbishop of Dublin
18519R	Scoil Seamus C B S	James Street, Dublin 8,	Archbishop of Dublin
18585H	Sn Banrion Na Naingea11	Ballyfermot, Dublin 10,	Archbishop of Dublin
18682F	St Canices B N S	Finglas, Dublin 11, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
18683H	St Canices G N S	Finglas, Dublin 11, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
18726W	S N Seosamh Na Mbrathar	Fairview, Dublin 3, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin

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18843D	Bainrion Na N-Aingal 2	Ballyfermot Upper, Dublin 10, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
18910P	Bantiarna Na Mbuanna B	Baile Munna, Dublin 9, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
18911R	Bantiarna Na Mbuanna G	Baile Munna, Dublin 9, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
18962L	St Ernans B N S	Rathnew, Co Wicklow, Wicklow	Archbishop of Dublin
18968A	St Malachys B N S	Edenmore, Raheny, Dublin 5, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
18969C	St Eithnes Senior G N S	Edenmore, Raheny, Dublin 5, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19015R	St Josephs G N S	Barry Avenue, Finglas West, Dublin 11, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19037E	St Monicas N S	Edenmore, Raheny, Dublin 5, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19197D	St Kevins B N S	Barry Avenue, Finglas North-West, Dublin 11, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19208F	Holy Spirit B N S	Silloge Rd, Baile Munna, Atha Cliath 11, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19209H	Sn An Spioraid Naiomh C	Sillogue Rd, Ballymun, Dublin 11, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19242F	Our Ladys Of Victories Infant NS	Ballymun Road, Dublin 9, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19297H	Cromcastle Green B N S	Kilmore Rd West, Artane, Dublin 5, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19298J	Scoil Nais Ide Cailini	Kilmore Road West, Artane, Dublin 5, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19302U	Sn Na Maighdine Muire B	Ballymun, Dublin 9, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19303W	Na Maighdine Mhuire	Virgin Mary, Girls National School, Ballymun, Dublin 9, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19425N	Ballyroe Central N S	Athy, Co Kildare, Kildare	Archbishop of Dublin
19430G	Scoil An Tseachtar Laoch	Ballymun Road, Dublin 11, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19431I	St Josephs Jnr	Balcurris, Ballymun, Dublin 11, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19438W	Scoil Colmcille Senior	Wyattville, Ballybrack, Co Dublin, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19454U	Darndale Ns Junior	Our Lady Immac Jun Ns, Darndale, Malahide Road, Dublin 17, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19464A	Sn Naomh Colmcille	Homelawns, Tallaght, Dublin 24, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19489Q	Sn Naomh Finnin	Glenties Park, Rivermount, Finglas South, Dublin 11, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19490B	Scoil Mhuire	Ballyboden, Dublin 16, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19497P	Scoil Mhuire	Shankill, Co Dublin, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19502F	Scoil Aenghusa Jun NS	Balrothery, Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19508R	St Fergals Junior National School	Ballywaltrim, Bray, Co Wicklow, Wicklow	Archbishop of Dublin
19509T	Scoil Nano Nagle	Bawnoge, Clondalkin, Dublin 22,	Archbishop of Dublin

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19510E	Talbot Senior NS	Bawnoge, Clondalkin, Dublin 22,	Archbishop of Dublin
19515O	Sn Naomh Treasa	Baile Brigin, Co Ath Cliath,	Archbishop of Dublin
19524P	Our Lady Immac Sen N S	Our Lady Immac Sen Ns, Darndale, Dublin 17,	Archbishop of Dublin
19543T	Scoil N An Croi Ro Naofa	Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19545A	Corduff N S	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15,	Archbishop of Dublin
19546C	St Oliver Plunkett N S	St Oliver Plunkett Ns, St Helenas Drive, Finglas, Dublin 11	Archbishop of Dublin
19566I	Our Lady Queen Of Apostles	Queen Of Apostles Ns, Clonburris, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19569O	Neillstown N S	St Peter Apostle Ns, Neillstown, Clondalkin, Dublin 22,	Archbishop of Dublin
19575J	St Marys Junior N S	Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, Dublin	Archbishop of Dublin
19576L	S N Aenghusa	Scoil N Aenghusa Sin, Balrothery, Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19577N	Scoil Iosa	Scoil Nais Iosa, Tymon North, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Archbishop of Dublin
19583I	St Josephs Senior N S	St Josephs Senior Ns, Balcurris, Ballymun, Dublin 11,	Archbishop of Dublin
19601H	St Philip The Apostle Junior N S	Mountview, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15,	Archbishop of Dublin
19605P	Scoil Nais Mhuire Sois	Blakestown, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15,	Archbishop of Dublin
19613O	Scoil Cnoc Mhuire Sin	Knockmore Ave, Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19619D	St Malachys NS	Rivermount, Finglas, Dublin 11,	Archbishop of Dublin
19636D	St Patricks Senior School	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15,	Archbishop of Dublin
19641T	St Colmcille Jun NS	Wyattville, Ballybrack, Co Dublin,	Archbishop of Dublin
19642V	St Peter Apostle Sen NS	Neillstown, Clondalkin, Dublin 22,	Archbishop of Dublin
19643A	St Philips Senior N S	Mountview, Clonsilla, Dublin 15,	Archbishop of Dublin
19646G	Scoil Santain	Bothar Na Habhann Mor, Tamhlacht, Ath Cliath 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19647I	St Marys Sen N S	Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Archbishop of Dublin
19652B	An Chroi Ro Naofa Sois	Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Archbishop of Dublin
19654F	St Fergals Senior NS	Ballywaltrim, Bray, Co Wicklow,	Archbishop of Dublin
19661C	St Gabriels NS	Dominican Campus, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10,	Archbishop of Dublin
19662E	St Michaels NS	Dominican Convent, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10,	Archbishop of Dublin
19663G	St Raphaels NS	Dominican Convent, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10,	Archbishop of Dublin
19668Q	St Francis Senior N S	Priorswood, Dublin 17	Archbishop of Dublin
19669S	Lady Of Good Counsel NS	Mourne Rd, Drimmagh, Dublin 12	Archbishop of Dublin

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19693P	Mary Queen Of Ireland N S	Toberburr, Co Dublin,	Archbishop of Dublin
19694R	Scoil Mhuire Sin	Blakestown, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15,	Archbishop of Dublin
19702N	St Thomas Junior N S	Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19707A	St Ronans N S	Deansrath, Clondalkin, Dublin 22,	Archbishop of Dublin
19723V	Queen Of Angels Primary School	Wedgewood, Dundrum, Dublin 16,	Archbishop of Dublin
19743E	St Bernadettes Junior N S	Quarryvale, Clondalkin, Dublin 22,	Archbishop of Dublin
19764M	Our Lady Of Wayside N S	Bluebell, Inchicore, Dublin 12	Archbishop of Dublin
19765O	St Thomas Senior N S	Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Archbishop of Dublin
19766Q	Scoil Iosagain/Mhuire	Mount La Salle, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10,	Archbishop of Dublin
19767S	Scoil Mhuire/Seosamh	Mount La Salle, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10,	Archbishop of Dublin
19774P	St Josephs Mxd N S	East Wall, Dublin 3,	Archbishop of Dublin
19775R	Scoil Cnoc Mhuire Junior	Knockmore Ave, Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19782O	St Brigids N S	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19785U	St Bernadettes Senior N S	Quarryvale, Clondalkin, Dublin 22,	Archbishop of Dublin
19834H	St Aidans NS	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19840C	Holy Family School	Dunedin Park, Monkstown, Co Dublin,	Archbishop of Dublin
19850F	Ladyswell N S	Ladyswell, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15,	Archbishop of Dublin
19872P	Scoil Chaitlin Maude	Cnoc Mhuire, Tamhlacht, Baile Atha Cliath 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19878E	Holy Rosary Primary School	Old Court Avenue, Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19889J	Scoil Colm	Armagh Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12,	Archbishop of Dublin
19895E	Scoil Mhuir S Iosaf	St Marys Place, Plas Mhuire, Off Dorset Street, Dublin 7,	Archbishop of Dublin
19896G	Scoil Caitriona Na Mbraithre	Baggot St, Dublin 2,	Archbishop of Dublin
19913D	St Josephs NS	Macroom Road, Bonnybrook, Dublin 17,	Archbishop of Dublin
19920A	St John Of God N S	Kilmore Road, Artane, Dublin 5,	Archbishop of Dublin
19922E	Our Ladys N S	St Columbanus Road, Milltown, Dublin 14,	Archbishop of Dublin
19924I	Harolds Cross N S	Harolds Cross, Dublin 6w,	Archbishop of Dublin
19929S	St Brigids Senior Girls	Finglas West, Dublin 11,	Archbishop of Dublin
19933J	Scoil Treasa Naofa	Petrie Road, Donore Avenue, Dublin 8,	Archbishop of Dublin
19935N	Scoil Eoin	Greendale Road, Dublin 5,	Archbishop of Dublin

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19938T	St Josephs	Tivoli Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin,	Archbishop of Dublin
19939V	Scoil Naisiunta An Dea Aoire	Whitehall Road, Churchtown, Dublin 14	Archbishop of Dublin
19946S	Rutland Street N S	Lower Rutland Street, Dublin 1,	Archbishop of Dublin
19950J	St Dominics N S	Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
19960M	St John's National School	Ballybrack, Co Dublin,	Archbishop of Dublin
19979K	St Kevins N S	Sallynoggin, Co Dublin,	Archbishop of Dublin
19981U	St Marys N S	Windsor Ave, Fairview, Dublin 3,	Archbishop of Dublin
20005V	Scoil Plas Mhuire	St Marys Place, Dorset Street, Dublin 7,	Archbishop of Dublin
20014W	St Agnes N S	Armagh Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12,	Archbishop of Dublin
20029M	St Brigids Infant N S	Wellmount Avenue, Finglas West, Dublin 11	Archbishop of Dublin
20035H	St Gabriels N S	Cowper Street, Dublin 7,	Archbishop of Dublin
20059V	Mother Of Divine Grace	Holy Faith Ns, Ferndale Ave, Ballygall, Dublin 11,	Archbishop of Dublin
20064O	Our Lady Of Consolation NS	Collins Ave East, Donnycarney, Dublin 5,	Archbishop of Dublin
20091R	St Peters NS	Phibsboro, Dublin 7,	Archbishop of Dublin
20092T	St Ultans NS	Cherry Orchard, Dublin 10	Archbishop of Dublin
20104A	St Audoens NS	Cook Street, Dublin 8,	Archbishop of Dublin
20139T	Inchicore NS	Sarsfield Road, Inchicore, Dublin 10,	Archbishop of Dublin
20173T	St Annes Primary School	Fettercairn, Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin
20218P	Archbishop Mcquaid National School	Loughlinstown, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin.	Archbishop of Dublin
20228S	St Laurence O Tooles Girls School	49 Seville Place, North Wall, Dublin 1,	Archbishop of Dublin
20278K	Newtownmountkennedy Primary School	Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow,	Archbishop of Dublin
20281W	St Benedicts And St Marys National School	Grange Park, Raheny, Dublin 5,	Archbishop of Dublin
19582G	St Maelruains N S	Kilclare Avenue, Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24,	Archbishop of Dublin & Bishop of Glendalough
04796R	Brackloon N S	Westport, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
05120L	Lehinch N S	Hollymount, Co Mayo,	Archbishop of Tuam
09833W	S N Leitirgeis	Leitirgeis N S, Rinn An Mhaoil, Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
10591I	S N An Ard Mhoir	Chiaráin, Carna, Co. Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
11261P	Scoil Mhuire	An Tuairin, Beal An Daingin, Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam

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12250P	Scoil Mhuire Primary Sch	Dublin Rd, Tuam, Co Galway	Archbishop of Tuam
12502Q	S N Eanna	Roundstone, Co Galway	Archbishop of Tuam
13174H	St Columbas N.S.	Inishturk, Co Galway	Archbishop of Tuam
13416F	S N Leitir Meallain	Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
13555T	S N Faitche	Westport, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
13621G	S N Muire	Letterfrack, Co Galway	Archbishop of Tuam
13781F	Breaffy N S	Castlebar, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
13821O	S N An Cloiginn	Cleggan, Co Galway	Archbishop of Tuam
13927H	Inishbofin N S	Inishbofin, Co Galway	Archbishop of Tuam
14064F	S N Coill An Bhaile	Westport, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
14420B	S N Naomh Padraig	Tully, Renvyle, Co Galway	Archbishop of Tuam
14421D	S N Ard	Aird Thiar, Carna, Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
14724V	Scoil Ronain	Oilean Tra Bhan, Leitir Mor, Gaillimh	Archbishop of Tuam
14863M	Achill Sound NS	Achill Sound, Westport, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
14866S	Sn Beal A Bhulain	Bun An Chorraigh, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mhaigh Eo	Archbishop of Tuam
14873P	Dookinella N.S.	Keel, Achill, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
15030Q	St Marys N S	Aghamore, Ballyhaunis, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
15539I	St Johns NS	Logboy, Tulrahan, Claremorris, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
15664L	Granlahan G N S	Ballinlough, Co Roscommon	Archbishop of Tuam
15866A	Carrakennedy N S	Westport, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
16052I	S N Naomh Padraig Saile	Gob A Choire, Acaill, Co Mhaigh Eo	Archbishop of Tuam
16113C	Sn Toin Na Gaoithe	Toin Na Gaoithe, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mhaigh Eo	Archbishop of Tuam
16122D	Knock N S	Claremorris, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
16295L	Sn An Chorrain	Gob A Choire, Co Mhaigh Eo	Archbishop of Tuam
16379R	Valley N S	Dugort, Achill, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
16618J	Myna N S	Westport, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
16904K	S N Lann Cille	Cathair Na Mart, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
17176I	S N Realt Na Mara	Mulranny, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam

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17282H	Scoil Na Mbraithre	Tuam, Co Galway	Archbishop of Tuam
17289V	S N Caomhain	Inis Oirthir, Arainn, Gaillimh	Archbishop of Tuam
17321O	S N An Coill Mhor	Newport, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
17483R	Carraholly N S	Peadar O Cearnaigh — Principal, Westport, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
17488E	Sn An Aill Bhreach	Baile Conaola, Connamara, Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
17562N	S N Naomh Pól,	Oilean Eadaigh, Caislean A Bharraigh, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
17574U	S N Naomh Ciarain	Cill Chiarain, Conamara, Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
17660N	S N Naomh Treasa	Caiseal, Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
17689O	S N Tir An Fhiaidh	Leitir Mor, Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
17770U	S N Naomh Colmáin	Muighinis, Cárna, Co. Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
18042P	Presentation Convent	Tuam, Co Galway	Archbishop of Tuam
18082E	S N Dumhach	Achill, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
18121L	S N Mhuire	Carna, Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
18514H	S N Choilm Chille	Baile Na Habhann, Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
18608Q	S N Muire Gan Smal	Cladach Dubh, Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
18712L	S N Cnoc Ruscaighe	Aughagower, Westport, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
18754E	Sn Naomh Seosamh	Bun An Chorraigh, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mhaigh Eo	Archbishop of Tuam
19290Q	Ballyconeely N S	Clifden, Co Galway	Archbishop of Tuam
19324H	S N Teaghlaigh Naofa	Sn Teaghlaigh Naofa, Killeen, Louisburgh Co Mayo,	Archbishop of Tuam
19451O	Newport Central	Baile Ui Bhfiachain, Co Mhaigh Eo	Archbishop of Tuam
19932H	Sn Mhic Dara	An Ceathru Rua, Co Na Gaillimhe	Archbishop of Tuam
19973V	Scoil Mhuire	Clifden, Co Galway	Archbishop of Tuam
20037L	S N Padraig Naofa	Louisburgh, Co Mayo	Archbishop of Tuam
20280U	Newtown NS	Newtown, Abbeyknockmoy, Tuam, Co. Galway,	Archbishop of Tuam
12767G	S N Ronain Naofa	Cloonloo, Boyle, Co Roscommon	Bishop of Achonry
13242V	Castlerock N S	Aclare, Co Sligo	Bishop of Achonry
13667H	Sn Muine Chonallain	Beal An Atha, Co Mayo	Bishop of Achonry
13944H	S N Naomh Atrachta	Kilmactigue, Aclare, Co Sligo	Bishop of Achonry

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14418O	Bofield Mixed N S	Attymass, Ballina, Co Mayo	Bishop of Achonry
15113U	S N Sheamais	Barnacogue, Swinford, Co Mayo	Bishop of Achonry
16173U	Kinaffe N S	Swinford, Co Mayo	Bishop of Achonry
16289Q	St Johns N S	Carrowmore, Swinford, Co Mayo	Bishop of Achonry
16793E	Mary Immaculate NS	Collooney, Co Sligo	Bishop of Achonry
17718S	S N Seosamh Naofa	Cul Mhaoile, Sligo	Bishop of Achonry
18298E	S N Cul Fada	Cul Fada, Ballymote, Co Sligo	Bishop of Achonry
18848N	S N Peadair Agus Pol	Straide, Foxford, Co Mayo	Bishop of Achonry
19392B	Scoil Naomh Aodain	Scoil Aodain, Mainistir Readhain, Co Shligigh	Bishop of Achonry
19488O	Scoil Naomh Feichin	Sn Ath Ti Mheasaigh, Beal Atha An Fheadha, Co Mhaigheo	Bishop of Achonry
19651W	Carracastle Central NS	Carracastle, Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon	Bishop of Achonry
19980S	St Attractas N S	Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon	Bishop of Achonry
20019J	Holy Family School	Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo	Bishop of Achonry
20113B	Scoil Croi Naofa	Bunninadden, Ballymote, Co. Sligo	Bishop of Achonry
00856M	Scoil Naomh Micheal	Longford, Co Longford	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
05115S	S N An Leana Mor	An Leana Mor, Co Longford	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
13320P	Fermoyle Mixed N S	Fermoyle, Lanesboro, Co Longford,	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
14339S	Achad An Measa	Caraigallen, Co Leitrim, Leitrim	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
15116D	Ardvarney Mxd N S	Dromahair, Co Leitrim	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
16665S	St Marys Mixed N S	Drumlish, Longford, Co Longford,	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
17069H	S N Muire Naofa	Pollach, Rahan, Tullamore, Co Offaly,	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
18178R	St Josephs Convent	Longford, Co Longford	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
18741S	Faitima N S	Cluana, Carrick On Shannon, Co Leitrim	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
18822S	St Mary's N.S	Summerhill, Carrick -On-Shannon, Co Leitrim	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
19279F	S N Naomh Treasa	Clontumpher, Ballinalee, Co Longford	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
19363R	Mullahoran Central N S	Kilcogy, Via Longford, Co Cavan	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
20068W	St Marys National School	Cloghan, Birr, Co Offaly	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
20073P	St Marys NS	Gracepark Rd, Athlone, Co Westmeath	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois

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20101R	The Sacred Heart Primary N.S.	Granard, Co Longford	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
20124G	St Marysn.S	Edgeworthstown, Co Longford,	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
20128O	St Matthews Mixed N.S	Ballymahon, Co Longford	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
20203C	Mohill N S	Mohill, Co Leitrim	Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
00373P	Deravoy National School	Deravoy, Emyvale, Co Monaghan	Bishop of Clogher
10429W	Scoil Mhuire	Rockcorry, Co Monaghan,	Bishop of Clogher
16202B	Castleblaney Convent	Castleblaney, Co Monaghan	Bishop of Clogher
16319W	Castleblaney Con Infts	Castleblaney, Co Monaghan,	Bishop of Clogher
17686I	Scoil Mhuire B	Castleblaney, Co Monaghan	Bishop of Clogher
17837D	Scoil Mhuire	Pettigo, Co Donegal	Bishop of Clogher
18234B	Scoil Naomh Padraig	Eo-Dhruim, Castleblaney, Co Monaghan,	Bishop of Clogher
18482U	Scoil Mhuire Gransla	Leachtgallon, Cluain Eois, Co Muineachain,	Bishop of Clogher
19362P	St Patricks N S	Clara, Killybrone, Emyvale Co Monaghan	Bishop of Clogher
18441G	Scoil Naomh Chuan	Cill Iomair, Beal Atha Na Sluagh, Co Na Gaillimhe	Bishop of Clonfert
20042E	Scoil An Chroi Naofa	Ballinasloe, Co Galway	Bishop of Clonfert
04268P	Clochiar Na Toirbhirte	Doneraile, Co Cork	Bishop of Cloyne
09815U	Tullaslease Mixed N S	Rathluirc, Co Cork	Bishop of Cloyne
11262R	Druimne N S	Rathluirc, Co Cork	Bishop of Cloyne
13031I	St Josephs Convent N S	Rathluirc, Co Cork	Bishop of Cloyne
17112F	Ballyhea N S	Ballyhea, Rathluirc, Co Cork	Bishop of Cloyne
17639W	Scoil Na Mbraithre	Mitchelstown, Co Cork	Bishop of Cloyne
18377A	Iosef Naofa	Fermoy, Co Cork	Bishop of Cloyne
19989N	Scoil Mhuire Na Trocaire	Cill Na Mullach, Co Chorcai,	Bishop of Cloyne
01197D	Strawberry Hill Bns	Sundays Well, Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
02707F	Sundays Well Gns	Cork, Co Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
05940D	Scoil Ursula	Blackrock, Co Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
07101R	Inchiclough N S	Bantry, Co Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
12473M	Greenmount Monastery NS	Scoil Muire Na Ngras, Greenmount, Co Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
13543M	Derrinacahara N S	Dunmanway, Co Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross

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13696O	St Vincent's Convent NS	St Marys Road, Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
14000C	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	N Mhuire An Oileain, Sharman Crawford St.,Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
14065H	Sherkin Island N S	Baltimore, Co Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
14198D	Naomh Eoin Easpal	Mayfield, Co Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
14227H	Kilcoe NS	Skibbereen, Co Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
14303U	S N Cleire	Oilean Chleire, An Sciobairin, Co Chorcai,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
16680O	Scoil Colmcille	Blarney St, Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
17011W	Mocomhog N S	Cappaboy, Kealkil, Bantry, Co Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
17024I	Scoil Na Croise Naofa	Mahon, Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
17045Q	St Patricks B N S	Ballyhooley Road, Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
17105I	Muire Gan Smal C	Glasheen, Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
17281F	Togher N S	Dunmanway, Co Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
17993R	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal B	Glasheen, Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
18153B	S N Padraig Naofa C	Dillons Cross, Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
18154D	S N Padraig Naofa	Dillons Cross, Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
18217B	Scoil Padre Pio N S	Churchfield, Cork City	Bishop of Cork & Ross
18237H	Maria Assumpta G N S	Ballypnehane, Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
18238J	Maria Assumpta Jnr Inft	Ballypnehane, Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
18292P	Gaelscoil An Teaghlaigh Naofa	Baile Feithean, Co Chorcai	Bishop of Cork & Ross
18587L	Scoil Mhuire Banrion	Mayfield, Cork, Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
18734V	Realt Na Maidine	Ballypnehane, Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
18786R	Scoil Iosagain	Farranree, Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
19426P	S N Mharcuis B	An Gleann, Corcaigh	Bishop of Cork & Ross
19427R	S N Bhreanndain C	An Ghleann, Corcaigh	Bishop of Cork & Ross
19588S	Scoil Naomh Therese	Bishopstown, Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
19714U	Mhuire Ar Chnoc Haoine	Knocknaheeny, Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
19908K	Gaelscoil Mhachan	Carraig Dubh, Corcaigh	Bishop of Cork & Ross
19909M	Gaelscoil Peig Sayers	Unit 42 North Point Business Park, New Mallow Raod, Corcaigh,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
19977G	Bandon Boys NS	Bandon, Co Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
20036J	North Presentation Primary School	Gerald Griffin Street, Cork City, Co. Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
20038N	Scoil Aiseiri Chriost	Farranree, Cork.	Bishop of Cork & Ross
20049S	Ringaskiddy Lower Harbour N S	Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork	Bishop of Cork & Ross
20140E	Scoil Mhuire Fatima	North Monastery, Cork,	Bishop of Cork & Ross
13976U	St Matthias N S	Church Road, Ballydehob, Co Cork	Bishop of Cork, Cloyne & Ross
07626H	S N An Iorball Riabaigh	Baile Ui Ghormain, Lethbhearr, Tir Chonaill,	Bishop of Derry
14631O	Scoil Cholmchille	Malin, Lifford, Co Donegal,	Bishop of Derry
16054M	St Patricks N S	Murlog, Lifford, Co Donegal, Donegal	Bishop of Derry
16349I	S N An Droim Mor	An Droim Mor, Killygordon, Co Donegal	Bishop of Derry
16821G	Clochra Padraig Naofa	Carndonagh, Co Donegal, Donegal	Bishop of Derry
16836T	Naomh Bridhid	Glenmakee, Carndonagh, Co Donegal,	Bishop of Derry
16880W	Scoil Naomh Colmchille	Craigtown, Carndonagh, Co Donegal	Bishop of Derry
17469A	Scoil Cuilm Cille	Ballindrait, Lifford, Co Donegal	Bishop of Derry
17552K	Scoil Bhrighde	Porthall, Lifford, Co Donegal	Bishop of Derry
17721H	Scoil Treasa Naofa	Malainn, Lifford, Co Donegal	Bishop of Derry
18076J	Sn Muire Gan Smal	Townparks, Lifford, Co. Donegal	Bishop of Derry
18114O	S N Naomh Eighneach	Discart Eighnigh, Buncrannach, Co Dun Na Ngall	Bishop of Derry
18446Q	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	Ceann Mhalanna, Ballygorman Lifford, Co Donegal	Bishop of Derry
18517N	Scoil Mhuire	Dristearnain, Gleneely Po Lifford, Co Donegal	Bishop of Derry
18605K	Scoil Naomh Padraig Boys	Carndonagh, Co Donegal, Donegal	Bishop of Derry
19614Q	Naomh Bodain	Culdaff, Lifford, Co Donegal,	Bishop of Derry
20054L	Scoil Eoghan	Moville, Co Donegal,	Bishop of Derry
01733B	Ardara Mixed N S	Ardara, Co Donegal	Bishop of Derry & Raphoe
10062E	Creeslough N S	Creeslough, Co Donegal,	Bishop of Derry & Raphoe
13755E	Gartan N S	Gartan, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Bishop of Derry & Raphoe
16138S	Raphoe Central N S	Raphoe, Lifford, Co Donegal	Bishop of Derry & Raphoe
18086M	Dunfanaghy N S	Dunfanaghy, Co Donegal	Bishop of Derry & Raphoe
18250W	S N Baile Mor	Dunfanaghy Po, Letterkenny, Co Donegal,	Bishop of Derry & Raphoe
01866U	Ballyforan Mixed N S	Ballinasloe, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
02327S	Manuta National School	Castlerea, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
07455G	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal	Ballygar, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
07722D	St Peters N S Snr	Athlone, Co Westmeath, Westmeath	Bishop of Elphin
13047A	S N Lios A Cuill M	Castlerea, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
13198V	St Annes Con N S	Castlerea, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
15255R	Don N S	Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon	Bishop of Elphin
15425Q	Fairymount N S	Fairymount Ns, Castlerea, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
15543W	Tibohine N S	Castlerea, Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
16639R	Sn Deaghan O Ceallaigh	Athlone, Co Westmeath,	Bishop of Elphin
16982H	S N Ath Eascrach Chuain	Beal Atha Na Sluagh, Co Na Gaillimhe,	Bishop of Elphin
17095I	S N Na Cealltraighe	Kinclare, Cealltrach Ballinasloe, Co Galway,	Bishop of Elphin
17266J	Ballanagare N S	Castlerea, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
17277O	St Edwards N S	Ballytivnan, Sligo,	Bishop of Elphin
17748E	S N Padraig Naofa	Dungar, Caisleain Riabhach, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
18165I	Tisrara National School	Tigh Srathra, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
18211M	S N Ciarain Naofa	Cill Liathan Newbridge, Ballinasloe, Co Galway,	Bishop of Elphin
18405C	S N Phoil Naofa	Athlone, Co Westmeath,	Bishop of Elphin
18536R	S N Mhuire Lourdes	Loch Glinne, Castlerea, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
18543O	S N Clochog	Castlebaldwin, Boyle, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
19809I	Abbeycarton NS	Elphin, Co Roscommon,	Bishop of Elphin
19818J	Creggs Central N S	Creegs, Via Roscommon, Co Galway,	Bishop of Elphin
19985F	Our Lady Of Mercy N S	Pearse Road, Sligo,	Bishop of Elphin
03633H	S N Bun Cloidi B	Bunclody, Co Wexford,	Bishop of Ferns
06959G	Clonroche N S	Clonroche, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Bishop of Ferns
08221J	St Senans National Sch	Templeshannon, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford,	Bishop of Ferns
11361T	Faythe Convent	St John Of Gods Convent, Wexford,	Bishop of Ferns
11986N	Convent Of Mercy	Pairc An Chinneideach, Loch Garman,	Bishop of Ferns
12372G	Michael St N S	Michael St, New Ross, Co Wexford,	Bishop of Ferns

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
14668O	Ballaghkeene N S	Ballaghkeene, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford,	Bishop of Ferns
16741I	Scoil Na Mbraithre	New Ross, Co Wexford,	Bishop of Ferns
17194K	S N Baile Ui Coileain	Ballycullane, New Ross, Co Wexford,	Bishop of Ferns
17443F	S N Fionntain	Taghmon, Co Wexford,	Bishop of Ferns
17457Q	Nmh Ioseph N S	New Ross, Co Wexford,	Bishop of Ferns
17638U	S N Nmh Seosaimh	Dunard, Poll Na Peiste, Cluain Na Roistigh, Co Loch Gorman,	Bishop of Ferns
17707N	S N Rath An Iubhair	Rath An Iubhair, Iniscortaigh, Co Loch Gorman,	Bishop of Ferns
17734Q	S N Gallbhaile	Ballyhogue, Gallbhaile, Inis Corthaidh, Co Loch Garman,	Bishop of Ferns
17769M	S N Mhuire	Tagoat, Co Wexford,	Bishop of Ferns
17841R	Sn Mhuire	Ballyhogue, Bree, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Bishop of Ferns
19352M	Sc Nais Realta Na Mara	An Chill Mhor, Co Loch Garman,	Bishop of Ferns
19739N	Scoil Mhuire Coolcotts	Scoil Mhuire, Coolcotts, Co Wexford,	Bishop of Ferns
20003R	St Aidans Parish School	Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford	Bishop of Ferns
01013N	Scoil Croi Iosa	Presentation Road, Galway	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
04515G	Scoil An Linbh Iosa	St Francis St, Galway	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
11290W	S N Muire Gan Smal	Camas, Co Na Gaillimhe	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
11373D	S N Mhuire	Turlach Beag, Rosmuc, Co Na Gaillimhe	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
13699U	S N Colmcille	Lettermore, Co Galway	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
13951E	S N Leitir Mucu	Camas, Co Na Gaillimhe	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
13952G	S N Bhride	Leitir Caladh, Lettermore, Co Galway	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
16943U	Niochlas N S	An Cladach, An Gaillimh,	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
17221K	Sn Colmcille	An Caislean An Gearr, Gaillimh,	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
17463L	S N Briocain	An Gort Mor, Rosmuc, Co Na Gaillimhe,	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
17655U	S N Caladh Na Muc	Ros Cathail, Co Na Gaillimhe,	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
17782E	S N Bride Naofa	Sean Tallamh, Gaillimh	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
18410S	S N Liosceanuir	Inis, Co Clare,	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
19225F	Scoil Michil Naofa	Baile Ban, Gaillimh	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
19226H	Scoil Na Trionoide Naofa	Muirbheach, Gaillimh	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
19401W	S N Caitriona Sois	Renmore, Co Galway	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
19468I	Sn Caitriona Sinsear	Sn Caitriona Sinsear, Renmore, Co Galway	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
19795A	Tirellan Heights N S	Headford Road, Galway	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
20199O	Scoil Naisiunta Uachtar Ard	Oughterard, Co Galway,	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
20245S	Ennistymon National School	Ennistymon, Co. Clare	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
05348S	Scoil Eoin	Tahilla, Sneem, Co. Kerry,	Bishop of Kerry
08251S	Scoil Naomh Micheal	Sneem, Co Kerry,	Bishop of Kerry
08687J	S N Muire Gan Smal	Na Corra, Cathair Saibhin, Co Chiarrai,	Bishop of Kerry
11419B	Scoil Bhreanainn	Portmagee, Co Kerry	Bishop of Kerry
12820H	Scoil Realt Na Mara	Killorglin, Co Kerry	Bishop of Kerry
12875J	Douglas National School	Killorglin, Co Kerry	Bishop of Kerry
13233U	S N Naomh Ioseph	Doon Road, Ballybunion, Co Kerry,	Bishop of Kerry
13530D	Scoil Mhuire	Tobar Mui Doire, Traili, Co Chiarrai,	Bishop of Kerry
13542K	Cahirciveen Convent	Cahirciveen, Co Kerry,	Bishop of Kerry
15978L	Curraheen Mxd N S	Glenbeigh, Co Kerry	Bishop of Kerry
16456J	Scoil Naisiunta Eirc	Baile An Mhoraigh, Baile Na Ngall, Tra Li, Co Chiarrai,	Bishop of Kerry
16702V	Sc Mhuire Na Mbraithre	Caherciveen, Co Kerry	Bishop of Kerry
16703A	Scoil Na Mbraithre	An Daingean, Co Chiarrai,	Bishop of Kerry
16744O	Boheshill Mxd	Glencar, Co Kerry,	Bishop of Kerry
16851P	Ballybunion B N S	Ballybunion, Co Kerry,	Bishop of Kerry
16871V	S N An Chroi Naofa	Traighli, Co Chiarrai	Bishop of Kerry
17915U	Freastogail Mhuire Mxd	Killahan, Abbeydorney, Co Kerry,	Bishop of Kerry
18283O	Scoil Mhuire	Sc Mhuire Brosnach, Tra Li, Co Ciarrai	Bishop of Kerry
19483E	S N Dar Earca	Ballyhearney, Valentia, Co Kerry,	Bishop of Kerry
19501D	Cahermore New Central S	Cahermore, Co Cork,	Bishop of Kerry
19507P	Scoil Chaitigheirn	Na Haorai, Beantraí, Co Chorcai,	Bishop of Kerry
19525R	Mhichil Naofa	Ballinakilla, Bere Island, Bantry, Co Cork	Bishop of Kerry

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19805A	Ballyduff Central	Ballyduff, Tralee, Co Kerry,	Bishop of Kerry
20004T	Scoil An Croi Ro Naofa	Castletownbere, Co. Cork.	Bishop of Kerry
20013U	Gaelscoil Lios Tuathail	Lios Tuathail, Co Chiarrai	Bishop of Kerry
12747A	Kildare Monastery N S	Kildare, Co Kildare	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
15599D	St Brigids Primary School	Kildare Town, County Kildare	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
16311G	Graig Na Manach Buac	Graigemanagh, Co Kilkenny	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
16635J	Curragh Camp B N S	Curragh Camp, Co Kildare	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
16636L	Curragh Camp G N S	Curragh Camp, Co Kildare	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
17096K	S N Nmh Fhingín	Garryhill, Muinebheag, Co Carlow	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
17127S	St Josephs NS	Hacketstown, Co Carlow	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
17224Q	S N Muire Gan Smal	Graigemanagh, Co Kilkenny	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
17555Q	Scoil Naomh Abban	Crettyard, Carlow, Co Carlow	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
17669I	S N Treasa Naomha	Cill Teagain, Co Cille Manntain,	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
17692D	Sraid Bhaile Boys N S	Sraid Bhaile, Co Laois	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
18265M	Bhríde N S	Ard Duach, Carlow, Co Carlow,	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
18449W	St Conleths N S	Derrinturn, Carbury, Co. Kildare	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
19452Q	Scoil Mhuire	Newbridge, Co. Kildare.	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
19477J	Holy Family B N S	Askea, Carlow, Co Carlow	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
19478L	Holy Family G N S	Askea, Carlow, Co Carlow,	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
19550Q	Ballymany Junior NS	Newbridge, Co Kildare	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
19747M	Scoil Bhríde NS	Portlaoise, Co Laois,	Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin
03924S	Owenbeg N S	Owenbeg P O, Ballina, Co Sligo	Bishop of Killala
06852L	Garracloon N S	Ballina, Co Mayo,	Bishop of Killala
11725I	Beheymore N S	Ballina, Co Mayo,	Bishop of Killala
12140I	Culleens N S	Culleens, Co Sligo,	Bishop of Killala
12373I	S N Eachleime	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Bishop of Killala
12569C	S N Ros Dumhach	Beal Atha An Fheadha, Co Mhaigh Eo,	Bishop of Killala
13222P	Sn Gleann A Chaisil	Bun Na Habhna, Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Bishop of Killala

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
13225V	Cormaic Nfa	Garranard P O, Ballina, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
13383Q	S N An Tsraith	Bun Na Habhann, Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo,	Bishop of Killala
13684H	Beannchor N S	Bangor, Erris, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
13758K	Templemary N S	Templemary Ns, Killala, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
13882L	S N Gleann Na Muaidhe	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Bishop of Killala
14188A	Barnatra N S	Ballina, Co Mayo,	Bishop of Killala
14193Q	S N Dubh Thuama	Gaoth Saile, Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Bishop of Killala
14258S	Cill Mhor Iorrais	Beal An Mhuirthead, Co Mhaigh Eo	Bishop of Killala
14290O	Scoil Naomh Brid	Ballycastle, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
14671D	S N Na Craobhaighe	Carrowmore-Lacken, Ballina, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
15014S	Corclough NS	Corchloch, Beal An Mhuirthead, Co Mhaigh Eo	Bishop of Killala
15032U	S N Muire Gan Smal	Ceathru Thaidgh, Beal Atha An Fheadha, Co Mhaigh Eo,	Bishop of Killala
16283E	S N Pol A Tsomais	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo,	Bishop of Killala
16811D	Killala N S	Killala, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
17129W	S N Naomh Pdraig	Rath Na Mbeach, Crossmolina, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
17532E	S N Druim Slaod	Baile Cruaich, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
17727T	Sn Croi Muire	Beal An Mhuirthead, Co Mhaigh Eo	Bishop of Killala
17923T	S N Beal An Mhuirthead	Beal An Mhuirthead, Co Mhaigh Eo	Bishop of Killala
18002D	Drumgallagh N S	Ballycroy, Westport, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
18175L	S N Beannchair	Carrowmore, Ballina, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
18506I	S N Naomh Pdraig B	Ballina, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
18594I	S N Achaidh An Ghlaisin	Beal An Mhuirthead, Co Mhaigh Eo	Bishop of Killala
19688W	Dromore West Central	Dromore West, Sligo	Bishop of Killala
19776T	Geesala Central School	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Bishop of Killala
20217N	Mount Palmer	Kincon, Ballina, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
20275E	Scoil Íosa	Convent Hill, Ballina, Co Mayo	Bishop of Killala
01594N	St Johns	Roscrea, Co Tipperary	Bishop of Killaloe
03220F	Mercy Primary School	Birr, Co Offaly	Bishop of Killaloe
03928D	Mullach N S	Mullach, Ennis, Co Clare	Bishop of Killaloe

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07315N	Holy Family Snr	Ennis, Co Clare	Bishop of Killaloe
08241P	Scropul N S	Mullagh, Ennis, Co Clare,	Bishop of Killaloe
10191P	S N Na Coradh	Mullach, Inis, Co Clare	Bishop of Killaloe
12343W	Shinrone Mixed N S	Shinrone, Co Offaly,	Bishop of Killaloe
12370C	St Brendans Monastery	Birr, Co Offaly	Bishop of Killaloe
12848G	Doonaha N S	Kilkee, Co Clare	Bishop of Killaloe
15221A	Annagh N S	Miltown Malbay, Co Clare	Bishop of Killaloe
15968I	Baltard National Schools	Baltard, Doonbeg, Kilrush, Co Clare	Bishop of Killaloe
17020A	Quilty NS	Quilty, Ennis, Co Clare	Bishop of Killaloe
17498H	S N Naomh Sheosamh	Toomevara, Nenagh, Co Tipperary	Bishop of Killaloe
17957N	Ennis Convent Inf N S	Ennis, Co Clare	Bishop of Killaloe
18345K	S N Iosef Naofa	Cor An Bhile, Roscrea, Co Tipperary,	Bishop of Killaloe
18435L	Sacred Heart Primary School	Newline, Roscrea, Co Tipperary	Bishop of Killaloe
19559L	Chriost Ri	Cloughleigh, Ennis, Co Clare	Bishop of Killaloe
20041C	Convent Of Mercy National School	Kilrush, Co Clare	Bishop of Killaloe
20078C	Sn Realt Na Mara	Chapel St, Kilkee, Co Clare	Bishop of Killaloe
01356U	Kilnaleck Mixed N S	Kilnaleck, Co Cavan	Bishop of Kilmore
06998Q	S N Tulach A Mhile	Corlough, Belturbet, Co Cavan	Bishop of Kilmore
08143P	S N Mhuire	Muileann Larainn, Swanlinbar, Co Cavan	Bishop of Kilmore
08490N	St Clares Primary School	Cavan, Co Cavan	Bishop of Kilmore
14898I	Drumeela N S	Carrigallen Po, Co Leitrim, Via Cavan	Bishop of Kilmore
16474L	Carrigallen N S	Carrigallen, Co Leitrim	Bishop of Kilmore
16951T	S N Na Craoibheleithe	Drumkeeran, Co Leitrim	Bishop of Kilmore
17125O	Differeen N S	Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim	Bishop of Kilmore
17326B	S N Naomh Feidhlim	Cavan, Co Cavan	Bishop of Kilmore
17479D	Scoil Mhuire	Lacken, Ballinagh, Co Cavan	Bishop of Kilmore
18139H	S N Naomh Pdraig	Tearmon Spencer Harbour, Carrick-On-Shannon, Co Leitrim,	Bishop of Kilmore
19365V	Achadh Na Sileann	Achadh Na Sileann, Cora Droma Ruisc, Co Liatroma,	Bishop of Kilmore

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20277I	St Michaels National School	Cootehill, Co Cavan	Bishop of Kilmore
18591C	Naomh Tomas N S	Rathowen, Co Westmeath	Bishop of Kilmore Elphin & Ardagh
00570R	Mhuire Naofa Cailini	Bishop Street, Limerick,	Bishop of Limerick
06936R	St Johns Convent	Cathedral Place, Limerick City	Bishop of Limerick
15320C	St Michaels NS	Cbs Grounds, Sexton Street, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
16715H	St John The Baptist Boys N S	Downey Street, Pennywell, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
16910F	Scoil Iosagain	Sraid Seasnain, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
17293M	Scoil Ioseph Naofa	Ballyorgan, Kilfinane, Co Luimni	Bishop of Limerick
17445J	Scoil Lile Naofa	Kileely, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
17593B	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	Cnoc Ui Coileain, Abbeyfeale, Co Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
17737W	Our Lady Queen Of Peace School	Janesboro, Limerick,	Bishop of Limerick
17941V	St Munchins G N S	Ballynanty, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
17942A	Scoil Mhainchin Buach	Bothar Siolbroin, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
18177P	Scoil Aine Naofa	Rath Caola, Co Luimni	Bishop of Limerick
18653V	Scoil Naomh Iosef	Rathkeale, Co Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
19372S	South Hill N S	South Hill, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
19667O	Our Lady Of Lourdes N S	Rosbrien, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
19830W	Corpus Christi N S	Moyross, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
19931F	Gaelscoil Sheoirse	Clancy, An Cnoc Theas, Luimneach, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
20018H	Maria King Presentation Primary	Sexton Street, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
20184B	Galvone NS	Kennedy Park, Limerick City	Bishop of Limerick
20185D	St. Mary's Boys N.S.	Island Road, Limerick	Bishop of Limerick
17161S	Kiltallagh N S	Kiltallagh, Castlemaine, Co Kerry	Bishop of Limerick, Killaloe & Ardfert
01731U	Ballynacargy Mixed N S	Ballynacargy, Co Westmeath	Bishop of Meath
05913A	Kilcormac Convent N S	Kilcormac, Co Offaly	Bishop of Meath
13118U	Clara Convent N S	Clara, Co Offaly	Bishop of Meath
16928B	S N Naomh Philomena	Tullamore, Co Offaly	Bishop of Meath

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
17359Q	St Cormacs N S	Kilcormac, Co Offaly	Bishop of Meath
17969U	S N Mhuire	An Uaimh, Co Na Mi	Bishop of Meath
17991N	Eoin Naofa N S	Ballymore, Mullingar, Co Westmeath	Bishop of Meath
18406E	S N Proinsias Naofa	Clarach, Co Ua Bhfailghe	Bishop of Meath
18429Q	S N Mhuire	Cul Ronain, Baile Iomhair, Co Meath	Bishop of Meath
18524K	S N Naomh Brighde Buach	Tullamore, Co Offaly	Bishop of Meath
18797W	S N Naomh Seosamh	Arden View, Tullamore, Co Offaly	Bishop of Meath
19215C	S N Ard Mhuire C	Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Co Louth	Bishop of Meath
19476H	St Oliver Plunkett NS	Navan, Co Meath	Bishop of Meath
19479N	Rathmullen N S	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Co Louth	Bishop of Meath
19678T	St Pauls Senior NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Co Louth	Bishop of Meath
19713S	Arden Boys NS	Arden View, Tullamore, Co Offaly	Bishop of Meath
20180Q	Scoil Naomh Eoin	Clonmagadden Valley, Windtown, Navan, Co Meath	Bishop of Meath
17108O	St Johns Infants N S	Michael Street, Kilkenny, Co Kilkenny	Bishop of Ossory
20011Q	St Johns Senior NS	Ballybough Street, Kilkenny	Bishop of Ossory
03294L	S N Caiseal Na gCorr	Gort A Choirce, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
04809A	Scoil An Aingil Choimheadai	An Cheididh, Burtonport, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
05164I	Scoil Naomh Cholmcille	Oilean Thorai, An Bhun Bhig, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
13563S	S N Chill Coinnigh	Cill Choinnigh, Glenties, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
14194S	Scoil Cholmcille	An Tearmann, Co Dun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
14502D	Scoil Mhuire B & C	Doire Beaga, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
14704P	Murroe National School	Murroe, Dunfanahy, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
15208I	S N Na Sraithe Moire	Min A Labain, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
15532R	Croaghross N S	Portsalon, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
15554E	Gortnacart N S	Gortnacart, Ardara, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
15729N	Rathmullen N S	Rathmullen, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
15955W	Sn Arainn Mhor I	Arainn Mor, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
16142J	S N Min Na Manrach	An Clochan Liath, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
16279N	Scoil Choluim	Ballyheerin,Fanad, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
16375J	Frosses N S	Frosses, Inver, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
16384K	Sn Arainn Mhor Ii	Arainn Mhor, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
16471F	St Davadogs N S	Tamney, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
16603T	S N An Chillin	An Cillin, Inver, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
16671N	S N Cnoc Na Naomh	Gort A Choirce, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
16820E	Sn Baile Nua An Phobail	Newtowncunningham, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
16823K	Min A Ghabhann N S	Lettermacaward	Bishop of Raphoe
16829W	S N Loch An Iubhair	Anagaire, Leitir Ceanainn, Tir Chonaill	Bishop of Raphoe
16837V	S N Duchoraidh	Duchoraidh, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
16850N	St Garvan's N.S.	Drum Halla, Rathmaolain, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
16995Q	S N Naomh Colmchille	Drumoghill Ns, Manorcunningham, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
17018N	Scoil Phadraig	Dobhar, An Bun Beag, Leitirceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
17130H	Scoil Naomh Dubhthach	Machaire Ui Rabhartaigh, Gort A Choirce, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
17328F	Scoil Roisin	An Clochan Liath, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
17447N	S N Crannaighe Buidhe	Crannog Bui, Ardara, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
17503U	S N Adhamhnain	Luinneach, Doiri Beaga, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
17549V	S N Ceathru Caol	Kerrykeel, Lifford, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
17553M	S N Taodhbhog	An Clochan, Leifearr, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
17564R	S N An Choimin	Clochan, Leithbhearr, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
17598L	Sn An Leinbh Iosa	Coxtown, Carrigans, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
17704H	S N Fhionnain	Baile Chonaill, An Falcarrach, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
17716O	St Riaghans NS	Drimnacros, Kilraine P.O., Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
17729A	Scoil Naomh Proinnseas	Magherabeg, Manorcunningham, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
17822N	Scoil Bhrighde	Min A Chladhaigh, Gort A Choirce, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
17828C	Scoil Adhamhnain	Rathbhoth, Leithbhearr, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
17945G	Scoil Naomh Chaitriona	Ballyshannon, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
18131O	S N Muire Gan Smal	Ard Aratha, Co Dun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
18151U	S N Mhuire	Baile An Ngallloglach, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
18219F	Sn Chonaill	Machaire Chlochair, Bun Beag, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
18241V	Scoil Naomh Cholmcille	Drumman, Ramelton, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
18286U	S N Na Hacraí	Ailt An Chorrain, Leitirceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
18295V	S N Min An Aoire	An Charraig, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
18371L	Scoil Mhuire	An Craosloch, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
18421A	Sn Dun Ceannfhaolaidh	Dun Ceannfhaolaidh, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
18611F	S N Na Carraige	Dun Na Ngall, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
18652T	S N An Chaiseal	Gleann Cholmcille, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
18710H	Sn Na Croise Naofa	Dunfanaghy, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
18766L	Scoil Cholmcille	Dubhlin Riabach, Carraig Airt, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
19009W	Craanford N S	Craanford, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
19228L	S N Naomh Brid	Na Dunaibh, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
19252I	S N Umlach	Carrigart, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
19310T	Scoil Naomh Earnan	Baile An Tsratha, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
19343L	S N Dhubhthaigh	Anagaire, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
19491D	Scoil Mhuire	Rathmealltain, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
19518U	S N Naomh Baoithin	Sc Naomh Baoithin, St Johnston, Lifford, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
19685Q	S N Chill Charthaigh	Chill Chartha, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Bishop of Raphoe
19756N	St Conals	Narin, Portnoo, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
19912B	Scoil Mhuire	Glenties, Co Donegal	Bishop of Raphoe
15046I	St Stephens N S	Waterford, Co Waterford	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
16729S	St Peter And Paul	Clonmel, Co Tipperary	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
16732H	Scoil Naomh Seosamh	Dungarvan, Co Waterford	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
18077L	S N Cnoc Machan	Bun Machan, Co Waterford	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
18462O	Scoil Lorcaín BNS	Ballytruckle, Waterford	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
18509O	An Teaghlaigh Naofa	Clochar Na Trocaire, Port Lairge	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
18689T	Our Lady Of Mercy Senior P.S.	Military Road, Waterford	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
19511G	St Saviours NS	Ballybeg, Waterford City	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore

Roll No.	School Name	Address	Patron
19645E	St Oliver Plunketts NS	Heywood Rd, Clonmel, Co Tipperary	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
19947U	Mount Sion Cbs	Barrack Street, Waterford	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
19953P	St Marys NS	Dungarvan, Co Waterford	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
19955T	S N Na Toirbhirte	Slievekeale Road, Waterford	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
20219R	St Pauls B N S	Lisduggan, Co Waterford	Bishop of Waterford & Lismore
20241K	Scoil Choilm NS	Porterstown Rd, Porterstown, Dublin 15,	County Dublin VEC
20158A	Tralee Educate Together NS	Collis Sandes House, Killeen Oakpark, Tralee, Co. Kerry	Educate Together
20186F	Castaheany Educate Together NS	Castaheany Educate Together Ns, Ongar Village, Dublin 15	Educate Together
20188J	Mullingar Educate Together	Rathgowan, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	Educate Together
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together NS	Hamlet Lane, Moylaragh, Co Dublin	Educate Together
20211B	Claregalway Educate Together N.S	Cloonbiggen Road, Claregalway, Co Galway	Educate Together
20235P	Letterkenny Educate Together	Ballyraine Halls, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Educate Together
20274C	Esker Educate Together NS	Adamstown Castle, Adamstown, County Dublin	Educate Together
20282B	Bracken Educate Together NS	Castlelands, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin	Educate Together
20295K	Carlow Town Educate Together NS	Unit 5 Shamrock Business Park, Graiguecullen, Co. Carlow	Educate Together
20302E	Thornleigh Green Educate Together NS	Thornleigh Green, Applewood Village, Swords, Co. Dublin	Educate Together
20303G	Lucan East Educate Together National School	Kishogue Cross, Off Griffeen Avenue, Lucan, County Dublin	Educate Together
20308Q	Belmayne Educate Together National School	Balgriffin Park, Belmayne, Dublin 13	Educate Together
20086B	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Co Clare	Educate Together
20307O	Skerries Educate Together NS	Barnageeragh Cove, Kellys Bay, Skerries, County Dublin	Educate Together
20313J	Mol An Oige	Ennistymon, Clare	Lifeways Ireland Ltd
00752A	Central Model Mixed N S	Marlboro St, Dublin 1	Minister for Education & Science
01795A	Central Infs School	Marlboro St, Dublin 1	Minister for Education & Science
19831B	Scoil Chaoimhin	Sraid Mhaoilbhríde, Baile Atha Cliath 1	Minister for Education & Science
07143K	Monreagh N S	Monreagh, Carrigans Lifford, Co Donegal	Presbyterian Moderator
09748I	Glenmaquin No 2 N S	Knockbrack, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Presbyterian Moderator
19910U	Sligo Project School	Abbey Quarter, Sligo	Sligo School Project

Schools Refurbishment

380. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the sum of funds granted to a school (details supplied) in County Kilkenny under the summer works scheme 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18775/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): My Department has offered grant aid in respect of improvement works at the school referred to by the Deputy under the Summer Works Scheme 2010. I understand that the Board of Management of the school has recently confirmed acceptance of this grant offer.

The funding information sought by the Deputy is confidential at this point due to the competitive tendering process being undertaken by the school.

Third Level Fees

381. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) in County Mayo is entitled to free fees. [18829/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Under the terms of my Department's Free Fee Initiative the Exchequer meets the cost of tuition fees in respect of eligible students who are pursuing full-time undergraduate courses of study which are a minimum of two years duration in an approved institution. The main conditions are that students must be first-time undergraduates, hold EU/EEA/Swiss nationality in their own right and have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course. Students with official refugee status in the State who meet the criteria of the scheme may also be considered under the Free Fees Initiative.

It is the students own nationality or his/her immigration status in the State that determines whether or not he/she meets the nationality requirement outlined in the Free Fees scheme. The assessment of eligibility under the Free Fees Initiative in individual cases is a matter for each higher education institution to determine within the terms of the scheme.

Where students do not meet the eligibility criteria of the Free Fees initiative such students must pay the appropriate tuition fee as determined by the third level institution. Such institutions are autonomous bodies and, as such, the level of fees to be charged in such cases is a matter for the institutions. In that regard, Section 473A, of the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997, provides tax relief, at the standard rate of tax, for tuition fees paid in respect of approved courses at approved colleges of higher education including certain approved undergraduate and postgraduate courses in E.U. Member States and in non EU countries.

Departmental Staff

382. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 921 of 20 April 2010, the exact salary her two special advisers and her press adviser each receive, including any additional allowance such as the 10% attraction allowance; if the salary and remuneration package is the same as they each enjoyed in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18837/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Appointment of Special Advisers and a Press Adviser at my Department is currently in process in accordance with section 11 of the Public Services Management Act 1997 and is expected to be completed

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shortly. I will forward the details requested by the Deputy on confirmation of appointment and finalisation of contracts.

School Curriculum

383. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills her plans to take steps to ensure schools and early years settings engage in mental health promotion and early intervention; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18850/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme is a mandatory part of the curriculum in primary schools and in junior cycle since 2003 and is designed to promote positive mental health. It is supported by comprehensive teacher guidelines and curriculum support services which provide training and advice for schools and a resource directory.

Its aim is to foster personal development, health and well being of children, to help them create and maintain supportive relationships, and develop the skills and attitudes for responsible citizenship.

From the beginning of primary schooling children learn, in an age-appropriate way, how to identify, explore and express feelings and emotions, how to communicate with others, to resolve conflict and to respect difference, the importance of caring for one's body, treating oneself and others with dignity and respect, and how to identify people, places and situations that may threaten personal safety.

The SPHE modules at junior cycle deal specifically with belonging and integrating, handling conflict constructively, bullying, dealing with peer pressure, coping with stress, emotional health and well being, influences on decision-making, and relationships and sexuality education. In third year, an awareness of the range of agencies who can help students in difficulty is promoted, as well as the skills of knowing when and how to seek help. SPHE is designed for implementation in the context of a caring whole-school approach which is supported by the pastoral care structures in schools.

All post-primary schools also provide a guidance and counselling service for their students and they receive ex-quota hours from the Department for this provision. The service includes the provision of individual guidance and counselling for students either at critical stages in their education or at times of personal crisis.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) operating within my Department provides a range of services both direct and indirect which support the personal, social and educational development of all children in primary and post-primary schools. NEPS also liaises with HSE services as appropriate in its service to schools. Well-being, identity and belonging are core themes within Aistear : the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment for use for children aged 0-6 in including crèches, playgroups, naionrai, hospitals, early start, after schools and primary infant classes, as well as childminders and parents in the home. The framework sets out sample aims, goals and learning experiences under each theme which are designed to support children being happy, healthy and self confident in their family and community.

Interdepartmental Committees

384. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the work of an interdepartmental health promotion committee between her Department and the

Department of Health and Children; the details of its work on mental health; the membership of the committee; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18851/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The committee to which the Deputy refers is an Inter Departmental Group on SPHE (Social Personal & Health Education) which was set up between my Department and the Department of Health and Children. The Group informs and guides partnership working between the two Departments in relation to the promotion and protection of the health of children and young people in the school setting in the context of curriculum development of Junior Cycle SPHE, teacher education and related policy development.

The composition of the group is three officers from my Department, two officers from the Department of Health and Children, a representative from the HSE, two representatives of the Inspectorate of my Department and two representatives from the support services of teacher professional development.

A sub-committee of the Inter Departmental Group was established in March of this year to oversee the implementation of The National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention (2005-2014) pertaining to the school setting. The sub-committee will develop a framework that will support evidence-based practice for mental health promotion and suicide prevention in the post-primary school setting in Ireland.

The composition of the sub committee is four officers from the HSE, one representative of the Inspectorate of my Department, one officer from the Department of Health and Children and one representative from the National Educational Psychological Service.

Higher Education Grants

385. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if various Vocational Education Committees and Local Authorities here which administer higher education student grants report to her on a weekly basis in the number of grants they have awarded; the number awarded in respect of each of the awarding authorities; the number of grants awarded to date in 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18864/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Normal reporting arrangements between the grant awarding authorities and my Department are on the basis of three financial reconciliations per year, a survey in January each year on progress in processing grant applications and an annual statistical return at the end of each academic year. This academic year, given the numbers of grant applications and the capacity of awarding authorities to process these, my Department had requested a weekly update from the awarding authorities to enable monitoring of the administration of student grants. This was an interim measure which was in place until the end of December 2009.

The following table details the number of new applications awarded a grant together with the number of renewal processed returned in the January Survey. The information has been supplied to my Department by the local authorities and the Vocational Education Committees.

Both VECs and local authorities are experiencing pressures due to the increased workload associated with the increased demand for student grants, particularly in the context of the recruitment moratorium in the public sector which, in some instances, will have impacted on the processing of grants. However, every effort is being made by these bodies to ensure that students get decisions on their grant applications and are paid as soon as possible.

Given the likelihood of further increases in the numbers of grant applications, my Department is working closely with local authorities, VECs and other relevant stakeholders to con-

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tinue development of a number of initiatives to support more effective delivery of student grants, including service improvements in application, assessment and payments arrangements.

The Maintenance Grants Schemes 2009/10

Statistics on new applicants for a grant under the 2009 Scheme

County Councils	Statistics as at 22nd January 2010	
	Awarded a Grant	Renewals processed
Carlow Co Co	155	222
Cavan Co Co	169	292
Clare Co Co	388	673
Cork City Co	367	687
Cork Co Co	395	1,795
Donegal Co Co	417	817
Dublin City Co	1,111	1,963
Dun Laoghaire Co Co	260	640
South Dublin Co Co	430	870
Fingal Co Co	217	770
Galway Co Co	829	2427
Kerry Co Co	344	900
Kildare Co Co	373	664
Kilkenny Co Co	306	529
Laois Co Co	259	337
Leitrim Co Co	147	219
Limerick Co Co	318	890
Limerick City Co	186	362
Longford Co Co	131	172
Louth Co Co	156	412
Mayo Co Co	360	887
Meath Co. Co.	303	486
Monaghan Co Co	156	412
Offaly	159	315
Roscommon Co Co	301	590
Sligo Co Co	215	337
Tipp NR Co Co	167	323
Tipp SR Co Co	265	342
Waterford Co Co *		
Waterford City Co	136	116
Westmeath Co. Co.	284	371
Wexford Co Co	248	730
Wicklow Co Co	348	638
Totals	9,900	21,188

*Not returned.

VEC's	Statistics as at 22nd January 2010	
	Awarded a Grant	Renewals processed
Carlow VEC	513	539
Cavan VEC	589	404
Clare VEC	628	655
Cork City VEC	450	639
Cork Co VEC	715	569
Donegal VEC	1,164	1,062
Dublin Co VEC	407	700
Dublin City VEC	768	1,192
Dun Laoghaire VEC	260	102
Galway City VEC	566	151
Galway VEC	1,022	393
Kerry VEC	1,294	787
Kildare VEC	642	310
Kilkenny VEC	576	309
Laois VEC	367	413
Leitrim VEC	321	227
Limerick Co VEC	618	397
Limerick City VEC	497	230
Longford VEC	337	180
Louth VEC	923	444
Mayo VEC	952	1,050
Meath VEC	743	487
Monaghan VEC	509	653
Offaly VEC	455	341
Roscommon VEC	637	300
Sligo VEC *		
Tipp NR VEC	700	362
Tipp SR VEC	598	285
Waterford VEC	343	159
Waterford City VEC	289	245
Westmeath VEC	532	351
Wexford VEC	917	497
Wicklow VEC	612	360
Total	19,944	14,793

*Not returned.

Colleges of Education

386. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of places for postgraduate conversion courses that are available in teacher training colleges; the number of places that have been closed arising from decisions taken in Budget 2010; the estimated savings that will accrue through this cutback; her views on reversing this decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18876/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The level of student intake to the Colleges of Education is determined annually by my Department and it takes account of the supply of, and demand for, primary teachers. The post graduate primary teacher education course for holders of suitable university degrees is provided in four of the Colleges of Education and was introduced as a response to a shortage in the supply of primary teachers. It was first provided in the 1995/96 academic year and has been repeated almost each year since then.

The course has not as yet been incorporated as a permanent feature of primary teacher training. The decision to provide further courses is generally made on an annual basis depending on the teacher supply situation. Intake to the courses which commenced in 2008 and 2009 was at a record high of 490 students. 200 places were approved for the course which commenced in February 2010 and reductions of the order of €3m have been made on the relevant subheads of the Department's Vote in 2010.

The decision on whether to run the course in 2011 will not be taken until later in the year when my Department will consider the factors affecting supply and demand in the light of available resources.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

387. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary schools with class sizes of 20 to 29, 30 to 39 and 40 and over for 2009 and 2010 in a tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19035/10]

389. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary schools which have 30 or more children in classes on a county basis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19042/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 387 and 389 together.

The Statistics Section of my Department's website contains information relating to class size in primary schools for the school years 2006/07 to 2008/09. The information includes the number of pupils in each class, the number of pupils in each class size range and the number of teachers in each school. The primary census for the 2009/10 school year is currently underway and the final outcome will be made available when this process is completed.

Departmental Expenditure

388. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the amount of expenditure in each year over the past three years to date in 2010 relating to continuous professional development by her Department and its agencies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19037/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Expenditure on professional development for my Department, the State Examinations Commission and the National Council for Special Education for the years requested by the Deputy is contained in the following tabular statement.

In relation to the other agencies under the remit of my Department this information is not readily available. Officials at my Department will request this information from the bodies concerned and forward it to the Deputy when it is to hand.

Organisation	2007	2008	2009	2010
	€	€	€	€
Department of Education & Skills	483,810	530,363	317,576	56,786
State Examinations Commission	158,862	146,667	90,921	31,769
National Council for Special Education	126,175	135,019	97,701	9,842

Question No. 389 answered with Question No. 387.

School Enrolments

390. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if her attention has been drawn to a group (details supplied) which has 160 adult members with parents completing pre-enrolment forms in respect of 90 children for the period 2011 to 2014 which proves the need for more multi-denominational school places for children in the Dublin South Central and Dublin South East constituencies; and the steps she will take to secure new multi-denominational schools to serve this area by September 2011. [19069/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Forward Planning Section of my Department has carried out a study of the country to identify the areas where, due to demographic changes, there may be a requirement for significant additional school provision at both primary and post-primary levels over the coming years. This study has been conducted using data from the Central Statistics Office, the General Register Office and the Department of Social & Family Affairs with reference to recent schools' enrolment data. The study indicates that the requirement for additional primary provision in years 2010, 2011 and 2012 is likely to be greatest in more than 40 identified locations across the country based on significant changes to the demographics of those areas.

Forward Planning Section is in the process of carrying out detailed analysis and reports for each of these locations in order to identify the school accommodation requirements for each area up to and including the school year 2014/2015. School accommodation requirements within the area referred have been considered as part of this detailed study of the identified areas. The progression of all large scale building projects arising from Forward Planning Section's analysis of accommodation needs will be considered in the context of my Department's multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme.

Garda Vetting Services.

391. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of teachers that have been vetted by the Garda vetting unit to date at both primary and post primary level; the procedure for vetting ancillary staff in schools, such as special needs assistants, caretakers and secretaries; if such staff are also vetted by the Garda vetting unit; the number that have been vetted to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19101/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The arrangements for vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff are set out in Department Circular 0094/2006 which is available on my Department's website. The vetting arrangements were introduced in September 2006 for vetting of new teachers at the time of their initial registration with the Teaching Council.

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The vetting procedures also apply to prospective employees for posts that involve working with children such as Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), bus drivers, bus escorts to children with special needs, caretakers and other ancillary staff in schools.

The specific data on vetting requested by the Deputy is not readily available from the Garda Vetting Unit.

Irrespective of the position on vetting by the Garda Vetting Unit where facts or information comes to a Board of Management's attention calling into question a person's suitability to work with children it is a matter for the Board to satisfy itself that the person is suitable to work in that capacity. This will naturally have to be assessed on a case by case basis. The Board will have to consider all the circumstances of the case, give due weight to all relevant factors, and afford fair procedures to the individual concerned before making a decision.

Computerisation Programme

392. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the level of funding that has been paid out under the Smart Schools Smart Economy strategy to date; the number of classrooms that have received new equipment from the funding to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19102/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Following publication of the Smart Schools = Smart Economy report in November 2009, ICT Infrastructure Grants amounting to €22.3 million issued to over 3,000 primary schools last November. I am pleased to advise the Deputy that a second tranche of ICT infrastructure funding in the region of €20 million will be distributed to post-primary schools in the coming weeks.

As the Deputy may be aware, this capital investment arises in the context of the broader ICT in Schools Programme, which is being pursued in light of recommendations made in the ICT Strategy Group Report and the Smart Schools = Smart Economy reports. Investment in the Programme (both capital and current) amounted to €35.2 million in 2009, and I envisage a further investment of €63.6 million in 2010. This funding addresses the following four key Programme areas:

- the provision of essential ICT infrastructure within schools;
- the provision of access to broadband connectivity to schools through a national Schools Broadband Service and associated Helpdesk;
- the development of teachers' ICT skills through a programme of continuing professional development in ICT for teachers through the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE);
- the integration of ICT within the curriculum and the provision of curriculum-relevant digital content and software through the national portal for ICT in Schools, www.Scoilnet.ie.

The specific information which the Deputy requests in relation to the number of classrooms which have received new equipment from the funding to date is not available as the grant fund in question follows the devolved model. While schools are asked to prioritise the equipping of each classroom with a digital projector, teaching computer, wireless mouse and keyboard, it is recognised that schools will already have this equipment in a number of classrooms. It is necessary therefore to provide schools with flexibility to use their grant funding to purchase other

ICT equipment, such as printers, scanners and digital cameras which would serve the needs of a school rather than a specific classroom.

Schools Building Projects

393. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the delay in the construction of the Athboy Community College, County Meath, under public private partnership; when the project will commence; when the works will be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19105/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Athboy Community School is one of six schools included in the 2nd bundle of primary/post-primary projects being provided under my Department's PPP programme. The other schools in the bundle are Bantry Community College and Gaelscoil Bheanntrai, Co. Cork, Kildare Town Community School, Abbeyfeale Community College and Wicklow Town Community College.

Macquarie Partnerships for Ireland (MPFI) were announced as the preferred tenderer in October 2009 and they have recently received full planning permission for five of the six schools together with a notification of a Decision to Grant in the case of the sixth School. Subject to the successful completion of the planning process for each of the six schools it is envisaged that the contract with MPFI will be ready to be signed by the National Development Finance Agency in early June and all six schools should be ready for occupation in the Autumn of 2011.

Special Educational Needs

394. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills when a child (details supplied) in County Mayo will be called for an dyslexia assessment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19108/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I can inform the Deputy that all primary and post primary schools have access to psychological assessments either directly through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), or through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA), full details of which are on the Department's website. Where a NEPS psychologist is not assigned to a school, authorities therein may access psychological assessments through SCPA. Under this scheme schools can have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved by NEPS, and NEPS will pay the psychologist the fees for this assessment directly.

It should also be noted that in common with many other psychological services, NEPS encourages a staged assessment process, whereby each school takes responsibility for a pupil's initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention. Only if there is a failure to make reasonable progress in spite of the school's best efforts, will a child be referred for individual psychological assessment.

It is the responsibility of the school Principal in the first instance to identify and prioritise pupils for assessment under the process described above. I would suggest that the parents of the child in question should discuss the matter with the school Principal who will advise them as to the appropriateness of a referral in this instance and the process for accessing same.

Should school authorities have specific difficulties with regard any of the foregoing I would suggest that they contact the relevant local NEPS Office (in this instance NEPS Castlebar Office, Tel: 094- 9028310) to discuss the matter.

Bullying in Schools

395. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding anti-bullying policy in the education system here; the person who is responsible for drawing up such policies; the person who is responsible for the enforcement of bullying policies; the role her Department has in the reporting of bullying in schools; the parts of the Education Act 1998 that are relevant to rules governing bullying in schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19116/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Board of Management of each school is required to prepare a code of behaviour in accordance with Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. To assist schools in formulating such a code, the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) has developed guidelines for schools on Codes of Behaviour.

My Department further requires each school to have in place a policy which includes specific measures to deal with bullying behaviour, within the framework of an overall school code of behaviour. Such a code, developed through consultation with the whole school community and properly implemented, can be the most influential measure in countering bullying behaviour in schools.

There is no requirement for local school authorities to report incidents or allegations of bullying to my Department. Responsibility for tackling bullying falls to the level of the individual school, as it is at local level that an effective anti-bullying climate can be established.

My Department has also issued guidelines as an aid to schools in devising measures to prevent and deal with instances of bullying behaviour and to increase awareness among school management authorities of their responsibilities in this regard. These guidelines were drawn up following consultation with representatives of school management, teachers and parents, and are sufficiently flexible to allow each school authority to adapt them to suit the particular needs of their school.

My Department has additionally published policy templates for post-primary schools in five key areas, including anti-bullying on its website, as part of our ongoing efforts in this regard. The template documents are not prescriptive, but rather highlight possible approaches and potential material for inclusion in school policies.

The anti-bullying policy template is based primarily on the key document Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour. However, it does take account of more recent legislative and regulatory changes, and reference is also made to issues of contemporary concern such as the need to tackle text bullying, cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying.

European Council Meetings

396. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of Council of the European Union's meetings that she was entitled to attend in the past three years; the number of Council meetings she attended; the number of same that were attended by officials in her place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19123/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I am entitled to attend three Education Council meetings per annum.

Including the meeting of today, 11 May 2010, and that of May, 2007, ten meetings have been held in the past three years. The Minister or a Minister of State at this Department attended seven of these meetings. In three cases, an official of the Office of the Permanent Represen-

tation of Ireland to the EU and/or an official of my Department attended in the Minister's place.

Schools Refurbishment

397. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the grants that are available to assist schools install water conservation meters; when the application period for such grants will be opened; if all schools meeting the criteria that apply are likely to receive funding in the next couple of months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19168/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Schools were invited to apply for funding for identified water conservation measures as part of the Summer Works Scheme 2010. As the Deputy will be probably be aware, I announced details of the successful applicants under the Summer Works Scheme on 19 April last.

Applications for funds for water conservation measures are currently with my Department for assessment and I hope to announce details of the successful applicants later this year.

Grant Payments

398. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the circumstances and the criteria whereby an application for maintenance grant for the 2009-2010 academic year can be re-assessed when there has been an adverse change in reckonable income since the application was first lodged; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19170/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The means test for an application under the student grant schemes is normally based on income in the last full financial year. Therefore, eligibility for a student grant for the academic year 2009/10 will be assessed on income from the 2008 financial year.

However, if there has been a permanent change of circumstances at any time during the period 1st of January 2009 to the last term of the 2009/10 academic year which may affect reckonable income, then eligibility for the grant may be re-assessed to reflect those changed circumstances.

Where a dependent student's parent experiences a permanent change in income level, for example, through a reduction in working hours or unemployment, then they may apply to their local authority or VEC to have their eligibility for a grant assessed on the basis of the new income level.

An Coimisiún um Chóiríocht Scoile

399. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** den Tánaiste agus Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén uair go díreach a bheas an Coimisiún um Chóiríocht Scoile ag tuairisciú di maidir leis an mbreithniú ar nósanna imeachta nua a bhaineann le bunscoileanna nua a bhunú; an gcuirfear teanga na scoile san áireamh go dearfach sna nósanna imeachta nua seo do bhunú bunscoileanna nua i gcomhthéacs Bhunreacht na hÉireann, ráiteas an Rialtais i leith na Gaeilge 2006, agus ghealltanais an Chomhchoiste Dála um Ghnóthaí Ealaíon, Spóirt, Turasóireachta, Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta go leanfaí leis an tacaíocht do scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [19198/10]

400. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** den Tánaiste agus Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén fáth nár tugadh aitheantas do Ghaelscoil Ráth Tó i Meán Fómhair 2010 nuair

[Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin.]

nach bhfuil sé de chumas ag na scoileanna atá sa cheantar cheana féin i limistéar Ráth Tó, limistéar a aithníodh lena leathnú de réir critéir Rannóg Pleanála Chun Cinn na Roinne Oideachais agus Scileanna, freastal a dhéanamh ar mhian Bhunreachtúil na dtuismitheoirí mar phríomhoideachasóirí a bpáistí, chun oideachas lánGhaeilge a sholáthar dá bpáistí; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [19199/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Tá sé ar intinn agam Ceisteanna Uimh. 399 agus 400, a fhreagairt le chéile.

Tá an Coimisiún um Chóiríocht Scoileanna chun tuairisc a chur faoi mo bhráid go gairid maidir leis an athbhreithniú ar na nósanna imeachta do bhunscoileanna a bhunú. I measc na gceisteanna atá faoi chaibidil mar chuid den athbhreithniú tá tábhacht na Gaeilge, ceist na héagsúlachta agus an chaoi ina bhfuil an Ghaeilge ina bealach chun éagsúlacht a chur ar fáil. Tar éis don tuairisc a bheith ullmhaithe beidh orm ceisteanna polasaí agus socrúithe riachtana-cha a bhreithniú agus a chinneadh céard iad na nósanna imeachta úra a bheidh le cur ar bun. Breithneofar sa chomhthéacs seo caomhnú agus cur chun cinn na Gaeilge trí Ghaelscoileanna a bhunú. Is féidir liom a dheimhniú don Teachta go bhfuil ról maighdeogach le himirt ag an mbunscolaíocht i gcaomhnú agus i leathnú na céad teanga oifigiúla. Bhí cur chun cinn na Gaeilge ina haidhm mhór ariamh ag Rialtais na hÉireann i ndiaidh a chéile agus cosnaíodh i gcónaí a hionad sa chóras oideachais. Comhartha air seo an chaoi inar aithníodh líon suntasach Gaelscoileanna nua le blianta beaga anuas — 17 ar fad ó 2005 i leith.

Tá staidéar ar an dtír déanta ag Rannóg Pleanála Chun Cinn mo Roinnse chun a fháil amach céard iad na ceantair ina bhféadfadh gá a bheith le cuid mhaith cóiríocht breise de bharr athruithe deimeagrafacha insna blianta amach romhainn. I ndiaidh na mionanailíse seo ba léir gur den chríonnacht é pleanáil chun scoileanna nua a bhunú a thosnódh ag obair i Meán Fómhair 2010 chun freastal ar an éileamh méadaitheach i gceantair shainaitheanta áirithe. Rinneadh pléanna mionsonraithe i rith 2009 leis na pátrúin go léir maidir leis na ceantair a bhí faoi chaibidil. Maidir leis an gcuid is mó de na ceantair seo ba é tuairim ghluaiseacht na nGaelscoileanna nár leor an t-éileamh breise ar sholáthar trí Ghaeilge chun bunú Gaelscoile nua a bharántú.

Rinneadh iarratas sainiúil ar Ghaelscoil nua a bhunú i Ráth Tó, Co na Mí. Ach tar éis anailíse mionsonraithe ar an méadú ar líon na ndaltaí i Meán Fómhair i mbliana agus ar chumas na scoileanna atá ann cheana, ba léir nár ghá scoil nua a bhunú chun riar ar an bhfás deimeagrafach. Bhí mo Roinnse deimhin de gur féidir leis na scoileanna atá ann riar ar an méadú réamheasta deimeagrafach i Meán Fómhair 2010. Athbhreithneofar an cás seo roimh Meán Fómhair 2011 i bhfianaise na riachtanas agus na bpléanna leis na comhlachtaí pátrúnachta.

School Staffing

401. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No 420 of 5 May 2010 the number of such teachers allocated to national schools by patron, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19206/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): In the current school year, there are over 1,180 EAL teachers (English as an additional language) at primary level. The level of detail sought by the Deputy in respect of each individual school would take some time to collate within my Department. As I have previously indicated to the Deputy my Department's Teacher Allocation Section is currently focused on the initial work for the allo-

cation of staffing for the coming school year and I do not propose to divert them from this work at this key time in the allocation process.

Departmental Correspondence

402. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if her attention has been drawn to correspondence from a person (details supplied) in Dublin 12; when she proposes to reply; the reason for the delay in replying; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19217/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I am aware of the correspondence to which the Deputy refers and can confirm that a letter has recently issued to the person involved. The delay in responding is regretted.

Special Educational Needs

403. **Deputy Charlie O'Connor** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the discussions she has had with a school (details supplied) in Dublin 24 in respect of special needs assistants; if her attention has been drawn to the concerns of the wider community in this matter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19218/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is an independent agency with responsibility for determining the appropriate staffing levels in relation to the support of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream and special schools. The NCSE operates within my Department's policy in allocating this support.

The Deputy will also be aware that the NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOS), is at present carrying out a review of Special Needs Assistants (SNA) allocations in all schools with a view to ensuring that the criteria governing the allocation of such posts are properly met. This is an exercise in identifying surplus posts which are in the system and which do not meet the current criteria — posts that have been retained when a pupil's care needs have diminished or where the pupil has left.

In the case of the school in question, the NCSE is committed to engaging with the school authorities and all other relevant State agencies to manage the situation in the short term and to ensure a sound basis for staff levels in the interest of pupils. This process is ongoing and the NCSE is working constructively with the school authorities to resolve any outstanding matters. The Deputy will appreciate that it is not appropriate for me to intervene in the allocation process. Without prejudice to the NCSE's allocation role, Senior Officials from my Department met with the school and parent representatives to establish what additional assistance they might provide to the school.

I am sure that the Deputy shares my concern to ensure that there is a consistent application of policy in relation to the allocation of special needs supports across the country. I can assure the Deputy that supports will continue to be made available to schools which have enrolled pupils who qualify for such support and children with special educational needs will continue to have access to an appropriate education in line with my Department's policy.

Schools Building Projects

404. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application to the primary school building unit by a school (details supplied) in County Roscommon; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19343/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The school to which the Deputy refers applied to my Department for capital funding for an extension project in September 2006.

The application has been assessed in accordance with published prioritisation criteria for large scale projects and assigned a band 3 rating.

Information in respect of the current school building programme along with all assessed applications for major capital works, including the project referred to by the Deputy, are now available on the Department's website at www.education.ie.

The priority attaching to individual projects is determined by published prioritisation criteria, which were formulated following consultation with the Education Partners. There are four band ratings under these criteria, each of which describes the extent of accommodation required and the urgency attaching to it. Band 1 is the highest priority rating and Band 4 is the lowest. Documents explaining the band rating system are also available on the Department's website.

The progression of all large scale building projects, including this project, from initial design stage through to construction will be considered in the context of the school building and modernisation programme. However, in view of the level of demand on the Department's capital budget, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression the project at this time.