

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].

Question Nos. 1 to 16, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 17 to 86, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 87 to 95, inclusive, answered orally.

Milk Supply

95. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views regarding reports of farmers who are supplying the liquid milk trade losing money due to pressure from the multiples; the action he will take to deal with this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48275/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Prices paid for products in the marketplace are a function of a number of market forces and the negotiation of commercial contracts is essentially a matter for the contracting parties.

The National Milk Agency, which operates under the aegis of my Department, was set up in 1994 to regulate the supply of milk for liquid consumption. All farmers supplying milk for liquid consumption in the winter months do so under contracts with processors which must be registered with the Agency. The Agency does not have a role in setting the retail price of milk but farmers supplying milk in the winter months are paid a premium over the price paid to farmers who only produce milk in the spring-autumn period. This premium reflects the additional costs of producing milk in the winter months.

The Programme for Government contains a specific commitment to enact fair trade legislation in the retail sector so as to ensure balance between various players in the grocery goods sector. This comes under the remit of the Minister for Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation. I understand that legislation is currently being prepared by the Office of the Parliamentary Draftsman, at the request of his Department, to allow for the introduction of a statutory Code of Practice to regulate particular practices in the grocery trade.

At EU level I understand that the high level group on better functioning of the Food Supply Chain has asked the Expert Business to Business Platform to make recommendations on a Community wide approach. The Platform has drafted guidelines of good practice but has not yet reached agreement on implementation. Discussions are continuing.

Coillte Teoranta Reports

96. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine as the main shareholder of Coillte Ireland, if he will indicate a timeline for publication of the geographical survey carried out on Coillte lands in 1989. [47689/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In the first instance, I wish to advise the Deputy that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform is actually the main shareholder in Coillte Teoranta. However, while I hold a lesser number of shares, there are a number of powers assigned to me under the Forestry Act 1988 under which Coillte Teoranta was established.

Coillte Teoranta, which was established as a private commercial company under the Forestry Act 1988, came into operation on 1 January 1989 at which time certain State lands totaling 396,000 hectares were vested in the Company in accordance with the Act. Coillte's Annual Report and Accounts 1989, which were published following its AGM for that year, includes a map of Ireland showing the distribution of forests and also includes a summary by region. There is no record of a geological survey carried out by Coillte at this time.

Coillte has acquired land since its establishment and now manages an estate of some 442,000 hectares. For this reason, if the Deputy is seeking to ascertain the current geographical spread or location of Coillte forests, I understand that such information is published in the Company's District Strategic Plans, which are accessible on the Company's website, while a breakdown by County may be made available on request to the company itself. This would give the Deputy the current situation and is already in the public domain.

Horse Racing Industry Funding

97. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the future funding of the horse racing industry, the need for a multi annual solution that would provide some stability for the industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48405/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Earlier this year I commissioned Indecon Consultants to undertake a Review into certain aspects of the Irish Horse Racing Industry. Indecon considered *inter alia* legislation, governance structures, funding and management of the horse racing industry in Ireland. Regarding funding the Report resulting from the Indecon study supports additional and sustainable funding for the development of the sector but states that this must be accompanied by an equal priority to maximise efficiency, effectiveness and value for money. In this context it identifies a number of areas to be addressed and recommends the introduction of measures to secure a significant increase in taxation from the Betting Sector and the creation of a level playing field between retail and remote off-course bookmakers and betting exchanges; a reduction in the size of the HRI Board and changes to the nomination and appointment processes; changes to the Committee structure of the Board; streamlining of functions between HRI & the Turf Club; new arrangements to address marketing and competitiveness.

I have indicated my general acceptance of the recommendations contained in the Indecon Report and I have confirmed my intention to bring forward legislative changes, where necessary, to implement the recommendations and update horse racing legislation.

Having considered the Indecon Report I have asked the Turf Club and HRI to immediately establish a Joint HRI/Turf Club Implementation Task Force, to address the opportunities for integration of functions, including shared services, with a view to achieving greater efficiencies

and to achieve a minimum of 10% reduction in costs as identified in the report. This is a critical pre-requisite to future funding for the industry.

On funding generally the Minister for Finance has published the Betting (Amendment) Bill 2012 which when enacted will ensure that all bookmakers taking bets from Ireland will pay 1% betting duty on those bets in the same way that betting shops currently do. Betting Exchanges will also be subject to tax under the new arrangements but the calculation of the tax will differ from that applying to bookmakers. This measure will increase the yield to the Exchequer from betting.

On the specific allocation to the horse racing industry Indecon also recommended a multi-annual commitment and this is matter I am considering having regard to the current economic conditions and the general budgetary position.

Farm Partnerships

98. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if progress has been made on broadening farm partnerships beyond solely dairy partnerships; the options open to those who operate enterprises other than dairy who wish to form a recognised farm partnership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48379/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Farmers, in common with business operators in other sectors, are at liberty to enter into partnership agreements establishing collaborative arrangements for farming or other activities. Such arrangements are governed by the Partnership Act of 1890. In addition, under the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, individual partnerships are given tax reference numbers and a precedent partner is identified for the purposes of assigning responsibility for the preparation and delivery to the Revenue Commissioners of a return of partnership income and gains.

A variety of business models, including collaborative arrangements such as partnership and share farming are available to farmers in all sectors, though not in a manner which requires formal registration of the farm partnership.

However, in the dairy sector, specific formalized arrangements for the registration of dairy production partnerships were established under the Milk Quota Regulations, in the context of providing access to milk quota for partnerships under the Milk Quota Trading Scheme. These regulations will be repealed upon the demise of milk quotas in 2015.

I am supportive of partnership and other collaborative arrangements between farmers which can help to address a variety of issues such as scale, land and capital equipment availability, sharing of skills and rural isolation. Equally, I recognize that there may be cultural and other barriers to formalised collaboration arrangements at farm level in Ireland.

With this in mind, and as a temporary stimulus to assist in the development of the partnership model, I announced in the context of last year's budget, a stock relief measure intended, subject to EU State Aid approval being obtained, to be available to registered farm partnerships. At present, and for the historical reasons already explained, the only formalised registration vehicle for farm partnerships is that available under the Milk Quota Regulations.

Against the general background described above, I am at present considering the question of establishing a formalised mechanism for recognizing farm partnerships, and in that context seeking to identify a basis in primary legislation for such registration. While deliberations on this matter have not yet concluded, I expect to be in a position to make a decision on the matter

in the near future.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Application Numbers

99. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the cost of a new suckler cow welfare scheme for 2013 based on the same rates of payment that currently operate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48252/12]

104. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in the current suckler cow welfare scheme that have herds of 10 or less cows, of between 20 and 11 cows, of between 30 and 21 cows and between 40 and 31 cows and of between 60 and 41 cows and greater than 60 cows; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48254/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 99 and 104 together.

The Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme is a five-year Scheme for beef animals born during the period, which commenced on 1 January 2008 and will end on 31 December 2012. The primary objectives of the Scheme was to improve welfare standards in the sector and to assist in the establishment of a breeding database from which suckler farmers could identify the best breeding stock for their particular requirements.

The tabular statement below illustrates the number of participants in the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme in a range of herd sizes.

Herd size(cows)	Number of herds
1-10	10,471
11-20	11,359
21-30	6,296
31-40	3,157
41-60	2,407
>60	1,177
Total	34,867

It can be seen from the table that the majority of the Suckler farmers are small holdings with herds of less than 20 animals.

A Value for Money Review on the operation of the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme was undertaken in 2011. This was done in accordance with the Department of Finance Value for Money and Policy Review guidelines. This review found that the Scheme has been successful in meeting its objectives and some of its main findings can be summarised as follows:

- The Scheme has largely met its original objectives in terms of bringing about improvements in animal welfare, collection of breeding data and ultimately achieving improved competitiveness within the Irish beef sector;

- The animal welfare measures have directly contributed to improved prices for weanlings and improved reputation for Irish beef and live exports in key markets while also having a significant attitudinal and behavioural change by suckler farmers with regard to animal welfare;

- Significant improvements have been achieved in the collection and processing of the

breeding data submitted under the Scheme;

- The Steering Group believed that the Suckler Scheme succeeded in advancing and improving management and animal husbandry practices on suckler farms but that it was appropriate to assess whether continued public funding was justified.

Part of this audit included surveys of, and presentations by, various interested bodies including the farming organisations and exporters and the conclusions were that the Scheme was extremely beneficial and was a significant contributor to the increased level of live exports in recent years. The future viability of this country's beef industry depends on our ability to produce the highest quality beef animals using the highest standards of animal welfare and husbandry. Ireland is now well placed to exploit the marketing advantage that this scheme presents when selling beef into the European and further markets.

Payments will continue to be made under this Scheme on 2012 born calves and those born in earlier years at current rates as they become eligible for payment. Any decision in relation to the future will be considered during the forthcoming budgetary process.

Harbours and Piers Expenditure

100. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the spend to date in 2012 on marine works allocated funding by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48273/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is responsible for the administration of the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Capital Development Programme which provides funding for works at the six Fishery Harbour Centres on an annual basis and in addition, where exchequer funds allow, funding is made available to Local Authority owned piers and harbours.

A budget of €6 million was allocated to the 2012 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme. The projects approved under the programme are in respect of works at the six Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Howth, Killybegs, Ros an Mhíl, Dingle, Castletownbere and Dunmore East as well as several Local Authority owned piers and harbours.

It is anticipated that the full budget for this programme will be expended by year end.

Common Agricultural Policy Negotiations

101. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on whether the agri-food sector here and throughout the EU will receive the required ongoing support through the common agricultural policy with particular reference to the need to maximise food production potential here and throughout the EU; if he expects this country's position as a major food producer to be enhanced in the course of such negotiations with specific reference to maximising job opportunities and contributing to economic recovery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47687/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The outcome of negotiations on reform of the Common Agricultural policy will set the context and part of the policy framework for the future development of the agri-food sector in Ireland and across the EU. In that connection, I welcome the three key principles underpinning the EU Commission's proposals for reform of the CAP which are to preserve food production potential in the EU, to

ensure sustainable management of natural resources and to maintain viable rural areas. I am satisfied that adherence to these principles will ensure the viability and future development of the food industry in Ireland and throughout Europe.

My own view is that food security in the European Union is the essence of what the new Common Agricultural Policy is about. Growing populations and increasing demand for protein-based foods, which is what we predominantly produce in Ireland through the dairy and meat industries, present a significant opportunity not only to continue, as the EU has been, to promote a sustainable way of producing food from an environmental and climate point of view but also to produce greater volumes of food. I will continue to make the case for sustainable intensification of food production, which is what agriculture should be all about.

Of course, a strong CAP is contingent on securing an adequate budget to deliver the objectives of that policy. In this regard, the negotiations to determine the budget for the CAP from 2014 to 2020 are part of wider negotiations that will decide the multiannual financial framework, or MFF, for the EU budget for the period from 2014 to 2020. These negotiations are being conducted under the auspices of the EU General Affairs Council, attended by the Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade. Ultimately decisions on the MFF will be taken by EU Heads of State and Government. A special meeting of the European Council has been scheduled for November 2012 for this purpose.

The overriding national priority is to safeguard CAP funding to the maximum extent possible, having regard to the reality that CAP accounts for over 80% of Ireland's total receipts of EU funding, equivalent to about €12 billion over the 2007-2013 period. We will continue to strongly defend our proposed allocation in the negotiations. This is a whole of Government position.

Fishing Industry Development

102. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he intends publishing a policy on the development of the inshore fishing industry for coastal and island communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48270/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am conscious of the economic potential of the inshore fisheries sector to grow and make an increased contribution to employment and economic growth in peripheral coastal and island communities. Already, many shellfish species make a valuable contribution to our exports, either through direct export or as essential raw material for added-value seafood products. Sustainably managed, there is much potential to grow landings in these fisheries.

However, in light of the judgment of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) against Ireland concerning non-compliance with the EU Habitats and Birds Directives, my overriding policy priority for the inshore sector must be to bring all inshore fisheries, and aquaculture, in Natura 2000 sites into full compliance with those Directives. Any wider policy initiatives for the inshore sector must take account of this policy priority and the associated legal constraints these Directives and the ECJ judgement impose in terms of putting in place new licensing or management arrangements for inshore stocks within or adjacent to Natura 2000 sites, in advance of the completion of the necessary environmental assessments under article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

My Department continues to work closely with BIM, the Marine Institute and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and other stakeholders to manage inshore fisheries generally and

measures are implemented within the constraints of the ECJ judgement to protect the stock.

Much of our coastline is affected by the designation of many bays and estuaries as Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive or Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive, collectively known as Natura 2000 sites. Article 6 of the Habitats Directive applies to all such sites and serves to prevent the introduction of plans or policies for fisheries in those sites which would involve licensing of fishermen or certain other planned management arrangements for those sites, unless an environmental assessment under that Directive has first been conducted and has discounted any significant impact on the protected habitat or species. The completion of Habitats Directive assessments for the in excess of 90 sites around our coastline is a significant undertaking that must be conducted in a systematic manner, informed by detailed scientific surveys and impact assessments on a site by site basis.

My Department has been engaged in a major multi annual project to deliver full compliance with the Directives for all marine Natura 2000 sites and is working closely with its agencies and the National Parks and Wildlife Service on this task. A substantial body of scientific data and analysis has been generated over the past number of years to inform the assessments. The project is now focused on the roll-out of the bay by bay environmental assessments required under the Directives and implementation of any consequent management measures arising.

Three comprehensive assessments have been completed, in respect of Castlemaine Harbour County Kerry, Dundalk Bay County Louth and Roaring Water Bay County Cork. Work is at an advanced stage in respect of Lough Swilly County Donegal and Clew Bay County Mayo, among others, and this process will continue throughout 2012 and into next year in respect of these and other sites.

Common Agricultural Policy Negotiations

103. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his policy in relation to the less severely handicapped areas under the proposed new common agricultural policy; if he will confirm that if these areas were to be reduced it would mean a loss of finance to Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48248/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The future system of payments to farmers in disadvantaged areas forms part of the wider negotiations on the reform of the common agricultural policy. Under the Commission's proposal, Less Favoured Areas – known as Disadvantaged Areas in Ireland – will become known as Areas facing natural or specific constraints, or ANCs. Designation of the ANC areas is proposed to be determined by 8 soil and climatic criteria. These are grouped under four headings of climate, climate and soil together, soil and terrain. They include low temperature, dryness, excess soil moisture, limited soil drainage, unfavourable texture and stoniness, shallow rooting depth, poor chemical properties and slope.

This is a very important issue for Ireland as the total area designated as disadvantaged is almost 75% of Ireland's total land area. From an economic perspective the Less Favoured Areas Scheme is particularly significant, contributing to the support of in excess of 100,000 Irish farm families, whose ability to farm is restricted by the physical environment, in particular, the impact of the prevailing wet cold climatic conditions in Ireland.

At EU level, in overall terms, I consider that the Commission's proposals of using biophysical criteria as laudable, but I believe there is a need to broaden the scope of the proposed criteria and to give Member States more flexibility in designating areas. My Department has

conducted extensive analysis of the impact of using the eight criteria. The results show that whilst there is not a major shift in the total area designated in Ireland there is a considerable change within the totality - areas not previously designated now included with other designated area excluded, and in some cases the designation is very difficult to justify. I can assure the Deputy, however, that I am seeking additional flexibility in the designation process and in the timeline for implementation of any changes to ensure that there are no abrupt or significant alterations to the conditions of the current scheme.

Of course the level of these payments in Ireland will also be informed by the decisions taken on the next multi-annual financial framework for the EU budget. The funding for the second pillar of the CAP, which includes provision for these payments, falls to be decided by Heads of State and Government as part of the MFF negotiations. A special meeting of the European Council is scheduled for 22 and 23 November for this purpose.

Question No. 104 answered with Question No. 99.

Rural Development Programme Funding

105. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total allocation to Ireland under the rural development programme 2007 to 2013 broken down measure by measure; the expenditure to date; his views on whether the full allocation will be spent under each measure; the implications for the programme and the common agricultural policy in Ireland if any measure fails to spend its allocation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48260/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Since the launch of the Rural Development Programme 2007 - 2013 [RDP] expenditure under the programme to 15 October 2012 amounts to €3.5bn. This represents close on 73% of the total value of the Programme which is €4.8bn. Axes 1 and 2 of the Rural Development Programme are administered by my Department while Axes 3 and 4 are delivered by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. A broadband measure comes under the remit of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. Details of the allocation and expenditure per measure under the RDP up to 15 October 2012 are set out in the table below. This table does not include funds already committed but not as yet claimed.

The programme, like all national spending, is subject to ongoing budgetary constraints but is configured to maximise all available EU funding. Ireland's draw down rate under the Programme has been among the highest of EU Member States over the lifetime of the current Programme. As is the case with the Programmes of other Member States, expenditure has not been entirely consistent across the measures and this has been due both to the more long term nature of some of the measures and to the prevailing economic situation. Spending under a number of measures may continue until the end of 2015 and this will provide considerable scope to allow all measures to spend up to their full allocation.

Full draw down of available EU funds is a major priority. Any review of expenditure under the programme must take account of the Axis balance which requires spending over the Axes in the proportions of 10:80:10 under the RDP. Adjustments have already been made to the RDP Financial Plan and will continue to be made to the end of the Programme in order to achieve the fullest possible draw down of available funds.

Questions - Written Answers

Axis / Measure	Measure - Code	RDP - Allocation - €m	Expenditure 2007 – 15 October 2012 - €m
AXIS 1 – COMPETITIVENESS	-	-	-
Vocational training (REPS)	111	5.7	6.6
Installation aid	112	12.3	12.9
Early retirement	113	219.2	208.6
Farm Modernisation	121	154.6	74.0
TOTAL AXIS 1		391.8	302.1

Axis 2 – Environment and Land Management

Axis / Measure	Measure - Code	RDP - Allocation - €m	Expenditure 2007 – 15 October 2012 - €m
Less Favoured Areas	212	1,617.9	1,255.6
Natura 2000	213	528.5	69.2
Agri-environment	214	1922.5	1,784.4
TOTAL AXIS 2		4,068.9	3,073.2

Axis 3

Axis / Measure	Measure - Code	RDP - Allocation - €m	Expenditure 2007 – 15 October 2012 - €m
Broadband	321	17.8	0
TOTAL AXIS 3		17.8	0

Axis 4

Axis / Measure	Measure - Code	RDP - Allocation - €m	Expenditure 2007 – 15 October 2012 - €m
Competitiveness – under Measure 123 for Food Projects.	411	5.0	0
Implementing Local Development Strategies – Quality of Life	413	265.5	95.3
Co-operation Projects	421	7.8	1.5
Running of LAGS	431	62.5	46.5
TOTAL AXIS 4		340.8	143.3

Axis 5 – Technical Assistance

Axis / Measure	Measure - Code	RDP - Allocation - €m	Expenditure 2007 – 15 October 2012 - €m
Technical Assistance		6.0	1.2
OVERALL RDP		4,825.3	3,519.8

Plean Teanga

106. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén uair a aontaíodh an plean teanga reatha atá ag a Roinn leis an Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gael-tachta; cén uair a bheidh plean nua le réiteach bunaithe ar fhorálacha Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [48269/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Seoladh Scéim Ghaeilge mo Roinne i mí na Nollag 2006. Tá plean nua á ullmhú lena chur i bhfeidhm in 2013.

Severe Weather Events

107. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the effect the bad weather of 2012 has had on the potato and horticultural industry; the steps he proposes to take to assist the industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48276/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): 2012 was a very difficult year for the production of potato and horticultural crops. The very wet weather during the summer months led to significantly reduced yields and poorer quality. The effects of this will continue through into 2013. The poor weather also led to higher disease pressures and higher costs.

In relation to vegetables, there were also negative impacts on the planting of certain crops.

The lower yields were offset to some extent by higher prices as the wet weather also affected producers across Western Europe. This was particularly so in the case of potatoes where prices have been more than double those of 2011.

Assistance for the industry

Unfortunately, the EU Commission does not provide funding to compensate for losses that arise due to the adverse weather conditions experienced this summer and due to the financial crisis the Irish Exchequer is not in a position to assist either.

However my Department expects to provide over €3m in grant aid directly to horticultural growers this year to assist development of the industry under the Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector. This competitive grant aid scheme, which covers all areas of the horticultural industry, is 100% State funded under the National Development Plan (2007-2013).

My Department and the other State agencies will continue to work with potato growers and the horticultural industry to ensure the long-term viability of both sectors.

Milk Quota Cessation

108. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views regarding the impact that the end of the milk quota system in 2014 may have on Ireland's climate policy should the dairy industry expand significantly and the follow on effect of an increase in emissions; the studies being undertaken in his Department to examine same; if he will be making an input into the forthcoming Climate Change Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47408/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Both the Irish dairy sector and market analysts have regarded the milk quota regime as a brake on the potential of the Irish dairy sector to respond positively to opportunities in the market.

With the abolition of milk quotas on the 1st of April 2015, I expect the Irish dairy sector to expand significantly in the years ahead, with output driven by global demand and with significant potential for associated job creation. The Food Harvest 2020 (FH2020) report set out an ambitious target for a 50% increase in milk production by 2020, compared to a 2007-2009 reference period.

The roots of this potential for increased production lie in the unrivalled natural advantage Ireland possesses in the form of a grass-based production system. This allows us to produce dairy products of the highest quality in an environmentally friendly manner and on a highly cost efficient basis, to meet global demand which is growing as a result of increasing population and purchasing power in developing economies.

The low carbon intensity of the Irish dairy sector is recognised by a number of important international reports which show Ireland to be among the most carbon efficient food producers in the world.

In 2011, an EU Commission Joint Research Centre study found Irish milk, pork and poultry products to have the lowest carbon footprint in the EU on a per unit of production basis. By factoring in future cost beneficial mitigation measures relative to increased production, the projected rise in agricultural output will represent a further improvement in the already efficient carbon intensity of agricultural production on a per unit basis.

In addition, a 2010 FAO report indicates that the grass based livestock production systems that form the cornerstone of Irish agriculture are already highly carbon-efficient and are associated with a low carbon footprint for livestock produce.

In April 2012, as part of the National Climate Policy Development Consultation, Teagasc published its Marginal Abatement Cost Curve for Irish Agriculture analysis. The report was prepared by Teagasc's working group on greenhouse gas emissions which integrates the extensive and diverse range of organisational expertise in research and practice associated with greenhouse gases. The analysis was conducted within the context of FH2020, which assumes that the 50% growth in the dairy sector will be achieved by a combination of 25% growth in cow numbers and 25% increase in yield.

Without mitigation, under a FH2020 scenario, the historical downward trend in agricultural greenhouse gas emissions is projected to reverse due to the growth in economic activity in this sector. In the absence of abatement measures, this report estimates that, by 2020, emissions are projected to increase by approximately 7% compared to the 2010 level. This increase is not substantial in comparison to the projected rise in agricultural output, due to ongoing gains in production efficiency and reductions in the carbon-footprint (greenhouse gas emissions per unit produced) of agricultural produce. Therefore, these figures would still represent a further improvement in the already efficient carbon intensity of Irish agricultural production.

However, it is estimated that mitigation measures have the potential to achieve reductions in reported agricultural emissions of 5.5% relative to the FH2020 reference scenario in 2020. Notwithstanding the planned increase in production, this would represent a 4.5% reduction compared to the reported agricultural emissions in 2005, which is the EU Effort Sharing reference year. These measures would include activities such as extended grazing, improved breeding index and efficient use of nitrogen.

It is important to note that a Marginal Abatement Cost Curve cannot remain static, nor should it be interpreted as definitive. This is because the potential for greenhouse gas abatement, as well as the associated costs and benefits, are likely to change over time as ongoing research programmes deliver new mitigation measures, or as socio-economic or agronomic conditions evolve. Therefore, the Teagasc report should be interpreted as the first outcome of an iterative process. Developments in the science of greenhouse gas abatement and in the market conditions faced by Irish agriculture will continue to shape analysis into the future.

In this context the Department will continue to support research and innovation to underpin the sustainable growth of the agri-food sector. The Greenhouse Gas Initiative for Ireland, a research network funded recently under my Department's Stimulus Programme, is particularly relevant in this regard.

In November 2011 my Department also invited proposals from independent external consultants to undertake an analysis and report on the likely environmental impacts of the achievement of the Food Harvest 2020 targets. Consultants were appointed in April 2012 and a final report is expected in early 2013. The possible impact on greenhouse gas levels is one of the areas under examination as part of the analysis.

As regards the forthcoming Climate Change Bill I will, of course, be working closely with my colleague Minister Hogan and others in formulating this important legislation, taking into account all of the available data.

Ash Dieback Threat

109. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the action he is taking to prevent the disease *Chalara Fraxinea* fungus affecting ash trees here; if he will confirm the total amount of ash imported each year; the inspections his Department carry out at the port of entry as prevention measurements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47232/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The disease *Chalara fraxinea* or ash dieback poses a very real threat to ash trees throughout Ireland and indeed to those industries which rely on that species for their business - most notably hurley manufacture. A total of 3% of the national forest estate is under ash and 10% of all new planting is currently made up of this important native species. The disease itself is relatively new and is caused by the fungal pathogen *Chalara fraxinea* which was first described in 2006. The precise origin of the disease remains uncertain and its biology is not yet fully understood. It has spread rapidly across much of Europe, with the majority of European countries where ash is present now reporting dieback.

Ash plants and ash wood with bark imported from countries where the disease is known to occur represents the most likely source of infection in Ireland. Approximately 200,000 ash plants and over 1000 cubic metres of round wood ash for hurley manufacture are imported per annum. Firewood data is not currently broken down by on a species by species basis.

The Department has been actively monitoring for occurrences of this disease since 2008 by carrying out site surveys to establish the status of *Chalara fraxinea* in the country and by carrying out examinations of ash imports at ports, importers premises, nurseries and planting sites. Since 2008 suspect samples have been sent for laboratory analysis but up to recently all results were negative. Last month, a suspect case of *Chalara fraxinea* was identified in Co. Leitrim which, following molecular testing was confirmed on the 12th October as Ireland's

first instance of the disease. The site itself which was established in 2009, and was planted using material from a consignment of saplings imported from continental Europe. Some 31,000 individual ash trees made up this consignment which was used in 11 separate sites throughout the country. Ash trees planted on the 11 sites in question have been cleared and destroyed. This involved the removal and burning of some 31,000 trees from the imported consignment (and several thousand adjoining trees) which was carried out rapidly with the cooperation of forest owners and contractors. Results from laboratory analysis received yesterday (5th November) confirm that while most of this consignment distributed to other sites had no symptoms, in four of the sites the disease was present on a very small number of trees. This confirms the Department's use of a precautionary approach in destroying the entire consignment in all 11 sites.

I have introduced legislation banning the import of ash plants from countries or parts of countries known to have the disease. This Statutory Instrument came into effect from the 26th October 2012 and in Northern Ireland equivalent measures were also simultaneously introduced. Additional legislative measures are also being introduced today in relation to wood in co-operation with the authorities in Northern Ireland.

Teagasc Rationalisation Programme

110. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide an update on the proposed reorganisation of Teagasc; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47633/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Teagasc has statutory responsibility to provide education, advisory and research services to the agriculture sector. Programmes and services are developed with clients and partners overseen by an Authority that is representative of the main agriculture stakeholder groups. It is a matter for Teagasc to prioritise activities in the delivery of services and to allocate resources in accordance with these priorities. Ministerial responsibility is confined to matters of policy in accordance with the Act and the Minister does not interfere in the day to day operations of Teagasc.

In 2009, Teagasc commenced a major organisational Change Programme to improve efficiencies, streamline services and promote greater integration across the organisation. The Programme involves the disposal of assets, a significant reduction in the number of research and advisory locations, reduction in staff numbers and redeployment of staff. Implementation of the programme is an operational matter for Teagasc.

It has resulted in a slimmed down senior management structure and a new programme structure based around four integrated operational programmes. The network of Teagasc offices around the country is being streamlined from 91 to 51 with 38 offices closed to date. Transfer of staff and activities from Kinsealy Research Centre to Ashtown is also being progressed. There has been significant progress in reducing staff numbers with over 380 permanent and temporary posts cut since 2008 as part of the Government initiative to create a smaller, more integrated public service. As part of this initiative, Teagasc successfully implemented a voluntary early retirement programme in 2011 in which 83 staff exited the organisation. The overall cost of servicing pay and pensions in Teagasc fell by €13m since 2008 while other non-pay costs declined by €11m.

These actions have resulted in Teagasc becoming a leaner, more efficient and focused organisation. Teagasc recognise that this process of change must continue and are committed to implementing further reforms in line with the Croke Park Agreement.

Seirbhísi trí Gaeilge

111. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cé na so-cruithe atá déanta aige chun a chinntiú go bhfuil seirbhísi trí Ghaeilge ar fáil óna Roinn do lucht labhartha na Gaeilge agus go mór mór do phobal na Gaeltachta; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [48268/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Cuireann mo Roinnse seirbhísi i nGaeilge ar fáil i gcónaí i gceantair Ghaeltachta. Is féidir le duine ar bith ar mian leis dul i mbun gnó leis an Roinn i nGaeilge é sin a dhéanamh ach iarratas a dhéanamh. Is i nGaeilge a dhéanann an fhoireann agus custaiméirí i gceantair Ghaeltachta roinnt dá ngnó, nó a gcuid gnó go léir, ar bhun neamhfhoirmiúil. Tá saoráidí fáiltithe i nGaeilge curtha ar bun in oifigí na Roinne nuair is féidir é, do chustaiméirí ar mian leo a gcuid gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge, go háirithe i gceantair Ghaeltachta. Chomh maith leis sin, foilsítear roinnt de príomhfhoilseacháin na Roinne i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge, agus bunaíodh seoladh ríomhphoist Gaeilge tiomanta, (aonadnagaeilge@agriculture.gov.ie) do chustaiméirí a dteastaíonn sé uathu. Tá leagan Gaeilge de láithreán gréasáin na Roinne ar fáil freisin, ar a bhfuil eolas faoi na príomhscéimeanna agus na príomh-sheirbhísi a fheidhmíonn an Roinn.

Common Agricultural Policy Reform

112. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the proposals that have been published by the EU Commission in relation to pillar 2 of the common agricultural policy; if proposals have not been published the dates on which he expects to publish same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48256/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Commission published its proposals for pillar 2 of the Common Agricultural Policy in October of last year as part of a package of seven legislative proposals for reform of the CAP after 2013. These proposals are linked to the EU 2020 Strategy and have three objectives of competitiveness, sustainable management of natural resources and wider rural economy, as under the current round. These objectives are to be met through 6 priorities of knowledge transfer, competitiveness, food chain organisation and risk management, preserving ecosystems, promoting resource efficiency and low carbon economy and realising jobs potential and development of rural areas.

Many of the proposed measures are similar to those in the current round. However there are new measures proposed for farm and business development, aimed at young farmers and small businesses and for cooperation, aimed at farm partnership type arrangements. Other new options include support for producer groups, organic farming and insurance premia and mutual funds to compensate farmers. Less Favoured Areas will become known as areas facing natural or other specific constraints and significant changes are proposed to this measure.

The axis balance provisions in the current programme are no longer a requirement and former Axis 3 measures now comprise one measure for basic services and village renewal in rural areas

A single co funding rate of 50% is envisaged but certain measures relating to knowledge transfer, producer groups, co operation and young farmers set up may be co funded at the rate of 80%. A specific provision is made for Leader funding (at least 5%) and Agri-Environment-Climate, Organic farming and Areas of Natural Constraint (at least 25%). A 100% co funding rate is envisaged for innovation projects.

The draft regulation proposes that funds will be distributed between Member States on the basis of objective criteria and past performance. However, the Commission has yet to publish concrete proposals on distribution or to provide full details of the criteria and weightings it is planning to use.

Decisions on funding and co-financing levels for pillar 2 will be taken by Heads of State and Government as part of the multiannual financial framework negotiations for the next EU budget and a special meeting of the European Council has been scheduled for 22/23 November to finalise this.

I have serious concerns that the envisaged use of a combination of past performance and objective criteria to determine distribution of Pillar 2 funds will reduce our allocation. I believe an objective criteria approach cannot provide a solution that will address the concerns of all Member States, and should be abandoned. Allocation of Pillar 2 funds should instead be based on past performance only, as measured over the entire 2007-2013 rural development programming period. Any adjustment beyond that should use the same methodology as the Commission has proposed for Pillar 1.

I am also pressing for Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 funds to be considered together, and for the pragmatic approach being employed for direct payments to be used for rural development too. The latter would be consistent with the complementary nature of the two pillars within one common agricultural policy.

In addition, I believe that no Member State with below-average Pillar 2 payments per hectare should lose in any redistribution, and no Member State should lose under both pillars. Ireland receives lower than average payments per hectare for direct payment and rural development funds combined, and I therefore see no justification for any reduction.

In any event, it is imperative that we see proposals soon from the Commission on Pillar 2 distribution. It is unrealistic to expect Member States to sign up to proposals for the allocation of Pillar 1 funds without knowing the Commission's intentions on the second pillar.

Dairy Equipment Scheme Applications

113. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when processing will commence of all outstanding applications under the dairy equipment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48255/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Dairy Equipment Scheme was introduced by my Department on 4 March 2011 in order to provide grant-aid for the purchase of milking machines and milk cooling equipment. The available grant-aid is 40% up to a maximum eligible investment ceiling of €40,000 for milking machines and €25,000 for cooling equipment. Special incentives are provided for certain Milk Production Partnerships. The indicative allocation for the Scheme in Ireland's Rural Development Programme is €45 million. In view of the high level of demand for grant-aid under the Scheme, I subsequently increased this amount to €49 million by way of the transfer of €4 million from the Rainwater Harvesting Scheme. As the financial allocation for the Scheme is limited, a series of tranches is in place in order to ensure that approvals to commence work can issue to farmers at regular intervals. Selection criteria have also been applied in order to determine those applications which will go forward to the approval process as the Scheme has been over-subscribed since its introduction.

The tranche which closed at end-July 2012 was over-subscribed and the processing of ap-

plications involved the detailed examination of all applications as well as the clarification and resolution of a large number of queries and other issues in correspondence with the applicants. This process is nearing completion and I expect that approvals will issue shortly. In addition, my Department has already commenced work on the applications received during the tranche which closed at end-October 2012. My aim is to ensure that approvals under both tranches will issue as quickly as possible.

Fisheries Offences

114. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to replace the system of criminal sanctions for minor fisheries' offences with a system of administrative sanction to bring Ireland into line with other European jurisdictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47699/12]

130. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the fact that Ireland is the only country in Europe in which one is criminalised for a fishing offence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47698/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 114 and 130 together.

The Programme for Government committed to replacing the criminal sanctions system for minor fisheries offences with administrative sanction system to bring Ireland into line with other European jurisdictions.

I sought the advice of the Attorney General on the matter. The Attorney General has responded with a detailed advice on the issue which I am currently examining. The advice highlights the difficulties in relation to the Constitution and in relation to the laws of the European Community relevant to the question of implementing a system of administrative sanctions for fisheries.

There are many significant differences between the legal systems in Ireland and that of other EU Member States. Ireland's constitutional and legal position provides certain basic rights which must be respected within our system of justice.

Furthermore, European Union legislation requires that penalties for fisheries offences must be "*effective, proportionate and dissuasive*". That is, they must act as a deterrent and they must also ensure that there is no benefit gained by infringing the rules.

Given the nature of the penalties involved, there is a general requirement under the Constitution that alleged breaches of fisheries control regulations must be tried in a court of law. I am continuing to actively examine the issue in the context of the Attorney General's advice in relation to the Programme for Government commitment.

Common Fisheries Policy Negotiations

115. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if as part of the renegotiation of the common fisheries policy he has raised the issue of the allocation of the fishing catch allocated to Ireland, approximately 4% in view of the fact that Ireland owns 18% of the fish resource of the EU; the response from the EU; if he intends pursuing this national interest; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48264/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The main potential benefit of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) system for Irish fishermen is that it provides a system which aspires to the structured and sustainable management of international fishing activity in each of the key areas of interest to Irish fishermen. In addition, it provides stable arrangements for access to the large EU seafood market for the large volume of Irish seafood products which the Irish fishing industry exports to EU markets. There has been traditional dissatisfaction in Ireland with the share of the relevant total allowable catches which Ireland secured at the outset of the CFP.

The share Ireland received of the quotas available at the outset was determined on a system of relative stability, based on historical fishing patterns in the confines of set management areas. That system has continued since and was not changed in the CFP Reform's of 1992 or 2002. There is no support in the Council for a change in the traditional quota allocations in the current Reform and the EU Commission has not proposed any changes.

However, under CFP arrangements agreed in 1976 a system of so called "Hague Preferences" was put in place, under which Ireland gets an enhanced share of certain key quotas on which we were traditionally dependant, if the share falls below certain set levels. The CFP Reform proposals envisage retaining this system in the way that it has operated previously and the retention of this arrangement is a key priority for me.

Securing enhanced fish quotas for Ireland and enhanced fish landings into Ireland however remains as an objective, but must I believe be delivered within the structures in place. For example, over the last two years Ireland has secured, by working within the system, a very significant two thirds share of the new and very large Boarfish Fishery. This fishery which will permit Ireland to catch 56,666 tonnes this year holds the potential to build a large new processing industry in Ireland, developing human consumption seafood products for exports. On my trade mission to China earlier this year I promoted the products from this new fishery to the large Chinese seafood market and Irish processors have already sent over 12 tonnes of boarfish as a commercial trial to a seafood processor in Qingdao. Similarly, on foot of initiatives taken by the Irish pelagic processing industry, this year we saw very large levels of landings of blue whiting into Killybegs for processing from Norwegian vessels. This gave a substantial boost for the Irish Seafood Processing industry generating increased employment in the North West.

The other way of increasing Irish fish catches and landings into Ireland is by growing the stocks on which we are dependant and which are proximate to Ireland. By growing stocks we increase our permitted volumes of landings even within a fixed sharing arrangement. The Quota increases secured in this way in the Celtic Sea this year are clear evidence of the gains that can be secured through this approach. There is much in the CFP Reform, such as long term management of stocks, reducing and eliminating discards and rebuilding stocks to Maximum Sustainable Yield, which holds the potential to substantially increase catches by Irish fishermen in the short and medium term.

One aspect of the CFP Reform Proposals, which I vehemently opposed from the outset, was the proposed system of mandatory transferable fishing concessions, which would have privatised the National Fish Quotas and posed real dangers to Ireland's fishing and processing industries and would have threatened the economic survival of our coastal communities. As part of the intensively negotiated General Approach which was agreed at June Fisheries Council we saw the removal of the mandatory element of this proposal where by each member state will be allowed to manage their fish quotas to take account of their own individual circumstances. We are awaiting the EU Parliament's position on the reform, including in relation to its approach to dealing with quota allocations and individual transferable concessions.

I will prioritise securing final agreement between the EU Fisheries Council and the EU Parliament on the CFP during the Irish Presidency during the first half of 2013.

Sugar Industry

116. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has commissioned a study on the impact that the end of the sugar beet quota system in 2015 may have on our climate policy should the industry be re-established here; the potential it has to provide a domestic biofuel crop; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47407/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Deputy will be aware that in 2011 I met with two separate groups which had conducted feasibility studies, into the possibility of establishing a new sugar/bioethanol facility in the country. At both meetings, I stated that any venture to develop a combined sugar/bioethanol production facility would have to be a commercial proposition, financed in total by investors and interested parties and make sound economic sense in order to be viable. I also further suggested to both groups, the desirability of there being only one single proposition in play, as both studies had indicated a potential for only one such viable project and both groups had appeared to accept the reasonableness of this position at the time.

Only recently, I re-stated that any business plan for a new venture in this area, would need to be competitive and that it would justify the very substantial investment to build a new facility.

I have strongly supported the current EU Commission's proposal to completely abolish sugar quotas from 30 September 2015, as part of the ongoing CAP reform discussions. At each meeting of the EU Council of Agriculture Ministers since October 2011, which has addressed this issue, I have intervened to fully support the Commission proposals for quota abolition. I also raised the issue with EU Agriculture Commissioner, Ciolos during his visit to Ireland in January 2012 and at the time I informed him of the growing momentum here for the revival of the sugar industry.

I also advised the Commissioner that while Ireland supports full quota abolition in 2015, if the regime were to continue beyond that date, Ireland does not want to be deprived, in the interim period of the option to recommence production. I am also aware of a significant number of Member States which wish to see the current sugar quota regime extended to 2017 or 2018. In addition, the European Parliament have clearly stated that they want the regime extended to 2020, so I expect that in the eventual conclusion to these complex reform negotiations, in which the sugar question is but one significant element, a compromise outcome will be agreed. However, I will endeavour to ensure that if the sugar quota regime does get extended beyond 2015, Ireland will be allowed to access a sufficient quota amount to ensure a viable sugar industry here.

I am most actively involved in these negotiations between Member States, on all aspects of the CAP Reform Proposals, including those concerning the EU sugar regime. During the first half of 2013, Ireland will hold the Presidency of the EU and I will assume the role of Chairman of the Council of Agriculture Ministers during that 6 month period. Based on current progress and developments in these negotiations, I believe that agreement on the CAP Reform measures can be concluded in the Council, including an outcome on the future of the EU sugar quota regime, during our Presidency period.

Given the uncertainty outlined above, my Department has not carried out nor commissioned a study on the impact the end of the sugar beet quota system in 2015 may have on our climate

policy should the industry be re-established here. However, further consideration may be given to this issue in light of future developments at European level and when a greater degree of certainty is established with regard to the potential development of a new sugar/bioethanol facility in Ireland.

With regard to the potential of sugar beet as a biofuel crop, establishing an ethanol plant in Ireland which uses sugar beet as a raw material in the production of ethanol would be a matter in the first instance for commercial decision by interested parties. Such a development would not be dependent on sugar quota becoming available. Sugar beet could be grown for such an enterprise, if regarded as commercially viable, in the same way that a quantity of sugar beet has always been grown in this country for fodder purposes.

The Deputy may also be aware that the European Commission published a proposal on 17th October 2012, drawn up by DGs Climate Action and Energy, that seeks to introduce a 5% ceiling on the use of biofuels derived from sugar, cereals and rapeseed as part of the count towards the EU's 10% target for renewable energy in the transport sector by 2020. The proposal seeks to shift the focus away from 1st generation biofuels and encourage future investment in advanced biofuels derived from municipal waste and agricultural residues that do not compete directly with food and feed crops. The Commission aims at protecting existing investment until 2020, but commits to cut all public subsidies for biofuels produced from crop-based biofuels once the current legislation expires in 2020.

Timber Supply

117. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his policy in relation to ensuring an adequate supply of timber to the timber processing sector here; his policy for retaining employment in this sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48267/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government is committed to developing and managing Ireland's forestry resource in a manner which will ensure sustainable output and growth into the future. The forestry and forest products sector employs nearly 12,000 people in Ireland and generates approximately €2.2 billion in annual output. Our approach to developing the sector is reflected in the budget allocation for 2012 of almost €112 million which is sufficient for the planting of close to 7,000 hectares of new forest plantations. Provision was also made in this budget for the building of in excess of 100 kilometres of forest roads to facilitate the extraction and supply of timber to the processing sector and other markets.

Total roundwood harvest during 2011 was approximately 2.7 million cubic metres. The *All Ireland Roundwood Production Forecast*, published by my Department in 2011, estimates that annual net realisable roundwood volume production for the island of Ireland will increase to 6.17 million cubic metres by 2020. Of this, approximately 2.5 million cubic metres (c. 40%) is expected to come from private sector forests. These figures and particularly the increase in private timber production are excellent indicators for future growth in our forestry sector.

Furthermore in terms of downstream support for the industry, Teagasc has, to date, supported the establishment of 25 Farm Forest Producer Groups around the country to assist private forest owners in the management of the forests and the mobilisation of timber to the processing sector. In addition, the COFORD Council has convened a group comprising sawmillers, Coillte and private growers to examine wood mobilisation issues in the sector and this group will report in 2013.

Taken together, I believe that these policies, initiatives and funding will help ensure the continued supply of raw material to, and consequent retention of employment in, this important sector.

Coillte Teoranta Dividend

118. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the dividend paid by Coillte Teoranta to the State in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48266/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The details of the dividends paid by Coillte in each of the past five years and to date this year are as outlined below.

Year	Dividend Paid	Type of dividend and year to which it related
2007	-	-
2008	€2,599,716	Interim dividend in respect of 2008. Received December 2008
2009	-	-
2010	-	-
2011	€10,000,000	Interim dividend in respect of 2011. Received September 2011
2012	-	Discussions regarding dividend for 2012 are not concluded

Agriculture Schemes Penalties

119. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers that were penalised under the single farm payment scheme and disadvantaged area scheme in 2011; the total financial amount of the penalties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48257/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As it has not been possible to collate the data sought by the Deputy within the available timescale, I am arranging for it to be forwarded directly as soon as it is available.

Food Harvest 2020 Strategy

120. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he expects the agri-food sector here to maximise the potential of Food Harvest 2020; if any initiatives are anticipated to ensure that adequate funding is made available to the sector in order to meet the challenges and the development costs therewith associated; if he favours a particular strategy in this context; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47688/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As indicated in *Milestones for Success 2012*, the second progress report on Food Harvest 2020, the agri-food sector is currently well placed to achieve the key targets set out for 2020 in Food Harvest.

Specifically, working from the baseline figures, by end 2011 the value of both primary output and exports has increased by almost 19% and 10% respectively, vis-a-vis the relevant 33% and 42% target increase set for 2020. The CSO also indicate that the value-added element of the sector has increased by 5.6% by end 2010, the latest figure available.

The budget allocations for 2013 are being considered in the context of the gross expenditure ceilings that were allocated to all Departments for the period 2012 -2014 under the Government's Medium Term Expenditure Framework. The preparations for the 2013 Estimate are currently underway and all budget lines on my Department's Vote will be examined carefully as part of that process having regard to the expenditure ceilings. My intention is to ensure that the resources available to my Department are managed to provide the optimum benefit to economic activity in the agricultural, food, fisheries and forestry sectors, and to realising the potential which exists for the sectors to contribute to the economic recovery.

Marine Plan

121. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will outline the future timetable of the Our Ocean Wealth policy initiative now that the public consultation period has ended; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48424/12]

126. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will report on the recent report *Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth - An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland*; if he will explain the way the report's recommendations will impact on the development of marine facilities and tourism including at national fisheries' harbours such as Howth, County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47632/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 121 and 126 together.

Following a successful public consultation process, the Government has published an integrated Marine Plan for Ireland entitled 'Harnessing our Ocean Wealth' which takes account of the various submissions received in the public consultation process and builds on the ongoing and future work of the various Government Departments involved in this area. The plan sets out a roadmap for the Government's vision, high level goals and integrated actions across policy, governance and business to enable Ireland's marine potential to be realised in the coming years. The plan also provides a new momentum for growth in the marine area and involves Departments working together more efficiently and effectively on the diverse issues related to the marine.

It is designed to contribute to getting the environment right for investment and so stimulate the private sector investment which will be crucial to achieving the targets outlined in the plan. As well as driving the potential of our marine economy, the plan will allow us to strike a balance between protecting the marine environment, its species and habitats, and maximising the use of its resources as a source of economic growth.

The plan sets out an overarching target to double the value of Our Ocean Wealth to 2.4 % of GDP by 2030 and moving toward the EU average of 3.5%. The Government has also set a 2020 target of exceeding €5bn in annual turnover. This would represent growth of approximately 50% drawn from a diverse range of marine sectors including marine and coastal tourism, marine commerce, seafood, shipping, oil and gas, renewable energy, marine manufacturing and other marine industries. The growth targets are based on existing government programmes such as my Department's Food Harvest 2020 in relation to seafood, sector specific projections, for example, *Failte Ireland* covering Maritime and Coastal Tourism and base levels of marine economic activity as measured in the most comprehensive recent economic report, *Ireland's ocean Economy 2010*. Socio- Economic Marine Research Unit in NUI Galway.

A copy of the published plan is available at <http://www.ouroceanwealth.ie>

Moving to the impact on marine facilities and tourism at the fisheries harbours, my Department has responsibility for the management and development of the six Fishery Harbour Centres, including Howth.

The Fishery Harbour Centres are unique in that they have been set up to provide a dedicated service to the Fishing Industry. It is policy at each Fishery Harbour Centre that priority is always given to the needs of the fishermen and indeed the significant capital investment at the Fishery Harbour Centres has reflected this.

However, in addition to serving the Fishing Industry, they also play an important role in the Irish tourist and marine leisure industry and also provide facilities for the support of passenger and cargo ferries to the islands. There are comprehensive marine leisure facilities at Howth, Dingle and Ros An Mhíl Fishery Harbour Centres which work well alongside the needs of the fishing industry. My Department will continue to take every opportunity to facilitate and promote marine tourism at the Fishery Harbour Centres subject of course to its compatibility with the needs of fishermen and budgetary constraints. The various strands of the Integrated Marine Plan (IMP) which I have outlined are designed to provide a new momentum for growth in this area for harbours such as Howth. The key issue is the development of a strong inter agency approach which will see Departments and stakeholders working together more efficiently and effectively on the diverse issues related to the marine.

Common Fisheries Policy Review

122. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he intends to take if the 31 December deadline for the completion of the review of the common fisheries policy will not be met under the Cypriot Presidency; his plans in relation to fisheries policy under the forthcoming Irish Presidency of the European Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48423/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The **Common Fisheries Policy** (CFP) is the fisheries policy of the European Union which was first put in place in 1983 and has been subject to reviews every 10 years. The current CFP is under review and will not be completed during the Cypriot Presidency and accordingly will fall for delivery during the Irish Presidency of the EU.

My overarching goal for the new CFP is for a sustainable, profitable and self reliant industry that protects and enhances the social and economic fabric of rural coastal communities dependent on the seafood sector, while balancing these objectives with the need to deliver a sustainable and eco centred fisheries landscape for future generations.

In the current economic climate, we need a policy that both simplifies and reduces the administrative burden while at the same time strengthens and supports the industry's capacity to maximise employment in coastal community's dependant on fishing.

The new CFP will be agreed between the European Parliament and the EU Fisheries Council under the ordinary legislative process (co-decision).

The Council of Fisheries Ministers under the Danish Presidency reached a general approach on the Basic CFP Regulation and the Common Organisation of the Markets (CMO) at the June Fisheries Council (12 June). This is a significant, though informal, step in the process of working towards final agreement with the European Parliament under the ordinary legislative procedure. At the October Fisheries Council, a partial general approach of the Council on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) was secured.

The European Parliament has completed its first reading of the CMO proposal and is currently conducting its first reading of the basic CFP Regulation and the EMFF proposal. It is expected that these first readings will be completed in the early part of the year.

As it now clear that adoption by 31 December 2012 will not happen, it is my intention to actively endeavour to reach agreement on the Reform package during the Irish presidency in the first half of 2013. I have recently had a series of meetings with Fisheries Ministers, Commissioner Damanaki and with key MEPs to lay the groundwork for achieving agreement.

Bovine Disease Controls

123. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he is taking to address the incidence of Bovine TB; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47556/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The bovine TB eradication programme includes a comprehensive range of measures, including the mandatory annual testing of all cattle in the national herd, the early removal of reactors, the payment of compensation for cattle removed as reactors, implementation of a range of supplementary tests such as post-derestriction and contiguous tests, a wildlife programme, and the depopulation of infected herds in some cases.

These measures have proven to be relatively effective in recent years as evidenced by the significant reduction in disease levels over the past decade. For example, herd incidence has fallen from 7.5% in 2000 to 4.2% last year and reactor numbers in 2011 were, at 18,500, the lowest recorded since the commencement of the programme in the 1950's. Reactor numbers and herd incidence have remained at close to 2011 levels this year. I would like to emphasise that the reduction in disease levels has also resulted in considerable savings on disease eradication. For example, expenditure on the TB and Brucellosis eradication schemes has fallen by over €20m or by one third since 2008.

Notwithstanding the difficulty in attributing trends to a single factor, my Department believes that much of the improvement in the TB situation, in recent years, is due the badger removal programme which has been in place for some years now. While the badger culling programme would appear to be very successful here, the long-term objective of my Department is to develop a vaccine for badgers and considerable research has been conducted in collaboration with UCD and the UK Department of Agriculture on the development of such a vaccine. My Department is implementing a number of badger vaccination trials in order to establish the efficacy of the oral vaccine in reducing the level of TB infection in field conditions. If the field trials are successful, badger vaccination will be introduced as part of the eradication programme in due course and this will reduce the need to remove TB infected badgers as TB levels fall in both cattle and badgers. It will be some years, however, before a vaccination programme on a widespread basis is a practicable proposition.

The eradication programme is scientifically based and my Department continues to monitor and review the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme on an on-going basis in light of experience and research. In this context, my Department reviewed the programme last year and concluded that, since the badger constraint was now being effectively addressed, if further progress was to be made, it was necessary to address other potential sources of infection, including from neighbouring herds and the movement of high risk animals. For this reason, my Department introduced a number of changes into the TB programme earlier this year to prevent the spread of disease from infected herds to clear herds and to tighten up on overdue testing.

These changes, which were made following a number of consultation meetings with the farming organisations, are designed to protect clear herds from buying in high risk animals and were based on research which demonstrated that there are increased risks attached to the movement of certain animals or being in the vicinity of a TB infected herd.

I am satisfied that these changes have improved the effectiveness of the eradication scheme, particularly by confining the disease to herds where it is originally detected. I am also very pleased with the improvement in the incidence of TB in recent years. Nevertheless, I want to re-affirm that my Department's ultimate objective is to eradicate the disease and this appears to be a more realistic objective now than at any time in the past. My Department will continue to review and make changes to various elements of the programme as deemed necessary in light of experience.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Payments

124. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the costs of a new suckler cow welfare scheme for 2013 based on the same rates of payment that currently operate but limiting the number of cows that a farmer can get paid on to 40 and 30 respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48253/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme is a five-year Scheme for beef animals born during the period, which commenced on 1 January 2008 and will end on 31 December 2012. The primary objectives of the Scheme was to improve welfare standards in the sector and to assist in the establishment of a breeding database from which suckler farmers could identify the best breeding stock for their particular requirements.

The tabular statement below illustrates the number of participants in the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme in a range of herd sizes.

Herd size(cows)	Number of herds
1-10	10,471
11-20	11,359
21-30	6,296
31-40	3,157
41-60	2,407
>60	1,177
Total	34,867

It can be seen from the table that the majority of the Suckler farmers are small holdings with herds of less than 20 animals. Limiting the size of herd to farmers with less than 40 animals would still see the majority of farmers (more than 31,000) remaining within the scheme.

Any decision in relation to the future of the Scheme will be considered during the forthcoming budgetary process.

Island Communities

125. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

the role his Department plays in ensuring the viability of island communities in particular in relation to the development of farming and fishing and the provision of piers on islands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48271/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): All Department schemes are open to farmers including in the islands. In terms of access to fishing opportunities, fish stocks are managed at a national level and there are no specific allocations for island communities. There is opportunity for increasing Irish fish catches, including for operators based in island communities, by growing the stocks on which we are dependant and which are proximate to Ireland. There is much in the Common Fisheries Programme Reform, such as long term management of stocks, reducing and eliminating discards and rebuilding stocks to Maximum Sustainable Yield, which holds the potential to increase catches by Irish fishermen in the short and medium term.

The only island harbour that my Department is responsible for is Cape Clear's North Harbour. The other island harbours are owned by the relevant Local Authorities who are responsible for their repair and maintenance.

Under the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme my Department provides funding for minor development and repair work of Local Authority owned harbours, piers and slipways subject to the availability of adequate exchequer resources and other national priorities.

Question No. 126 answered with Question No. 121.

Common Agricultural Policy Reform

127. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he is taking to secure support for the common agricultural policy budget and his single farm payment reform proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47555/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Deputy correctly identifies the crucial importance for Ireland of securing support for its position in relation to the EU budget and the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The building of alliances with counterparts in like-minded Member States is an essential component of Ireland's approach to both sets of negotiations.

The negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework, or MFF, for the period from 2014 to 2020 are being conducted under the auspices of the EU General Affairs Council, attended by my colleague, the Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs. However, I have also been taking the opportunity, in the course of my extensive consultations with counterparts on the reform of the CAP - and in preparation for the Irish Presidency of the Agriculture Council - to make very clear Ireland's concerns in relation to the elements of the budget negotiations that have a direct bearing on the CAP.

The overriding national priority is to safeguard CAP funding to the maximum extent possible, having regard to the reality that CAP accounts for over 80% of Ireland's total receipts of EU funding, equivalent to about €12 billion over the 2007-2013 period. This is a whole of Government position. The CAP is the only expenditure heading that has already been reduced in real terms in the Commission proposal. There is pressure from some Member States to reduce CAP spending further - and this has been reflected in the latest version of the Negotiating Box circulated by the Cypriot Presidency last week. The Irish Government's view remains that the amounts proposed by the Commission are the minimum acceptable, and we will strongly

resist pressure for further cuts.

We also want to retain our current levels of funding for both direct payments and for rural development. The Commission proposals for Pillar 1 direct payments take a pragmatic approach to redistribution and are broadly satisfactory, albeit with a small loss to Ireland. However, the Presidency's communication last week raises the prospect of cuts to both pillars, and we will therefore continue to strongly defend our allocations in the course of the negotiations.

Ultimately, of course, decisions on the MFF will be taken by EU Heads of State and Government. A special meeting of the European Council has been scheduled for the 22nd and 23rd of this month for this purpose, and it is my intention to attend those talks.

More specifically in relation to CAP reform, the building of alliances is something that I have undertaken since my appointment in March of last year. Dialogue with my counterparts in other Member States has been a constant feature of the negotiations thus far, and has been particularly effective in recent months in our efforts to ensure that the scale of transfers arising from the redistribution of direct payments within Member States is kept to the minimum possible level.

The Deputy will be aware that, under the Commission's flat rate proposals, the scale of transfers in Ireland would be extremely large, and both economically and politically unjustifiable. Approximately 75,000 farmers would see their payments rise by an average of 85%, while 55,000 would see their payments fall by an average of 33%. An alternative approach developed by Ireland, involving the application of the Commission's methodology for the distribution of direct payments between Member States, would ensure more modest gains of an average of 29% and losses of 9%.

I have been working closely with like-minded Member States to gain support for this alternative approach, which is consistent with the Commission's desire to move away from the historical basis for direct payments but does not go as far or as fast as the Commission proposes. And I have been very successful, with five Member States - Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Luxembourg - signing up to a joint paper with Ireland that calls for Member States to be given the flexibility to apply this model. Other Member States have also shown interest, and we are continuing to consult with them. I am hopeful that these efforts will result in greater flexibility being given to Member States to implement models that suit their own farming conditions, and will mitigate the potential impact of the move away from the reference to historical payments.

Of course all of these bilateral contacts are in addition to the opportunities that I have availed of to discuss issues of importance to Ireland with my Ministerial colleagues from the other Member States - and Commissioner Ciolos - at the EU Council of Agriculture Ministers meetings held each month in Brussels or Luxembourg, and at the Informal Ministerial Councils, held this year, for example, in Denmark and Cyprus. I have also addressed the Agricultural Committee of the European Parliament, and have met with key MEPs including Rapporteurs and Shadow Rapporteurs across the different CAP reform dossiers, as well as key interlocutors in the Commission and in the Council Secretariat.

I plan to continue these contacts over the coming months, and to engage actively with Ministerial colleagues from other Member States, with the Commissioner and with Members of the European Parliament. My approach will continue to be informed at all times by the need to maintain and develop alliances with like-minded Member States in order to secure the best possible outcome for Ireland in the CAP reform negotiations.

I should add that my contacts at Ministerial level are supplemented by a parallel process of detailed engagement at official level by my Department with counterparts from the Commis-

sion, European Parliament and other Member States.

Fisheries Protection

128. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of boats disqualified from fishing for herring this year due to the changes in the rules introduced by him this year; the home ports of the vessels in question; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48265/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In 2011, I asked the fishing industry and other interested parties to make proposals on the future management arrangements for all Irish herring fisheries, the Celtic Sea stock, the stocks off the North West coast and the Atlanto Scandian stock. The objective of the review was to deliver a policy which would ensure an economically and biologically sustainable fishery. I received over 20 sets of proposals and comments in relation to herring stocks management. It was very clear from these documents that there was no agreement within the industry as to how the future herring fishing opportunities should be managed. I asked my Department to examine the proposals received and to prepare for me a number of options, which as far as practically possible, took the views of stakeholders into account while delivering proper and effective management.

On 22 December 2011, I published a draft policy document on the matter which I believe meets the objectives to the greatest extent possible. I again carried out a written consultation process and received 49 written submissions. I then met the industry regarding the draft policy and again there was no consensus.

Having considered all views and having regard to the sustainability of the fisheries, I came to a decision which I believe provides for the proper and effective management and conservation and rational exploitation of the herring stocks. The policy is based on giving access to each of the fisheries to those with recent track record in that particular fishery. The track record involves vessels having landed a minimum of 5 tonnes of herring in 2009 or 2010 or in 3 of the 5 years during the period 2006 to 2010. In addition, there are some very limited specified circumstances where an earlier track record may be taken into account.

Both the North West Herring Fishery and the Celtic Sea Herring fishery are ring fenced separately based on the vessels track record in each fishery. A vessel may have qualified in one or both fisheries depending on the vessel’s track record as specified above.

The only exception to track record relates to small vessels in the Dunmore area for the Celtic Sea fishery where a small scale local fishery is permitted in line with the Rebuilding/ Management Plan for the fishery. Two modest restricted quota fisheries were established for vessels under 20m in overall length without a track record, in both the Celtic Sea and Area VIa South.

The decision made was based on a clear, detailed and objective assessment of the fisheries in recent years. This policy is intended to ensure the long term sustainability of the herring fisheries by limiting participation in the main fisheries to those vessels which have participated in the fishery, in the 5 years prior to the commencement of the review, even at a low level.

There are 33 vessels which were not precluded from fishing for herring under the old system (i.e. less than or equal to 19.81m Registered Length) but which are now precluded from fishing for herring because they are greater than or equal to 20m in Length Overall and did not have the track record specified for qualification as set out above. This list does not include all vessels of under 20m in overall length who would have in the past had the option to book into the fishery and receive an individual allocation for herring as there was no restriction in their licenses but

did not have a track record of fishing for herring and now have access to allocations set under the modest restricted fishery on a periodic basis. The vessels are shown below according to the registered home port of the vessel. This does not necessarily reflect the operational home port of the vessel.

Registered Home Port	Vessels > 20m LOA without Herring Access
Sligo	2
Cork	5
Arklow/Dublin	1
Waterford	2
Skibbereen	10
Drogheda	10
Galway	3

Commonage Division

129. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide the details of proposals in relation to the stocking of commonages; the level of consultation he has had in relation to this issue with farmers in the regions affected; if he intends to organise public meetings that he will attend, similar to those he organised recently in relation to the reform of the common agricultural policy, to discuss this issue directly with farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48258/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department is proposing to introduce measures under the provisions of Article 6 of Council Regulation (EC) No 73/2009 for the maintenance of certain lands, including commonages declared under the Single Payment Scheme (SPS), the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, REPS, AEOS and the Grassland Sheep Scheme. As part of this process the Commonage Framework Plans, first published in 2002, have been reviewed in co-operation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to take account of the current vegetative condition of commonages nationally. This review which replaces the Commonage Framework Plans has been carried out on a commonage LPIS parcel basis and sets a minimum and maximum number of ewe equivalents (EE) required to graze the commonage parcel to ensure that it is maintained in Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC)

The overall numbers required for each commonage LPIS parcel are apportioned to all claimants on a commonage based on the area of the commonage they claimed on their 2012 SPS application. This information is available on the Department's website. The area of commonage claimed by an applicant on their SPS application does not amend or adjust the actual share of the commonage owned by them.

Maintaining commonage land in GAEC is vital to protect against areas being deemed ineligible under the Single Payment Scheme, other Direct Aid Schemes and consequential imposition of sanctions under Cross Compliance/GAEC provisions. All shareholders have a role to play in making sure that penalties are avoided and a collective approach to grazing the commonage minimises the risk of this happening. The Department is proposing, therefore, that scheme claimants will be required to submit details to Department in writing, of the number of ewe equivalents each will graze on the commonage to achieve the required grazing number across the whole commonage parcel. The collective agreement will allow flexibility for claimants to increase sheep numbers up to at least the minimum while not exceeding the maximum allowed.

The Department has been in on-going discussion for some time with the farming organisations in relation to the proposed changes. Further meetings are underway this week. Arrangements for the implementation of the proposals will be announced when final decisions have been made.

Question No. 130 answered Question No. 114.

Harbours and Piers Expenditure

131. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the allocation made in each of the past five years to local authorities for marine harbours and piers and coastal protection works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48272/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department administers the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme on an annual basis. The Programme provides funding for the development of the six state owned fishery harbours and aquaculture landing places.

Subject to the availability of necessary exchequer funding, the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme does in addition, provide funding for harbour development works at Local Authority owned piers and harbours.

On the 1st January 2009 the functions and responsibilities in relation to coastal protection and coastal flooding were transferred to the Office of Public Works.

The following tables show the funding allocated by my Department to the Local Authorities for these programmes over the past 5 years:

Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme

Local Authority Programme

Year	Approved funding
2008	€9.6 m
2009(No Programme)	€0.0
2010	€707,667
2011	€1.7 m
2012	€2.7 m

Coastal Protection Programme

Year	Approved funding
2008	€2.4 m

Agriculture Schemes Expenditure

132. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money paid out to date and the number of recipients in each case under the single payment scheme and the disadvantaged area scheme broken down by county; the number in each county under each scheme that have not had their payments processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48246/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In the case of

the Single Farm Payment, the earliest payment date under the governing EU rules is 1 December. However earlier this year in recognition of the difficult financial situation faced by many farmers I successfully sought the approval of the Commissioner to have advance payments made as and from 16 October. This is the earliest possible legal date for making advance payments, it being the start of the new EU financial year.

The payment figures for SPS applicants up to 5th November are as follows:

COUNTY	No. of applicants	No. Paid	Amount Paid	Applicants to be Paid
CARLOW	1,617	1,525	€11,777,498.31	92
CAVAN	4,681	4,343	€16,854,451.36	338
CLARE	5,987	5,733	€23,362,122.62	254
CORK	12,759	11,938	€79,164,240.90	821
DONEGAL	7,975	7,438	€22,804,401.54	537
DUBLIN	621	548	€3,767,468.76	73
GALWAY	11,760	11,109	€38,625,117.60	651
KERRY	7,504	7,260	€29,026,735.85	244
KILDARE	1,998	1,892	€14,861,201.96	106
KILKENNY	3,395	3,118	€25,576,570.71	277
LAOIS	2,885	2,774	€19,654,424.59	111
LEITRIM	3,329	2,957	€7,791,415.46	372
LIMERICK	5,038	4,843	€25,764,637.23	195
LONGFORD	2,320	2,186	€9,547,670.51	134
LOUTH	1,474	1,393	€9,283,935.96	81
MAYO	11,258	10,151	€27,749,725.90	1,107
MEATH	3,678	3,562	€26,609,674.27	116
MONAGHAN	3,928	3,614	€14,385,133.05	314
OFFALY	2,986	2,775	€17,116,778.53	211
ROSCOMMON	5,597	5,163	€19,200,664.44	434
SLIGO	3,854	3,582	€10,702,457.73	272
TIPPERARY	6,828	6,592	€48,990,312.31	236
WATERFORD	2,391	2,316	€19,281,233.01	75
WESTMEATH	2,891	2,661	€15,113,130.39	230
WEXFORD	3,947	3,841	€30,020,683.96	106
WICKLOW	2,049	1,771	€12,224,446.57	278
	122,750	115,085	€579,256,133.52	7,665

Advance payments will continue to be made on clear cases, twice weekly, on an on-going basis. The balancing payments will commence as provided for under EU legislation from 1st December.

Payments under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme commenced, on schedule, on 26 September; payments have continued to issue, twice weekly, as cases are confirmed eligible. The payment figures as at 5 November are as per the following table:

County Stats Reports 2012

County Name	Applied	Paid	Gross Amount	Percentage Paid
Carlow	789	660	€1,371,613.28	83.65%
Cavan	4,952	4,078	€8,971,202.28	82.35%
Clare	6,254	5,283	€12,945,471.87	84.47%
Cork	7,310	5,965	€13,788,422.24	81.60%
Donegal	8,790	6,503	€15,049,576.41	73.98%
Dublin	155	107	€228,726.87	69.03%
Galway	12,520	9,831	€21,463,718.50	78.52%
Kerry	7,935	6,330	€15,813,003.56	79.77%
Kildare	544	443	€788,710.58	81.43%
Kilkenny	1,824	1,484	€3,111,789.83	81.36%
Laois	1,763	1,496	€3,004,467.32	84.86%
Leitrim	3,574	2,708	€6,138,324.87	75.77%
Limerick	3,012	2,478	€4,973,679.91	82.27%
Longford	2,440	2,041	€4,561,723.63	83.65%
Louth	825	634	€1,064,758.89	76.85%
Mayo	12,000	8,858	€18,828,710.71	73.82%
Meath	1,385	1,201	€2,219,593.66	86.71%
Monaghan	4,162	3,418	€6,927,952.91	82.12%
Offaly	2,487	2,004	€4,046,113.53	80.58%
Roscommon	5,905	4,699	€10,572,404.85	79.58%
Sligo	4,175	3,245	€7,191,581.88	77.72%
Tipperary	4,666	3,915	€8,462,108.38	83.90%
Waterford	1,500	1,241	€2,553,156.79	82.73%
Westmeath	2,722	2,239	€4,591,056.55	82.26%
Wexford	1,562	1,220	€2,239,658.55	78.10%
Wicklow	1,843	1,390	€3,371,462.31	75.42%
TOTALS	105,094	83,471	€184,278,990.16	79.43%

Stocking Densities

133. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in cases in which farmers have had their stocking level limited in a REP scheme plan, a national parks and wildlife plan or an agri environment option scheme plan the level of tolerance under the maximum stocking permitted which was allowed by him in assessing applications for a derogation under the disadvantage area scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48259/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, eligible applicants in 2012 must have met (a) a minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units per hectare in 2011 (equivalent to 2 ewes per hectare) and (b) 0.15 livestock units per hectare in 2012.

However, in recognition of the environmental objectives of the Scheme, specific provisions were made for those farmers, who had a stocking density less than 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare in 2011, where that lower stocking density was as a result of adherence to lower stocking by agri-environmental measure. All applicants, whose stocking density was below 0.3

livestock units per forage hectare in 2011, were formally written to and given the opportunity to apply for a derogation on the grounds that his or her participation in one of the above measures resulted in the lower stocking density.

In excess of 10,000 farmers were written to and, of these, almost 9,500 sought derogation. Applicants were invited to apply for derogation under one or more of six categories, one of which – Category 1 – was specifically for those whose farming activity had been restricted by virtue of adherence to a recognised agri-environmental plan.

Farm Inspections

134. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farm inspections that have taken place this year on a monthly basis under the single farm payment regime; the number that took place each month in 2011; the number of farmers that have been penalised under the scheme each month in 2011 and 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48277/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As it is not possible to compile the full information requested in the available timescale, I am arranging for it to be provided directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Animal Welfare Expenditure

135. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he is satisfied that grant aid in respect of animal welfare which amounts to €1.1 million per year is value for money and that the various organisations are providing a service that is in keeping with funding from public moneys; if he is satisfied that they publish accounts and have audited accounts of public money; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47231/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Since 1995, my Department has made ex-gratia payments to a number of organisations directly involved in the delivery of animal care. This funding is intended only as a contribution to the overall costs of an organisation.

Applications for funding are considered against a number of criteria. These include the standing of each applicant, past performance in respect of utilisation of grants from my Department and impact, real and potential (i.e. that direct care and welfare services to animals have been delivered which have had a meaningful impact on animal welfare in the locality). The levels of grant assistance provided also take account of the fact that large urban areas make particularly onerous demands on animal welfare services. In considering the amounts granted in each case, a conscious effort is made to achieve proportionality and the greatest possible spread of benefits from within available resources.

In December 2011 each organisation received a copy of the code of practice which sets out recommendations to promote sound welfare and management practice that all animal welfare organisations should adhere to. All applicants with income in excess of €100,000 are required to submit audited accounts.

Tax Code

136. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if in the context of Budget discussions, he has raised the issue with the Department of Finance in relation to the importance of maintaining the farm taxation measures introduced in Budget 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48261/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A number of new tax measures were introduced in 2012, with a view to

- encourage farming as a career for young people;
- incentivise farm partnerships and greater productivity at farm level;
- stimulate land sales and land transfers;
- facilitate new enterprise opportunities in farming; and
- help agri-food businesses innovate and export.

The new stock relief measure for farm partnerships introduced from January 2012 is intended to encourage more farmers to enter into partnership agreements. For registered farm partnerships, the current rate of 25% stock relief was increased to 50%, and, for certain young trained farmers entering such partnerships, a rate of 100% stock relief is available. This new incentive will run until December 2015. I believe that collaboration through partnership can improve farm structures generally, facilitating farms to operate more efficiently, increasing scale on farms, and bringing more innovative and energetic young prospective farmers into farming. More farming partnerships are required to increase productivity and meet the Food Harvest 2020 targets. Several events were organised this year to encourage the concept of partnership amongst Irish farmers.

Budget 2012 reduced the stamp duty rate on agricultural land from 6% to 2%. In addition, half the rate (1%) will be applicable on transfers to close relatives until the end of 2014. This change will substantially reduce the stamp duty payable on transfers of farm land by gift or by sale. It should stimulate a stagnant land market – currently only 0.5% of total agricultural land is offered for sale annually – and ensure that land transfers to more active producers. It will also promote inter-generational transfer, as the cost of lifetime transfer to transferees who do not qualify for the young trained farmer stamp duty relief has reduced considerably.

Budget 2012 restructured the retirement relief available on Capital Gains Tax in order to incentivise the earlier transfer of farm assets to the next generation, and to encourage the sale of land by those farmers with no successors. As of 1st January 2014, for those farmers aged 66 and over, an upper limit of €3m will be introduced on family transfers, compared to an unlimited amount currently. On non-family transfers, the current upper limit of €750,000 will be reduced to €500,000. Applying the new limits from 1st January 2014 allows farmers already aged 66 and over to plan the orderly transfer of assets in advance of that date.

Other tax changes introduced in budget 2012 which benefit the agri-food industry include:

- Additional supports which will benefit the food industry including improvements to the R&D tax credit and a Foreign Earnings Deduction to apply where an individual spends 60 days a year developing markets for Ireland in the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).

- The VAT rate applied to open farms (such as pet farms) will be 9% rather than the new standard rate of 23%. This will be of significant benefit to such farms, which offer an important opportunity for farm diversification. It brings the treatment of open farms into line with the VAT

rate applied to museums and other cultural attractions.

- The exemption rate for the Universal Social Charge has been raised from €4,004 to €10,036. This will be of particular benefit to low-paid seasonal workers in the farming sector.

- Consistent with the commitment in the Programme for Government on carbon tax, farmers are now allowed a double income tax deduction in respect of the increased costs arising from the change in carbon tax (the carbon tax is to increase from €15 per tonne to €20 per tonne from 1 May 2012 for agricultural diesel).

- An amendment to the VAT refund order for farm construction will allow farmers to claim a refund on wind turbines purchased from 1st January 2012.

The taxation measures announced in Budget 2012 reflect the Government's commitment to the agri-food industry and in particular to the expansion planned in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. This commitment will continue to inform future budgetary policy.

Agriculture Schemes Expenditure

137. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the percentage of 2012 payments his Department expect to have paid by the 31 December 2012 under each of the following schemes, agri environment option scheme 1 and 2, REP scheme, disadvantaged area scheme and the single payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48250/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As regards the Single Payment Scheme, advance payments of 50% started issuing on cases cleared for payment, as scheduled, on 16 October. Since that date about 115,000 applicants have been paid some €579M. Advance payments will continue to be made on clear cases, twice weekly, on an on-going basis. The balancing payments will commence as provided for under EU legislation from 1st December.

The number of farmers not cleared for payment of the advance of the Single Farm Payment on 5th November is 7,665 or 6.24% of applicants. My Department will continue to clear the maximum possible number of these cases for payment by the 31st December. However, due to the number of variables involved, it is not possible, at this stage, to indicate what the year-end outturn will be.

Payments under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme commenced, on schedule, on 26 September and, to date, payments worth some €185,864,741 have issued to 83,921 applicants. Given the changes to the Terms and Conditions governing the 2012 Scheme, prompted by the need to achieve the savings necessitated due to budgetary restrictions, it is difficult to project the level of spend that will be achieved by year-end. That said, however, every effort is being made to maximise the expenditure under the Scheme in the current calendar year. To this end payments are continuing to issue twice weekly, as individual cases are confirmed eligible for payment.

As regards the agri-environmental schemes of REPS and AEOS, under the governing EU Regulations, comprehensive administrative checks, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, as well as field inspections must be completed before payments can issue. Actual expenditure in any one year will depend on the completion of this process and on the and level of query resolution on individual claims.

I expect that 2012 payments of REPS 4 and of both AEOS 1 and 2 to commence shortly and my objective is to ensure that as many REPS and AEOS participant as possible are paid by year end.

Exploration Licences Approvals

138. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the input he had, in the decision to grant an exploratory licence to a company (details supplied) to drill and conduct seismic surveys in the major fishing area of Dublin Bay and the Kish Bank. [48408/12]

141. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the input he had, in the decision to grant an exploratory licence to a company (details supplied) to drill and conduct seismic surveys in the major fishing area of Dublin Bay and the Kish Bank. [48409/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 138 and 141 together.

The foreshore licence application referred to by the Deputies was referred by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government to my Department for observations in December 2011.

Following an assessment of the application by the Marine Institute, my Department advised the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in February 2012 that the activity associated with the application will not have a significant impact on aquaculture or fishery related activities in the study area provided that the mitigation measures outlined as part of the application are implemented in full.

Coillte Teoranta Staff

139. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the present remuneration package for the CEO of Coillte Ireland; and his plans to reduce this package. [47690/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The present remuneration package of the Chief Executive Officer of Coillte Teoranta includes a basic salary of €265,252 per annum, a pension contribution (equating to 25% of base salary), a car allowance and health insurance. There is also provision for the payment of Performance Related Awards. In relation to the latter, the Government has decided to continue the policy of requesting Commercial State Companies not to award such bonus payments in recognition of the serious state of the public finances.

The Government agreed, in June 2011, to the adoption of a general policy that a salary ceiling of €250,000 will apply to future appointments of Chief Executive Officers of Commercial State Companies.

Sugar Industry

140. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the

steps he is taking to ensure that a sugar industry will once again be established here; his views on the importance of this for food security; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48263/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The EU Sugar Regime underwent a radical reform in 2005 following major EU decisions to restructure this regime and Greencore, the holder of the entire Irish sugar quota, availed of this voluntary scheme, dismantled its facilities and ceased production in 2006. Post reform, production is now concentrated in 18 Member States. The present regime runs from 1 September 2006 to the 30 September 2015. There is no mechanism under the present EU Regulations which would allow for the re-instatement of the sugar quota for the growing of sugar beet in Ireland for the production of sugar. Of course, sugar beet is still grown in Ireland as a fodder crop.

In 2011 I met with two separate groups which had conducted feasibility studies, into the possibility of establishing a new sugar/bioethanol facility in the country. At both meetings, I stated that any venture to develop a combined sugar/bioethanol production facility would have to be a commercial proposition, financed in total by investors and interested parties and make sound economic sense in order to be viable.

I also further suggested to both groups, the desirability of there being only one single proposition in play, as both studies had indicated a potential for only one such viable project and both groups had appeared to accept the reasonableness of this position at the time. Only recently, I re-stated that any business plan for a new venture in this area, would need to be competitive and that it would justify the very substantial investment to build a new facility.

I have strongly supported the current EU Commission's proposal to completely abolish sugar quotas from 30 September 2015, as part of the ongoing CAP reform discussions. At each meeting of the EU Council of Agriculture Ministers since October 2011, which has addressed this issue, I have intervened to fully support the Commission proposals for quota abolition. I also raised the issue with EU Agriculture Commissioner, Ciolos during his visit to Ireland in January 2012 and at the time I informed him of the growing momentum here for the revival of the sugar industry.

I also advised the Commissioner that while Ireland supports full quota abolition in 2015, if the regime were to continue beyond that date, Ireland does not want to be deprived, in the interim period of the option to recommence production. I am also aware of a significant number of Member States which wish to see the current sugar quota regime extended to 2017 or 2018. In addition, the European Parliament have clearly stated that they want the regime extended to 2020, so I expect that in the eventual conclusion to these complex reform negotiations, in which the sugar question is but one significant element, a compromise outcome will be agreed. I will endeavour to ensure that if the sugar quota regime does get extended beyond 2015, Ireland will be allowed to access a sufficient quota amount, to ensure the reinstatement of a viable sugar industry here.

I am most actively involved in these negotiations between Member States, on all aspects of the CAP Reform Proposals, including those concerning the EU sugar regime.

During the first half of 2013, Ireland will hold the Presidency of the EU and I will assume the role of Chairman of the Council of Agriculture Ministers during that 6 month period. Based on current progress and developments in these negotiations, I believe that agreement on the CAP Reform measures can be concluded in the Council, including an outcome on the future of the EU sugar quota regime, during our Presidency period.

Question No. 141 answered with Question No. 138.

Forestry Grants

142. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total cost in 2012 of forest premium being paid by his Department; the number of recipients and the number of these receiving more than €20,000 per annum, more than €50,000 per annum and more than a €100,000 per annum respectively, in praemia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48274/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): At this stage of the year, it is not possible to give the exact cost of forestry premiums that will be paid in 2012, as the final cost will depend of the number of correct applications submitted by clients by the year end. However, the total cost to 31st October 2012 was €74,927,283 and this was paid to 14,165 forest owners. Of these:

- 397 owners received between €20,000 and €50,000
- 44 owners received between €50,000 and €100,000
- 14 owners received in excess of €100,000.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

143. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when REP scheme 4 payments and agri environment option scheme 1 and 2 payments will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48249/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): REPS and AEOS are area based schemes which are co-funded by the EU under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 and EU Regulations governing the Schemes must be strictly adhered to. These require that a full and comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, as well as field inspections, must be completed before payment issue. The Commission have made it clear, in the course of audits, that all checks must be passed and eligibility conditions met. This means that a farmer's application must be fully in order, all outstanding documentation provided and queries resolved before payment can be released to him or her. Given these requirements, my officials take considerable care in validating payments while also ensuring that farmers receive their payments as soon as possible. In overall terms, the situation is that preparations for payments are now at an advanced stage and I expect that payments under both REPS and AEOS in respect of the 2012 scheme year will commence shortly.

Job Statistics

144. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach the number of companies operating here that have 100 employees or more. [47787/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The latest year for which the information requested is available is 2010. In that year there were 1,268 enterprises operating in Ireland that had 100 or more persons engaged. Of these, 1,033 were limited companies and 235 were other legal forms of ownership.

These figures are based on the CSO's Central Business Register and the following defini-

tions apply:

1. Persons engaged include employees, proprietors and family members. Employees are persons who are paid a fixed wage or salary. Persons at work or temporarily absent because of illness, holidays, strike etc. are included in the definition while persons working on a labour-only subcontract basis are excluded. Proprietors and family members are those proprietors, partners and members of their families who work regularly in the firm and are not paid a definite wage or salary.

2. A public or private limited company is a private or publicly quoted joint stock company with limited liability for those owning shares.

3. Other legal forms of ownership include a) personally owned limited and unlimited liability partnerships, b) individual proprietorships which are personally owned and have no limit to personal liability and c) other legal forms such as cooperatives, associations etc.

Departmental Expenditure

145. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the full cost to the Exchequer in the previous 12 months for his Department staff attending conferences including registration fees and travel. [47233/12]

154. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the full cost to the Exchequer in the previous 12 months for his Department staff attending conferences including registration fees and travel. [48392/12]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 145 and 154 together.

The total cost incurred by my Department in relation to staff attending conferences from October 2011 to the end of September 2012 was €5,533.42. This includes spend associated with travel costs and accommodation as well as conference fees.

Departmental Staff Promotions

146. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff members of his Department that have been awarded internal promotions and or additional acting up or temporary allowances to perform more senior roles since 27 March 2009; the details of the grades involved; the pre-promotion temporary acting and post promotion temporary acting pay scales; the total increase in salary payments to each staff member involved; the duration of assignments; the area to which each person was assigned; the business reasons supporting any such decision; the details of sanction received from the Department of Finance and or Public Expenditure and Reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47234/12]

The Taoiseach: Details of the internal promotions to permanent positions in my Department since 27 March 2009 are set out in the table beneath.

Grade to which Officer was Promoted	Previous Grade	Number of Promotions	Areas to which each promoted officer was assigned
Principal Officer	Assistant Principal Officers	3	- two to Economic, International and Northern Ireland Division.- one to Public Service Modernisation Division (now transferred to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform)
Assistant Principal Officer	1 Administrative Officer 1 Higher Executive Officer	2	- one to Corporate Affairs.- one to Economic, International and Northern Ireland Division.
Higher Executive Officer	Executive Officer	1	Economic, International and Northern Ireland Division.
Executive Officer	3 Clerical Officers	3	- one to EU Affairs and Co-ordination Division. - one to Government Secretariat. - one to Corporate Affairs.
Head Service Officer	Service Officer	1	Corporate Affairs.

The total increased salary cost arising from these promotions was €64,639. The average salary increase for the officers promoted to Principal Officer is €9,439; for officers promoted, for Assistant Principal Officer it was €12,479; and for Executive Officers it was €2,593. The average salary increase between the other two grades where promotions took place was €1,792.

All staff were, and continue to be paid in accordance with Department of Public Expenditure pay circulars, copies of which are available on that Department's website, www.per.gov.ie.

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform sanction was received in respect of each promotion in accordance with standard procedures. My Department has undergone a reduction in both staff numbers (down 18%) and budget (down 44%) in recent years. Each promotion was required to fill a vacancy in my Department which was considered essential to fill in order to ensure the Department's ongoing objectives are achieved.

No staff in my Department have been awarded acting up allowances since 27 March 2009.

The current Secretary General and one Assistant Secretary previously served in my department in the grades of Assistant Secretary and Principal Officer respectively.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

147. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff members from his Department that have been temporarily and or permanently redeployed to other Government Departments or agencies since 27 March 2009; the details of the grades and pay scales involved; the total amount of savings achieved in salary payments in respect of the persons concerned; the duration of assignments; the business reasons supporting the redeployment of staff; the details of sanction received from the Department of Finance and or Public Expenditure and Reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47235/12]

The Taoiseach: In 2009, three posts in my Department engaged in the work of the Information Society Commission which now comes within the remit of the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources were redeployed to that Department. The posts involved were one Principal Officer, one Assistant Principal Officer, and one Higher Executive Officer. As some functions regarding the Information Society Commission were transferred to the Department of Finance at that time also, one Administrative Officer redeployed from my Department to the Department of Finance. The total salary savings for my Department arising from the transfer of Information Society Commission functions was €322,936.

Arising from the commitment in the Programme for Government, sections and posts in my Department which had been engaged in work that now comes within the responsibility of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform transferred to that Department in 2011, along with some support staff. The total number of staff that transferred was 27.

The grades of the staff that were redeployed were: one Assistant Secretary; five Principal Officers; six Assistant Principal Officers; four Administrative Officers; one Higher Executive Officer; two Executive Officers; three Staff Officers; and five Clerical Officers. The salary saving arising for my Department was €1,639,543.

Details of staff temporarily seconded from my Department since 27 March 2009 are set out in the table beneath:

Grade of Officer Seconded	Organisation Seconded To	Purpose of Secondment	Duration of Secondment
Principal Officer	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	To work on the Commemorations Programme	to July 2013
Assistant Principal Officer	CSO	To work on the census	to end 2012
Assistant Principal Officer	State Laboratory	To work as Head of Corporate Services	to April 2015
Assistant Principal Officer	Public Appointments Service	To work in IT area	to September 2015
Executive Officer	CSO	To work on the census	From October 2010 to October 2012

The annual salary savings in relation to these temporary secondments is €384,819.

All staff redeployed or seconded from my Department were paid as per the salary scales prescribed in Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 28/2009, copies of which are available on that Department's website, www.per.gov.ie.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

148. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff members that have been temporarily and or permanently redeployed to his Department from other Government Departments or agencies since 27 March 2009; the details of the grades and pay scales involved; the total increase in salary payments for his Department in respect of the persons concerned; the duration of assignments; the area to which each person was assigned; the business reasons supporting the redeployment of staff, details of sanction received from the Department of Finance and or Public Expenditure and Reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47236/12]

The Taoiseach: Arising from the commitment in the Programme for Government a new EU Co-ordination Division was established in my Department with personnel from my Department's existing EU and International Division and 20 staff from the EU Affairs Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, comprising 11 staff who were permanently redeployed to my Department and 9 staff who were temporarily seconded.

The breakdown in grades of those redeployed is one Assistant Principal Officer, four Executive Offices and six Clerical Officers. Two Counsellors, three First Secretaries and four Third Secretaries were temporarily seconded. The duration of their secondments will be in keeping with the usual policy of secondments of diplomatic staff employed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The annual increase in the salary costs for my Department arising from these redeployment and secondments is €1,078,313.

Details of the permanent redeployments to my Department since 27 March 2009, are set out at Table 1 while Table 2 contains details of the temporary redeployments/secondments to my Department. Each redeployment filled a vacancy which was considered essential to ensure the Department continues to meet its ongoing objectives. The total annual cost arising from these redeployments is €546,401. The usual arrangements for Department of Public Expenditure and Reform sanction in relation to these redeployment were applicable.

Table 1 - Permanent Redeployments

Number (wte)	Grade	Area Assigned To
1	Service Officer	Corporate Affairs
1	Assistant Principal Officer	IT Unit
1	Executive Officer	Merrionstreet.ie

Table 2 - Temporary Redeployments / Secondments

Number (wte)	Grade	Area Assigned To
1	Principal Officer	Economic, International & Northern Ireland
0.5	Principal Officer	EU Affairs and Co-ordination Division
0.5	Principal Officer	Constitutional Convention
1	Administrative Officer	Government Press Office
1	Third Secretary	Private Secretary to the Minister of State for European
1	Higher Executive Officer	EU Affairs and Co-ordination Division
1	Higher Executive Officer	Government Press Office

Northern Ireland Issues

149. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Taoiseach if there is a North South Co-operation unit in his Department; the number of staff working in the North South Co-operation unit; the

number of staff that have worked in the North South Co-operation unit in each year since 2007. [47237/12]

156. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Taoiseach if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48552/12]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 149 and 156 together.

The Department of the Taoiseach does not have a North South Cooperation Unit as such. The Northern Ireland Section which has been in existence in the Department for many years continues to support me on all matters relevant to Northern Ireland and plays an important role in co-ordinating matters relating to North South Co-operation across Departments.

The work of the Section is overseen by an Assistant Secretary and is currently staffed by one Principal Officer; one Assistant Principal (whole time equivalent); one Administrative Officer; one Higher Executive Officer and one Clerical Officer. There are no current vacancies in this Section.

Details of the staff levels from the year 2007 -2011 are included in the table below

Year	No. of Staff (W.T.E.)
2007	6
2008	6.4
2009	8
2010	7.9
2011	7.9

Departmental Expenditure

150. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach if he will provide in a tabular form, a list of all professional fees including but not limited to legal, consultancy, IT related, advisory, advertising, and accountancy, the company name and the amount invoiced since March 2011 to the end of June 2012. [47254/12]

The Taoiseach: The table below sets out the list of suppliers to my Department of professional services, where professional services withholding tax has been applied, and the total paid from 1 March 2011 to end June 2012, including professional services withholding tax, according to my Department's Financial Management System.

Vendor Name	Total Paid
DESIGN FACTORY	€17,552.10
FIONA SHERIDAN	€80.00
GER GARLAND	€1,328.40
ERSKINE, CAROLINE	€19,803.00
JDK DESIGN	€114.95
POWER DESIGN	€1,076.90

Vendor Name	Total Paid
TERMINAL FOUR LTD	€91,654.71
RED DOG DESIGN CONSULTANTS	€1,635.90
GERALYN DOWNEY	€200.00
MSA (MICHAEL SLATTERY ASSOC)	€23,595.00
TOWERS WATSON (IRELAND) LTD	€12,100.00

Departmental Reports

151. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Taoiseach the name, costs, date of commission, date or expected date of publication and name of the external consultant of all external reports commissioned by the his Department since March 2011. [47240/12]

The Taoiseach: The table below provides details of external reports commissioned by my Department from March 2011 to end September 2012.

Name of Consultant	Details of Report Commissioned	€
QTS Limited	Health and Safety Consultancy Health and Safety Statement 2011	€ 1,270.50
QTS Limited	Health & Safety Consultancy - Health and Safety Statement 2012	€ 1,270.50

Departmental Staff Rehiring

152. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Taoiseach the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47301/12]

The Taoiseach: No staff who retired from my Department before March 2011 have been re-hired.

Public Sector Allowances Payments

153. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach if he will provide details of all the Gaeltacht allowance payable to civil and public servants; the level of each allowance payable to each category and the monetary level of each allowance together with the total amount payable in 2009, 2010 and 2011. [47479/12]

The Taoiseach: Staff in my Department and the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO), which is the only agency under its aegis, are not eligible to claim the Gaeltacht allowance as they are based in Dublin only. Consequently no costs arose for my Department or NESDO during the period in question.

Question No. 154 answered with Question No. 145.

Unemployment Statistics

155. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach if he will confirm the latest unemployment figures in respect of those signing on at the Tallaght Social Protection Office, Dublin 24; if he

will also provide the comparison with the similar month for the past two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48510/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Live Register series gives a monthly breakdown of the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance and other registrants as registered with the Department of Social Protection. Figures are published for each county and local social welfare office.

The most recent Live Register figures available are for October 2012. The table below contains the numbers signing on in the Tallaght local office on the last Friday of October 2010, October 2011 and October 2012.

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 Jobseeker's Benefit or Allowance.

Persons on the Live Register in Tallaght Local Office by sex and age, October 2010, 2011 and 2012:

Males	Age	October 2010	October 2011	October 2012	Annual change October 2011	Annual change October 2012	% change October 2011	% change October 2012
	Under 25 years	1,542	1,447	1,314	- 95	- 133	- 6.2	- 9.2
	25 years and over	5,450	6,203	6,399	+ 753	+ 196	+ 13.8	+ 3.2
	Total males	6,992	7,650	7,713	+ 658	+ 63	+ 9.4	+ 0.8
Females								
	Under 25 years	859	883	863	+ 24	- 20	+ 2.8	- 2.3
	25 years and over	2,092	2,583	2,737	+ 491	+ 154	+ 23.5	+ 6.0
	Total females	2,951	3,466	3,600	+ 515	+ 134	+ 17.5	+ 3.9
All persons								
	Under 25 years	2,401	2,330	2,177	- 71	- 153	- 3.0	- 6.6
	25 years and over	7,542	8,786	9,136	+ 1,244	+ 350	+ 16.5	+ 4.0
	Total persons	9,943	11,116	11,313	+ 1,173	+ 197	+ 11.8	+ 1.8

Source: CSO Live Register

Question No. 156 answered with Question No. 149.

Departmental Staff Numbers

157. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Taoiseach the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49078/12]

The Taoiseach: No staff in my Department or the National Economic and Social Development Office, which is the only agency under the aegis of my Department, are currently employed on a roster basis.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

158. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Taoiseach the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49090/12]

The Taoiseach: No retired public servants have been re-hired in an established position by my Department or the National Economic and Social Development Office, which is the only agency under the aegis of my Department.

However, one person who previously retired from the Public Service is employed in an unestablished position by my Department. The employment contract of the person concerned will cease when my term of office as Taoiseach ends.

Dual Citizenship Numbers

159. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of Irish passport holders that are dual nationals; if it is part of the application process for an Irish passport to indicate if the applicant intends to be a dual passport holder; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47855/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): As the Passport Service does not request any information on other nationalities as part of the application process, information on the number of Irish passport holders who are dual nationals is not available.

International Agreements

160. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline his stated position on the State's sovereignty claim over Rockall and the surrounding continental shelf; if he will provide an update on Ireland's engagement with the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf regarding the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48435/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Rockall is a small uninhabitable rock, 25 x 30 metres wide, located approximately 160 nautical miles west of the Scottish islands of St. Kilda and 230 nautical miles to the north-west of Donegal. It marks a point at which the Rockall Bank, part of the very large Hatton-Rockall area of continental shelf extending under the north-east Atlantic Ocean, protrudes 21 metres above sea level. During the 1960s and 1970s the issue of Rockall was a source of legal and political controversy

in both Ireland and the United Kingdom. The UK claims sovereignty over Rockall and has sought to formally annex it under its 1972 Island of Rockall Act. While Ireland has not recognised British sovereignty over Rockall, it has never sought to claim sovereignty for itself. The consistent position of successive Irish Governments has been that Rockall and similar rocks and skerries have no significance for establishing legal claims to mineral rights in the adjacent seabed or to fishing rights in the surrounding seas.

During the course of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, which took place from 1973 to 1982, Ireland worked hard to achieve agreement on this principle. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was adopted at the conclusion of the Conference on 10 December 1982, provides at Article 121, paragraph 3 that: “Rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf”. Rockall falls into precisely this category.

In 1988, Ireland and the UK reached agreement on the delimitation of areas of the continental shelf between the two countries, stretching out up to 500 nautical miles from their respective coastlines. This included the division of the Hatton-Rockall area of continental shelf on which Rockall is situated, although under the terms of the Law of the Sea Convention the location of Rockall was irrelevant to the determination of the boundary. According to that determination, Rockall is situated to the north of the boundary agreed with the UK in 1988 and lies outside the zone claimed by Ireland.

As with any claim to continental shelf lying beyond 200 nautical miles from a state’s coast, the UN Convention requires that Ireland and the UK submit their claims for examination to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. However, the claims to the Hatton-Rockall shelf agreed between Ireland and the UK are not accepted by Iceland or Denmark (on behalf of the Faroe Islands), which make their own claims.

The four countries have met regularly since 2001 in an effort to resolve the overlapping claims issue, but to date have been unable to reach agreement. The 10-year deadline for the making of submissions to the UN Commission expired for Ireland in May 2009. The Government therefore submitted the national claim for this area at the end of March 2009, as did the British Government in respect of the UK’s claim. The deadline for the Faroe Islands is 2014 (because Denmark, which is responsible for the foreign relations of the Faroe Islands, only became a party to the Convention on the Law of the Sea in 2004) and its submission was lodged with the Commission in New York in 2010.

The Commission’s rules of procedure prevent consideration by the Commission of a submission relating to a disputed area without the consent of all the states concerned and Iceland does not currently consent to the consideration of these submissions. The submission within the deadline preserved the State’s legal position and since then the Government has continued to work for the creation of conditions that will permit its consideration as soon as possible.

The State’s continental shelf has already been successfully extended beyond 200 nautical miles in the area to the west of the Porcupine Bank where, following consideration by the UN Commission, 39,000 square kilometres of additional seabed designated in 2009 under the Continental Shelf Act. Together with France, Spain and the UK, we have also made a successful submission to the Commission in relation to a large area of seabed in the Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay and the four countries have recently begun discussions on the division of this area.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

161. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47295/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Details are set out in the following table of the retired officials of my Department who were temporarily re-engaged or who were already contracted to the Department during the period in question:

NAME/GRADE	POSITION HELD	DURATION	ESTIMATED COST - €
Frank Cogan Assistant Secretary	Head of Task Force in connection with Ireland's Chairmanship of the OSCE, 2012	Contract from 7 January 2011 to 31 December 2012	70,835 in 2012
Pádraig Murphy Deputy Secretary	Tánaiste's Special Representative in connection with Ireland's Chairmanship of the OSCE, 2012	Contract for a maximum of 30 weeks spread over the twelve months of 2012	62,450 in 2012
Hugh Swift Assistant Secretary	Passport Appeals Officer	Three-year contract from 20 January 2012 to deal with appeals as and when they arise	Dependent on the number of appeals processed (no costs incurred in 2011 or to date in 2012)
Art Agnew Assistant Secretary	To assist in the preparation of files for the National Archives	Contract for a maximum of 10 weeks spread over the twelve months of 2012	16,246 in 2012
Brendan Moran-Counsellor	Relating to Ireland's Chairmanship of the OSCE, 2012	Contract from 4 February 2011 to 22 December 2011	29,452 in 2011 (no costs incurred in 2012)
Joe Brennan Counsellor	To assist in preparations for the Irish Presidency of the European Union in January-June 2013	Contract from 1 May 2012 to 30 June 2013	8,866 in 2012

My Department's Development Cooperation Division also occasionally engages a small number of retired staff for short duration specialist consultancy projects connected with the activities of Irish Aid.

The policy of my Department regarding the re-engagement of retired officials is to do so to the minimum extent possible. However, for certain once-off or short-duration projects, it is more productive and cost-effective to re-engage retired staff who already have the relevant expertise and experience than to go through a time-consuming and relatively expensive recruitment, induction and training process. Where it occurs, retired staff are usually re-engaged on a pension abatement basis, which means in effect that they continue to receive their pensions and are paid correspondingly reduced salaries by the Department.

Middle East Peace Process

162. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views regarding the recent interception by Israeli forces of the flotilla sailing to Gaza with basic equipment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47826/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I have stated repeatedly that the overall restrictions placed on Gaza by Israel are unjustified and counter-productive and I have called for the blockade to be lifted. However, in circumstances where groups in Gaza continue to fire missiles at Israel, primarily at civilian targets, as has been happening again in the last week, Israel is entitled to interdict supplies of arms destined for Gaza, and therefore to detain and search cargoes. Non-military goods, however, should then be allowed to enter. I have seen reports that the ship recently intercepted was carrying supplies of basic non-military goods. I have also seen reports that the cargo in question was then transferred to Gaza by land; I should say, however, that I have no direct information to verify either of these reports.

While I have every respect for the motives of those engaged in these efforts, these repeated attempts to break an enforced naval blockade have been both dangerous and, I would suggest, counter-productive. There is a risk that the flotillas themselves will become the focus of political discussion rather than the issue of Gaza itself. Shipments into Gaza, even if unimpeded, can never provide more than a fraction of the needs of the territory. Much larger volumes enter the territory daily both from Israel and in smuggling tunnels which stretch across the border with Egypt. The key issue is not sea access but persuading Israel to lift the restrictions on land shipments, which are the only way in which the needs of Gaza can be met.

Illegal Israeli Imports

163. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views regarding the purchase of goods by EU countries from Israeli-occupied areas of the West Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47827/12]

181. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in view of a recent report *Trading Away Peace*, published by a consortium of 22 organisations across Europe, which shows that despite viewing Israeli settlements as illegal the EU imports goods and services with an estimated value of €230 million from the Israeli settlements compared to €15 million from Palestinian territories, if he will provide an estimated figure for the value of trade between Ireland and Israeli settlements in Palestine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48672/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 163 and 181 together.

I have stated on many occasions my view that it would be entirely consistent with EU policies and values for the products of illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to be excluded from the EU altogether, and that Ireland would support such a proposal at EU level. However, there is no prospect at present of achieving consensus on such a ban.

I have written to the Deputy, and to all Deputies, this week to set out in greater detail the Government's position on issues related to settlement products.

The report 'Trading Away Peace' is an important and powerful synopsis of issues surround-

ing the illegal settlements, which are an increasingly destructive element both in the lives of Palestinians and in relation to the very concept of a peace agreement in the Middle East. Settlements are thus a real threat to the interests and future of both Palestinians and Israelis. While I would not necessarily accept all of the views in the report, I agree -- and have been saying for some time -- that the international community, and the EU specifically, need to become more active about these issues and, where necessary, to follow up statements with actions.

It is impossible to estimate with any degree of certainty the value of settlement goods imported into Ireland. Total imports to Ireland from Israel last year were €177 million. The EU Commission has estimated very roughly that settlement products might amount to somewhat under 1% of imports from Israel. This would suggest that settlement goods imported into Ireland might amount to roughly €1.7 million (though this is a very imprecise estimate). The percentages estimated in the above-mentioned report might suggest a somewhat higher figure, although the total would still be quite small.

Shannon Airport Facilities

164. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the report findings by Shannonwatch, which show a total of 250,000 troops passing through Shannon in 2011; if this figure is consistent with the Programme for Government commitment to enforce the prohibition of the use of Irish airspace, airport and related facilities for purposes not in line with the dictates of international law; if he will commit to ending the Shannon stopover for US troops passing through Shannon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48039/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Ireland has made overflight and landing facilities at Shannon Airport available to the United States for well over 50 years. As these arrangements are fully compatible with the dictates of international law, there is no inconsistency with the commitment made under the Programme for Government to which the Deputy refers. While my Department has primary responsibility under Irish legislation for foreign military aircraft seeking to overfly or land in Ireland, the vast majority of the US troops to which you refer pass through Shannon Airport on commercial flights. The regulation of civil aviation is primarily a matter for my colleague the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. There are no plans to make any changes to the existing arrangements.

In the event that permission is sought, my Department requires an undertaking from the relevant embassy that the aircraft in question will be unarmed; will not be carrying arms, ammunition or explosives; will not engage in intelligence gathering; and is not participating in military exercises or operations.

A number of bodies in Ireland play a role in ensuring compliance with civil and criminal legislation, including An Garda Síochána, and the customs authorities. However, none of these are under the aegis of my Department.

Shannon Airport Facilities

165. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views regarding reports of the use of Shannon Airport by US forces as a stopover point for extraordinary rendition; his views on whether the Chicago convention does not preclude States from unilaterally making transit or overflight dependent on the provision and verification of information which might relate to the practice of extraordinary rendition; if he will introduce

a system of checks and investigations aimed at ensuring that there can be no aircraft passing through Shannon involved in the practice of extraordinary rendition, in line with the Chicago convention, which makes it clear that every State has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48040/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): As the Deputy will be aware, the Programme for Government states that the Government “will enforce the prohibition of the use of Irish airports and related facilities for purposes not in line with the dictates of international law”. I have regularly stated in this House that this Government does not tolerate and will not tolerate the use of our airspace or airports for any illegal purpose, including torture, rendition or the unauthorised detainment of any individual. This position is unchanged; Ireland remains totally opposed to the practice of extraordinary rendition.

Immediately following the first reports several years ago that the US was practising extraordinary rendition to transit prisoners, the then Government demanded and received specific assurances from the US authorities that such prisoners had not been transferred through Irish territory, nor would they be, without our permission. These assurances were confirmed at the highest political level. They were of a clear and categorical nature, relating to facts and circumstances within the full control of the US authorities. I am satisfied, as previous Ministers have been, that it is appropriate for the Government to rely fully on these assurances.

The permission of the Government must be sought and obtained for the transport of prisoners through Irish airports. I made it clear in this House on 22 May 2012 that “under no circumstances will we grant permission for the transport of prisoners who are subject to extraordinary rendition”.

It is likely that a small number of commercially leased aircraft which have been involved in legitimate commercial activities have also been involved at various times in activities related to extraordinary renditions. However, there is no evidence to suggest that any of these aircraft were carrying prisoners at any time when they transited through Irish airports, including Shannon Airport.

The Deputy seeks the introduction of “a system of checks and investigations aimed at ensuring that there can be no aircraft passing through Shannon involved in the practice of extraordinary rendition”. Where allegations have been made, including by members of the Oireachtas, these have been fully investigated by senior officers of An Garda Síochána. In no case has any evidence been adduced to support claims that extraordinary rendition had occurred. If anyone has evidence to suggest that any person subject to extraordinary rendition has transited an Irish airport during this process, this evidence should be made available to An Garda Síochána, so that an investigation can take place.

Questions relating to the regulation of international civil aviation and to the Chicago Convention are primarily a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. The Department of Transport is the primary interlocutor with the International Civil Aviation Authority, which has responsibility under this Convention for the regulation of international civil aviation.

Overseas Development Aid Oversight

166. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in view of the situation in Uganda, the measures and safeguards that are in place to ensure Irish aid funds are not misappropriated by other Governments and authorities that benefit from such

funding. [48166/12]

168. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 137 of 28 February 2012, in view of recent revelations regarding direct funding to the Ugandan Government, if he will commission a full audit to be carried out of all spending on behalf of the State by Irish Aid in programme countries; if he is satisfied that direct funds from Ireland to individual Governments are not being used for the purchase of arms or other military materials or services; his views on whether it is appropriate to be providing direct funding to Governments for projects while these same Governments are purchasing arms and military capability; if he intends to review the process of direct aid to Governments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48287/12]

171. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to respond to the revelation about the misappropriation of Irish ODA to Uganda; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48398/12]

172. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the total amount of Irish aid given to Uganda in 2009,2010,2011 to date in 2012; the number of staff involved, the primary goals of our engagement with the region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48399/12]

176. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the Government is going to reassess Ireland's aid giving abroad in view of what has gone on in Uganda and if there will be a policy shift and an increase in giving aid to charities based in Ireland rather than abroad also, in view of Ireland's economic difficulties and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48514/12]

180. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade following on from the foreign aid which went missing in Uganda, and is believed to have been misappropriated, the further checks that will be put in place to ensure that any funds sent abroad for foreign aid are used for the purpose for which they are intended; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48653/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 166, 168, 171, 172, 176 and 180 together.

I am deeply concerned about the recent developments relating to misappropriation of Irish development funding in Uganda. Ireland has no tolerance for fraud or any other form of malfeasance in relation to our development programme. This is clearly known to all of our development partners.

I have therefore suspended all Irish development assistance which was due to be channelled through the Government of Uganda in 2012, totalling €16 million and I have initiated an investigation into the misappropriation of funds by the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda. I have also made it clear that all necessary actions to pursue those guilty of this crime must be taken by the Ugandan authorities and that Irish funding be repaid in order that it can be used for the purposes for which it was intended, that is assisting the poor of Northern Uganda.

The Auditor General of Uganda has been carrying out a special investigation into the handling of aid funds by the Office of the Prime Minister. Ireland has been working with and assisting the office of the Auditor General as an inherent part of our programme of building accountable institutions of Government. He has visited Ireland to look at our systems of accountability. His recent report highlights significant financial mismanagement in relation to the Peace Recovery and Development Programme (PRDP) for Northern Uganda. The PRDP

Programme was established to rebuild Northern Uganda, a region which has suffered dreadfully from internal conflict and the ravages of Joseph Kony and his so-called Lord's Resistance Army. The Auditor General has found that funding of €12.6 million received from Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark last year was transferred to unauthorised accounts, of which the Irish Aid component is €4 million.

Our Ambassador in Kampala and the Director General of Irish Aid, who travelled out from Ireland, last week met with the Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Finance and Economic Development of Uganda and stressed my insistence that the misappropriated funds be restored by the Ugandan authorities. The Ugandan Government have since confirmed that all Irish Aid funds that have been misappropriated will be reimbursed, that the officials against whom financial impropriety has been established will be fully prosecuted, and that strong measures will be undertaken to tighten their internal controls. I welcome this commitment and have directed our Ambassador to work with the Ugandan authorities in bringing matters forward. The suspension of funding channelled through the Government of Uganda remains in place.

A team from the Evaluation and Audit Unit of my Department also travelled to Uganda last week to investigate the findings of the Auditor General and they will be reporting shortly.

Ireland's aid programme is strongly focused on the poorest people and communities in sub-Saharan Africa. The Government will not provide financial support under our development cooperation programme unless it is clear that Irish money is being spent for the purpose for which it was allocated. Irish funding is not given to the Ugandan Government to spend as they see fit, but rather it is for programmes in particular in the social, health and education sectors that are prescribed and agreed with Irish Aid. Funding sector programmes through Government systems is an important tool in achieving strong development outcomes and empowering national Governments to deliver and take ownership of the provision of services and is essential if the improvements put in place are to be sustainable in the long term.

In the case of Uganda, the independence and strength of the Auditor General is a clear sign of Ugandan Government accountability systems working well and the importance of assisting in this work. Ireland has been providing technical and financial assistance to his office for a number of years to build the skills and capacity required for the conduct of complex investigations such as this. While the findings of the Auditor General in this case are deeply disturbing, the fact that the Auditor General is now in a position to make them is a demonstration of the increased capacity and determination of elements within the Ugandan administration to enforce accountability for the use of Government and donor money. It is only by building national accountable systems such as this that corruption can be eliminated and I believe that if eventually we are in a position to resume development assistance to Uganda, we must continue to work with and assist the Auditor General.

Our aid programme in Ugandan is regularly examined and evaluated in order to ensure we achieve effectiveness and value for money. This is done through: auditors based in our Embassy in Kampala; the evaluation and audit team at headquarters; international accountancy firms whom we commission to carry out audits; the national audit offices of our partner Governments; and my Department's Audit Committee which provides an independent appraisal of Irish Aid's audit and evaluation and also meets with the Comptroller and Auditor General and publishes an annual report on its work. However, it is clear that notwithstanding all these 'checks and balances' that funding programmes through Governments can be very challenging as we can see in this particular case. I am committed to ensuring that we learn from this to strengthen our systems of monitoring and audit to seek to minimise the potential for the misuse of funds.

Ireland has had a bilateral aid programme with Uganda since 1994. The programme is strongly focussed on reducing poverty among some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the country. Our aid programme in Uganda is designed to: reduce the incidence of HIV and AIDS; to build schools and provide education for poor children; to reduce the incidence of Gender Based Violence; to improve democratic accountability including the promotion and protection of human rights; to help enhance the capacity of the private sector to provide jobs and economic opportunities for Ugandans and, in particular, to provide support for Karamoja, which is one of the poorest and most marginalised regions of the country.

Since commencing our work in Uganda, we have witnessed huge improvements in the quality of life for the Ugandan people. Peace has returned to most of the country after generations of war. There are now 8.3 million pupils in primary schools compared to 2.5 million in 1997. The HIV prevalence rate has been reduced dramatically from 18% in the 90s to just over 6% today. Most importantly, poverty has more than halved over the last two decades. These are real achievements, which have been made possible with the support of donors such as Ireland.

Currently 190 staff are assigned to the Development Cooperation Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade at Headquarters and Embassies and Missions overseas. There are four headquarters based officers in the Embassy in Kampala. In addition, the Embassy has a number of professional staff hired locally to provide technical input to specific programme and project areas, including a professional accountant, an internal auditor and several staff working specifically on monitoring and auditing of programmes.

The annual budget for the Irish Aid programme in Uganda over recent years was €32.75 million in 2011, €33 million in 2010, and €35.4 million in 2009. Additional support of over €7 million annually was provided by Irish Aid through NGOs, missionaries and other international partners for their work in Uganda.

I will continue to ensure that our funding is directed to those areas most in need, is used for the purposes intended and represents the best value for money. We are committed to delivering on our commitment that all aid funded by the taxpayer will benefit the poorest and most vulnerable in the countries where we are working.

Irish Communities Abroad

167. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 154 of 26 June 2012, if he will provide the 2011 figures; and if those figures can be broken down into criminal and immigration related offences. [48173/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): United States of America: In respect of the United States, the following are the relevant statistics based on information made available by the US Department of Homeland Security:

Period	Total	Criminal	Non-criminal
Federal Year 2011(October 2010 – September 2011)	58	28	30

Source: Department of Homeland Security Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2011

Canada:

In respect of Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency has made available the 2011 information as follows:

Period	Total	Criminality	Non-compliance
2011	4	3	1

Source: Canada Border Services Agency

Australia:

The statistics for Australia are below, along with definitions of the various categories. Due to privacy concerns, the Australian authorities do not provide precise breakdown of categories where the numbers involved are below 5.

2011- Irish Returns or Removals

Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR)

2011	-
Visa Overstayer	10
N/A	<5

Monitored Departure from Community

Departure	-
Other Unauthorised Arrival	14
Visa Overstayer	232
Visa Cancellation	8
N/A	<5

Involuntary Removal from Detention

Removal	-
Visa Overstayer	<5

Voluntary Removal from Detention

Other	-
Other Unauthorised Arrival	58
Visa Overstayer	17
N/A	<5
Total	347

Source: Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship

The definitions of the categories used by the Australian authorities are:

Other	-
Assisted Voluntary Return	Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) refers to clients who are returned with IOM assistance via the Community Assistance Support Program (CAS) or Community Status Resolution (CSR) and who depart Australia lawfully.

Other	-
Monitored Departure	Monitored Departure refers to clients who depart from the community lawfully, usually holding a Bridging visa E.
Involuntary Removal from Detention	Involuntary Removal refers to clients located in Immigration Detention who have no ongoing matters before the department or the courts and who are refusing to depart Australia.
Voluntary Removal from Detention	Voluntary Removal refers to clients in Immigration Detention who request to be removed from Australia by signing a request for removal form and are cooperative with the department to make removal arrangements, including seeking a travel document.

Question No. 168 answered with Question No. 166.

Diplomatic Representation Expenditure

169. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the Vatican Embassy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48288/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): As I have stated consistently, the decision to close the resident Embassy to the Holy See will not be reversed in the immediate term. However, in the context of the budgetary situation, I will continue to review the deployment of our diplomatic resources overseas. Any discussions with the Holy See on arrangements whereby it might be possible to re-establish a resident Embassy at a future date are best conducted in confidence and I do not intend to comment further on the matter.

EU Funding

170. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on whether the outcome of the negotiations on the EU's Multi-Annual Financial Framework will reflect Ireland's core values; if there is support from Ireland and other EU member states for the Commission's proposal to increase the budget for the EU's foreign policies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48373/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Negotiations of the EU Budget Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-20 are actively in progress. The Commission has proposed that €70 billion be allocated to Heading 4 (Global Europe) over the lifetime of the MFF. This would cover funding for external action instruments, most notably the Development Cooperation Instrument, the Instrument for Pre-Accession and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (it does not include the European Development Fund, aimed at African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, which is funded separately).

We have supported the Commission's proposals for Heading 4. We think it is important that

the EU establish itself as a global player to better project our values and advance our interests. Ireland has a particular interest in measures providing humanitarian and development aid.

There is broad agreement among the Member States on the structure of this heading. However, Member States are far from agreement on the overall size of the MFF, with many Member States calling for substantial reductions in the Union's Budget, which would inevitably impact on Heading 4 of the Budget. Agreement will inevitably require compromise by all sides.

A Special European Council will take place on 22-23 November devoted to the MFF and we hope that final agreement can be reached there.

Questions Nos. 171 and 172 answered with Question No. 166.

Overseas Development Aid Oversight

173. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the non-governmental organisations Ireland is engaged with in Uganda; the steps he has taken to review their activities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48400/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) (Deputy Joe Costello): Ireland has had a bilateral aid programme with Uganda since 1994. Since starting our work in Uganda, we have witnessed huge improvements in the quality of life for the Ugandan people. Peace has returned to most of the country after generations of war. There are now 8.3 million pupils in primary schools compared to 2.5 million in 1997. The HIV prevalence rate has been reduced dramatically from 18% in the 1990s to just over 6% today. Most importantly, poverty has more than halved over the last two decades. These are real achievements, which have been made possible with the support of donors such as Ireland.

The provision of support to civil society through Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) has been an essential factor in achieving real improvements in the well-being of Ugandans. Details of the Irish, international and Ugandan NGOs that receive funding from Irish Aid for programmes in Uganda are detailed below.

It should be noted that funding proposals submitted by NGOs are rigorously appraised against clear criteria by Irish Aid staff both in Headquarters in Ireland and in the Irish Embassy in Kampala and, as appropriate by external experts. The criteria include a proven organisational capacity for the effective use of funding and an assessment of management and oversight systems within partner organisations. Departmental procedures to ensure that funding to the NGO sector is used for the intended purposes include regular field monitoring visits, annual narrative and financial reporting against agreed objectives and budgets, evaluations, audits and ongoing reviews of compliance. Audit is a fundamental component of good governance and the primary responsibility for complying with audit obligations rests with the NGOs funded by the Department. NGO partners must submit annual audited accounts to the Department as part of the annual reporting process.

I have witnessed on my recent trips to sub-Saharan Africa the excellent work being undertaken by many Irish and international NGOs funded by Irish Aid. I am personally very committed to working with NGOs, both large and small, to build their capacity to make a real difference on the ground in the countries they operate. I am fully aware of the deep-rooted historic support of the public to Irish NGOs working to improve the lives of those in developing nations. My Department will continue to support the work of NGOs in Uganda and in our other Programme Countries and will ensure that Irish Aid funding is directed to those areas most in

need, is used for the purposes intended and represents the best value for money. I am committed to delivering on the commitment that all aid funded by the taxpayer, either through NGOs or through direct programmes, will benefit the poorest and most vulnerable in the countries where we are working.

2011 Irish Aid Funding to NGOs for programmes in Uganda

Funding given to Irish NGOs through HQ Civil Society Process	2011
GOAL	€ 2,851,703
MISEAN CARA FORMERLY IMRS	€882,378
CONCERN WORLDWIDE	€774,976
TRÓCAIRE	€644,133
IRISH FAIR TRADE NETWORK	€691,638
SELF HELP AFRICA	€542,272
WORLD VISION IRELAND	€270,290
OXFAM IRELAND	€268,949
AIDLINK	€250,226
WAR ON WANT NORTHERN IRELAND	€200,000
A-Z CHILDREN'S CHARITY	€168,800
GORTA	€150,000
THE LEPROSY MISSION IRELAND	€128,230
RÉALTA GLOBAL AIDS FOUNDATION	€73,189
CIVICUS SOUTH AFRICA	€50,000
VOLUNTEERS IN IRISH VETERINARY ASSOCIATION	€35,574
SPECIAL OLYMPICS IRELAND	€33,750

Funding for NGOs

Funding given to NGOs through Embassy Kampala for Country Programme Activities	-	2011
Human Rights Centre Uganda (HRCU)	Support for the project on the promotion of rights for Human Rights Defenders Uganda	€137,500
Democratic Governance Facility (DGF). This a joint donor funding mechanism of 7 donors run by an independent Programme Management Unit	The DGF funds civil society organisations working in the areas of 1) Voice and Accountability, 2) Deepening Democracy, 3) Peace Justice and Human Rights	€1,462,000
Independent Development Fund (IDF). This is funded by contributions from Sweden, UK, Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark.	Supporting civil society dealing in human and civil rights	€250,000
Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment	Environmental Accountability in Uganda: Rural Livelihoods Security in Karamoja	€100,000
Transparency International Uganda (TIU)	Tracking the utilisation of Universal Primary Education funds in Northern Uganda	€100,000

Funding given to NGOs through Embassy Kampala for Country Programme Activities	-	2011
Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS)	Responding to the floods and landslide disaster in Eastern Uganda	€50,000
African Centre for the Treatment & Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV)	Treatment, psycho-social support and legal services to victims of torture as well as advocating against torture	€100,016
Human Rights Network (HURINET)	Civil society participation in Uganda's first review of the human rights council	€25,851
Uganda Women Parliamentary Association (UWOPA)	Implementation of the Women legislative agenda for the 9th Parliament in Uganda	€40,575
International Alert	Research into the potential of oil to contribute to peaceful development	€400,000
Ecological Christian Organisation (ECO)	Support implementation of the first phase of small scale mining in Karamoja	€23,327
Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE)	Karamojong Secondary & University Bursaries Programme	€421,403
Acholi Education Initiative (AEI)	Scholarship Programme for War Affected Youth and Children in Acholi Sub-region	€178,640
HIV Civil Society Fund	Strengthening Civil Society for Improved HIV/AIDS and Orphans /Vulnerable Children Service Delivery	€4,500,000
AMICAALL - U	Strengthening Local Government Sector HIV Response in Karamoja Region	€300,000
The AIDS Support Organisation (TASO-U)	Decentralised Capacity Building of HIV/AIDS Civil Society Organisations in the Karamoja Region	€300,000
Uganda Women's Network (UWONET)	Joint Programme to Address Gender Based Violence in Busoga Sub-region	€195,501
Centre for Domestic Violence and Prevention (CEDOVIP)	Joint Programme to Address Gender Based Violence in Busoga Sub-region	€103,252
Uganda Episcopal Conference	Tackling Domestic Violence through working with the Catholic Church	€40,000
Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU)	Work with Communities & religious Leaders to reduce GBV in Busoga	€66,713
Tufts University (Feinstein Centre)	Research Study on Customary Mechanisms in Karamoja	€150,000
Oxfam UK	Reduction in Marginalisation, Sustainable Development of the Population of Karamoja	€1,300,000

Overseas Development Aid Oversight

174. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the plans he has to review the auditing system of Irish ODA, any future changes to the system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48401/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Internal Audit in my Department operates at all times to high standards in line with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing as published by the Institute of Internal Auditors and, in this regard, our auditing systems have evolved quite considerably over the past number of years.

Audit assurance in my Department is delivered in a number of ways including audits directly undertaken by the Internal Audit Unit; Irish Aid Missions and selected partners are audited annually by commissioned internationally reputable audit firms; reliance on audit reports from the National Auditors General in partner countries, where Public Expenditure Financial Accountability or other assessments have given satisfactory ratings to these bodies, audits commissioned with other donors of jointly funded programmes.

The audit function of my Department is suitably staffed with qualified accountants at HQ and in Irish Aid missions and all staff have relevant experience in the delivery of aid programmes overseas.

External oversight of the audit function in my Department is carried out in a number of ways.

Firstly, the Comptroller and Auditor General reviews the operation of the Department's Internal Audit function and places reliance on its work for the purpose of its annual report. This report is in turn examined by the Public Accounts Committee.

Secondly, my Department has in place a fully independent Audit Committee which reports to and advises the Secretary General. The Audit Committee provides oversight of the evaluation and audit function, reviews the work programme and audit policies, and assesses the operation of the Department's system of Risk Management. The Audit Committee meets approximately 8 times each year, including annually with the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. It publishes an annual report on its work.

The work of the Evaluation and Audit Unit in my Department is in line with international auditing standards employing a risk-based approach to determine its multi-annual workplan. This is approved by the Secretary General and overseen by the independent Audit Committee.

The role of audit has evolved in recent years to include reviews by my Department of partner Governments' public financial management systems in countries where Irish Aid implements its development programmes. Evidence gathered from these reviews demonstrates that National Audit Offices (NAOs) are operating effectively. This in turn allows my Department to use National Audit Offices as part of our audit systems.

As part of the Evaluation and Audit Unit's strategy to strengthen the capacity of National Audit Offices, my Department supports a global initiative known as the INTOSAI Donor Cooperation (International Organisation for Supreme Audit Institutions) and Ireland is a prominent member of this initiative providing both funding and in-kind support.

Regular reviews of the overall audit approach, audit work programmes and resources are undertaken by the Evaluation and Audit Unit to ensure that developments in audit keep abreast of the challenges posed by the expanding programme. As part of this process the Evaluation and Audit Unit proposed in 2011 that an external review of the audit systems employed by my Department be undertaken and this review is scheduled to take place in 2013. I look forward to the outcome of this review. In addition, the Evaluation and Audit constantly monitors its own performance and adjusts its operation to ensure maximum effectiveness.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

175. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the plans he has to designate a Chief Risks Officer and appoint a professionally qualified Head of Finance in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48402/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): My Department pursues a pro-active Risk Management Policy. A Risk Management Committee, chaired by the Head of Corporate Services Division, coordinates risk management across the Department and reports to the Management Advisory Committee (MAC). Individual Heads of Division are responsible for managing Risk in their own areas of operation and Risk management is a standing item on the agenda of the monthly meetings of the MAC. This structure and approach is in line with Department of Finance guidelines. Nevertheless, my Department is constantly striving to enhance its risk management processes in line with best practice. In that context, it is considering a recommendation from the Department's external Audit Committee that a Chief Risk Officer be designated for the Department. Given the very diverse range of functions fulfilled by the Department and the need to concentrate increasingly scarce staff resources on major current and upcoming operational responsibilities, it has not been possible to identify a candidate to fulfil the role who is free of line management responsibilities. The Secretary General of my Department invited the audit committee to meet with the MAC to elaborate further on its proposal and set out its view of how a dedicated chief risk officer would operate in the Department and this meeting will take place shortly.

The audit committee has also recommended the appointment of a head of finance at counsellor/principal officer grade who holds a professional accounting qualification and who has significant relevant experience. While the current moratorium on recruitment and the limited possibilities for redeployment of a suitably qualified candidate from elsewhere in the public service means that it has not been possible to implement this recommendation to date, my Department is developing a proposal to strengthen and upgrade its professional capacities in the accounting area which will feature in the Department's workforce plan which will be finalised shortly.

In the meantime, I note that both internal audits and external Comptroller and Auditor General audits have reported satisfaction with the management and operation of the Department's Finance Unit.

Question No. 176 answered with Question No. 166.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

177. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48546/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I am and my officials are directly involved in ongoing and frequent North South engagement up to and including the highest levels. This involves having extensive contact with the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly, political parties, civil society and all sides of the community.

This work is undertaken in the context of actively pursuing our priorities for advancing co-operation through the structures of the North South Ministerial Council, most recently at the plenary meeting of the Council which took place last Friday 2 November in Armagh. The engagement involves many officials in the Department in addition to the current team of four officers, two at first secretary/assistant principal level, one administrative officer and one clerical officer) within the Department's Anglo-Irish Division who deal primarily with matters relating to North South economic co-operation, and the nine officers (one at counsellor/principal officer level, and others at first secretary/assistant principal, higher executive officer and clerical officer levels, who are working as part of the Joint Secretariat of the North South Ministerial Council in Armagh.

Áisíneachtaí Tras-Teorann

178. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dessie Ellis** den Tánaiste agus Aire Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála cén maoiniú atá curtha ar fáil do na háisíneachtaí trasteorann don bhliain 2012; cén céatadán den mhaoiniú a caitheadh ar thuarastail gach bliain ó 2008; an bhfuil fostaithe na n-áisíneachtaí atá lonnaithe ó dheas ag feidhmiú faoi ráta tuarastail atá bunaithe ar an gcioclán is déanaí de chuid na Státseirbhíse, Ciorclán 28/2009; ar íocadh incrimintí le foireann na n-áisíneachtaí sin ó 2008; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [48605/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Nil aon fhreagracht dhíreach ar mo Roinnse maidir leis na Forais Fhorfheidhmithe Thuaidh-Theas a bunaíodh faoi Chomhaontú na Breataine-na hÉireann. San dlínse seo tá an fhreagracht sin ar chúig Roinn Stáit: Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta (Uiscebhealaí Éireann, an Foras Teanga Thuaidh/Theas a chuimsíonn Foras na Gaeilge agus Bord na hUltaise), an Roinn Post, Fiontair agus Nuálaíochta (IdirThrádáil Éireann), an Roinn Cumarsáide, Fuinnimh agus Acmhainní Nádurtha (Coimisiún an Fheabhail, Chairlinn agus Shoilse Éireann-Gníomhaireacht na Loch); Roinn Caitheachais Poiblí agus Athchóirithe (Clár Speisialta AE); an Roinn Sláinte (An Bord um Chur Chun Cinn na Sábháilteachta Bia). De bhreis air seo, tá freagracht maidir le Turasóireacht Éireann ar an Roinn Iompair, Turasóireachta agus Spóirt.

Trade Missions

179. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will consider the possibility of a national trade mission to Great Britain, which was proposed at a recent meeting of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly, of a nature similar to those that have been led by government Ministers to countries including China, in an effort to have trade boosted in our nearest foreign market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48627/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Britain is a major export market for Irish business and is also a strategic export market in that it is often the first export destination for indigenous companies. As a large and nearby market, with similar business practices and client needs, it is a natural fit for Irish exporters. It accounts, for example, for 41% of Irish food and drink exports and the market supports vital employment in the Irish economy. It is also a growing market. Notwithstanding the current economic challenges globally, for the first eight months of this year, our merchandise exports to Britain have increased by more than €1 billion compared with the same period last year, reflecting both the quality and value of the offering from Irish exporters and the priority attached to the market by the Government.

Reflecting that importance, the level of trade promotion activity by the Government in the British market is already quite extensive. To date in 2012 there have been 25 ministerial or high-level visits to Britain incorporating a trade promotion element. Typically these have been in support of specific sectorial trade promotional activities by the State development agencies.

Our economic agencies and our diplomatic service have a significant market presence in Britain, and are well positioned to support exporters there on a targeted and ongoing basis.

Notwithstanding that extensive promotional effort and export performance, the Government is clear that we must seek to further develop our trade relationship with Britain. The joint statement issued by the Taoiseach and PM Cameron in March of this year aims to build on the existing strong trade relations between Ireland and the UK. Supporting and further developing this growth is something to which I am devoting considerable attention.

The joint statement identifies a number of sectors where collaboration between British and Irish entities could give rise to mutual gain and work is ongoing between the two Governments in pursuit of that agenda.

It is also true that, even without availing of the Government support available, it is possible for Irish companies to engage in Britain with relative ease. Many Irish suppliers maintain a physical presence in the UK and in some sectors customers operate as a UK and Ireland business, resulting in market needs which are very closely aligned.

I should also note that trade missions may take place under the auspices of non-governmental groups, including Chambers of Commerce, which bring together companies with common interests. The Deputy may be aware, for example, that there is a newly formed British Irish Chamber of Commerce which I expect will engage in activities designed to increase trade between Britain and Ireland.

Because of the importance of the British market, I intend to keep the level and nature of trade promotion with Britain under review and to support whatever activities best generate new business opportunities and employment in Irish firms.

Question No. 180 answered with Question No. 166.

Question No. 181 answered with Question No. 163.

Overseas Development Aid Oversight

182. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide a detailed breakdown of all moneys allocated to Irish aid for overseas development during the past five years; if he is satisfied that all moneys went to the projects for which they were intended; if all this funding was spent appropriately and accounted for; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48735/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): Ireland's aid programme prioritises the fight against global poverty and hunger. Every day it saves lives and builds capacity for the future – making a real difference in the lives of millions. The programme is central to our foreign policy, has an enviable international reputation, and consistently enjoys strong political and public support.

Over the past five years, and despite the very difficult economic conditions facing the country for much of that period, Ireland has consistently contributed over 0.52% of gross national

product, GNP, towards Official Development Assistance, ODA. This level of contribution has earned us a strong reputation for being a generous and reliable donor, and clearly demonstrates the Government's determination to meet our commitments towards assisting some of the world poorest people. In the current year, Ireland will contribute €639 million to ODA.

Each year a detailed analysis of Ireland's ODA is published in the statistical annexes to the Irish Aid annual report. The annexes provide a comprehensive analysis of Ireland's ODA, including the developing countries supported; the areas or sectors in which we engage, and the partner organisations implementing our development programmes. I am arranging for copies of the annual reports for the past five years to be sent to the Deputy.

Irish Aid works in some of the world's least developed countries, often in challenging and risky environments. Many times we are working through government systems and other partnerships with relatively low capacity. We have put in place rigorous systems for planning, monitoring, evaluating and auditing the aid programme to ensure funding is spent for the purposes intended. We continually monitor and assess programmes both at mission level and by headquarters staff to ensure that programmes deliver the intended results. A comprehensive system of internal audit is in place, with an independent audit committee which reports directly to the Secretary General. We work closely with national audit offices and provide assistance where appropriate. All instances and/or allegations of fraud or misappropriation are reported directly to the Secretary General and onwards to the Comptroller and Auditor General. However no control environment, no matter how strong, can provide cast iron assurances that fraud or misappropriation will not occur. In the last two weeks evidence of serious misappropriation of funding in Uganda has come to light concerning Irish and other donor funding intended for northern Uganda. The Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade took immediate and decisive action and suspended all aid to Uganda through government systems, until such time as the funding is repaid and action taken against the perpetrators of this fraud. In addition a team of evaluation and audit officials from my Department travelled to Uganda to investigate the findings of the Auditor General and will be reporting back shortly.

The role of the Ugandan Auditor General was very important in identifying this fraud especially in view of the levels of collusion involved. Irish Aid has been assisting this office over a number of years as part of its programme of building strong and accountable Government institutions. Corruption and fraud must be fought if continuing progress is to be made in Africa. Offices of Auditors General are key to this fight and we will continue to support them where possible.

We have now received confirmation from the Ugandan Government that all Irish Aid funding misappropriated will be repaid; the officials who engaged in financial impropriety will be fully prosecuted, and that strong measures will be undertaken to tighten internal controls. We welcome this commitment, and our Ambassador in Kampala is working with the Ugandan authorities in bringing matters forward. Finally, we are determined to ensure the lessons learned from Uganda are incorporated into our business control system.

Departmental Staff Numbers

183. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49074/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I understand that the Deputy's question relates to cases involving staff being moved from roster-

working to annualised hours. No such cases arise in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

184. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49086/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I understand that the Deputy's question relates to certain retirements on or before 29 February 2012 – the end of the so-called *grace period* – where superannuation benefits were calculated on the basis of pre-1 January 2010 salary scales. One officer who retired under this arrangement has been temporarily re-engaged in order to assist with the Department's activities in the lead-up to and during Ireland's Presidency of the EU from January to June 2013. The officer was re-engaged on a pension abatement basis, meaning that he continues to receive his pension and is paid a correspondingly reduced salary by the Department. This temporary recruitment arrangement is in line with a Government decision of 16 December 2011 relating to Presidency matters, including staffing arrangements. The policy of my Department regarding the re-hiring of retired officials is to do so to the minimum extent possible. However, for certain once-off or short-duration projects, it is more productive and cost-effective to re-hire retired staff who already have the relevant expertise and experience than to go through a time-consuming and relatively expensive recruitment, induction and training process. There are no State agencies, offices or bodies under the aegis of my Department.

Budget 2013

185. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide the full list of budgetary information, not the actual data, which will be sent to foreign individuals and or groups, for example the IMF, ECB, the European Commission, the German Parliament, before being seen by Dáil Éireann, including for each one, the name of the person or organisation, the type of information which will be sent, the date it will be sent and the agreement treaty it is being sent under; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48008/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The final details of the budget are decided by the Government and are not made known to individuals or groups outside the Government system until budget day. As the Deputy will be aware, we are in a programme of financial support with the EU and the IMF. The programme documents include a commitment to publish a budget to achieve a specified level of consolidation. The commitment provides broad indications of how this is to be achieved. As part of our programme, we are obliged to share some information with the EU Commission, the ECB and the IMF – the external partners, especially during the quarterly review missions. In this context, the continuing conditions listed at the start of the memorandum on specific economic policy conditionality include the following provision:

“To facilitate programme monitoring, the authorities will provide the European Commission, the ECB and the IMF with:..... All information required to monitor progress during programme implementation and to track the economic and financial situation.” Such information is shared on a confidential basis, with the understanding that its circulation is restricted. This

includes technical information on the options for revenue and expenditure measures which could be considered to meet the fiscal consolidation targets already specified. Any such options are clearly signalled as being subject to Government decision. This information flow is part of the process needed to facilitate the evaluation of the performance to date, and also, to provide assurance to the EU, ECB, and the IMF that there are options available to enable us meet our commitments.

The quarterly review process is an integral part of our financial support programme. The process starts with a review mission and ends with consideration and approval by the EU (Commission and Council) and the IMF executive board. Following each review mission the external partners and the Irish authorities agree updated programme documents, specifically the letters of intent, the memorandum of understanding on specific economic policy conditionality, the memorandum of economic and financial policies and the technical memorandum of understanding. Once finalised, the Letters of Intent are signed jointly by the Minister for Finance and the Governor of the Central Bank and are issued to the EU and the IMF, along with the accompanying programme documents. These documents are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and placed on the Department of Finance website following their transmission. In the event that these documents are issued prior to Budget Day, they will not include budget day details as mentioned above.

Tax Reliefs Application

186. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence regarding pension tax breaks (details supplied). [48152/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The correspondence referred to in the question is from an individual who is concerned about reductions in the current tax relief available on pension contributions. No decisions have been made in this matter and I will bear in mind the concerns expressed in the context of any decisions that may be made in the future.

Pension Provisions

187. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will intervene to stop the pensions levy being charged on retired members (details supplied) of the Electric Supply Board pension fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48625/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The pension fund levy applies at a rate of 0.6% per annum to the market value, on the valuation date, of assets under management in pension funds and pension plans approved under Irish tax legislation. The levy will operate for a period of four years only (2011 to 2014) and the legislative provisions giving effect to the levy (section 4 of Finance (No 2) Act 2011) were specifically drafted to reflect this.

The moneys raised from the pension fund levy are being used to pay for the Government's *Jobs Initiative* introduced in May 2011. The measures introduced as part of the *Jobs Initiative* include a new 9% VAT rate on certain activities, the halving of the lower rate of PRSI and small amounts of additional current and capital expenditure.

The implementation of a jobs and growth strategy is a key priority of the Government. The measures announced in the *Jobs Initiative* are aimed at assisting in employment generation – providing opportunities for those who are out of work, to restore public morale and confidence in the economy and encourage spending by consumers.

The chargeable persons for the levy are the trustees or other persons (including insurance companies) with responsibility for the management of the assets of the pension schemes or plans. The payment of the levy is treated as a necessary expense of a pension scheme and the trustees or insurer, as appropriate, are entitled, where they decide to do so, to adjust current or prospective benefits payable under a scheme to take account of the levy. It is up to the trustees to decide whether and how the levy should be passed on and who should be impacted and to what extent, given the particular circumstances of the pension schemes for which they are responsible. I cannot intervene in this process in respect of the ESB pension fund or other pension funds.

However, the legislation also includes safeguards aimed at ensuring that benefits payable, either currently or prospectively to any member, are adjusted in such a way that the reduction in value of those benefits shall not exceed 0.6% of the market value of the assets accounting for the scheme's liabilities to that member.

I am conscious of the concerns of pension scheme members about the impact of a levy in circumstances where the pensions sector, in common with other sectors in our economy and society, is finding the current economic and financial environment very challenging. However, much of the value of pension funds is attributable to the rolled up value of generous tax reliefs that pension savings have historically been granted and continue to receive. The imposition of the levy is for a relatively short period and its purpose is to improve the economic environment by providing the means to encourage job creation in areas of our economy most likely to deliver that employment quickly.

Tax Code

188. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will ensure greater equity in pension tax arrangements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48688/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There are a number of significant challenges currently facing pensions systems across Europe and in Ireland. As the populations of most EU countries are aging, issues around pension sustainability and adequacy mean that effective retirement age and the need for longer working in particular have come to the fore. In Ireland, there are currently six people of working age for every pensioner and this ratio is expected to decrease to approximately two to one by 2050. People aged 65 years and over will account for a greater proportion of the population while the proportion of working age is expected to decline. People are living longer with healthier lives and growing numbers of people want to work, or may need to work beyond State pension age. This has obvious and significant implications in relation to the future costs of State pension provision. Therefore, the task of financing increasing pensions will fall to a diminishing share of the population.

With these challenges and opportunities in mind, earlier this year, the Government asked the OECD to examine Ireland's overall pension policy in light of the economic downturn and to ensure that it meets the needs of future generations. The review, which began in April of this year, encompasses the totality of pension provision in Ireland i.e. state, private, occupational and public sector. The review takes account of the programme for Government commitments in the pensions area, including tax reliefs and the commitment to cap taxpayers' subsidies for pension schemes, (including politicians' pension schemes), that deliver income in retirement of more than €60,000. The review will focus in particular on the commitment on universal coverage, and is also informed by developments at EU level in relation to pensions.

The OECD will report on the sustainability of the pension system in the light of demograph-

ic and investment challenges; the adequacy and coverage levels, in order to ensure adequate income in retirement with a particular focus on the lower and middle income group; the modernity of pension systems to ensure flexibility in the labour market and supporting mechanisms for longer working, and equity within the pension system.

In addition to this overall review, the Government has, since coming into office, introduced a number of key pension reforms:

Legislation was introduced in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act, 2011 to abolish the State pension (transition) with effect from January 2014 thereby standardising pension age at 66. The State pension (contributory) age will be increased to 67 in 2021 and to 68 with effect from 2028.

Further changes to State pension include changes to rate bands; to align the rate of pension paid with the contribution made ensures that those who contribute more during a working life benefit more in retirement than those with lesser contributions.

Significant changes to occupational pensions, specifically defined benefit pension provision have also been introduced:

Legislation introduced in 2011 provided for a sovereign annuity as an option for pension schemes. In August, the National Treasury Management Agency, NTMA, announced details of the sale of over €1 billion of Irish amortising bonds which were purchased by pension schemes and welcomed pension funds into the economy.

The regulatory structure for defined benefit pension schemes has been re-introduced. Legislation enacted during the year strengthened the Funding Standard by introducing a requirement for schemes to develop a risk reserve from 2016 and to meet the reserve requirement in 2023 with a view to ensuring greater security for pension scheme members and giving pension schemes increased protection from market volatility in the future.

The “Report on Pension Charges in Ireland 2012” was recently published by my Department with support from the Central Bank and Pensions Board. This report, which is a fact finding report, has concluded that there are serious challenges in relation to the reasonableness and transparency of the pension changes. Comments from interested parties and stakeholders are being invited over a three month period (i.e. by the end of January 2013). These responses will be considered and a further policy and regulatory response, if necessary, will be brought to Government.

Tax Credits

189. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide the number of tax credits and reliefs available to taxpayers; the number of taxpayers that have availed of these; and if he will provide a breakdown of the total cost of these credits and reliefs. [47218/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As regards tax reliefs currently available, a comprehensive summary of these was provided recently in my reply to Dáil Question No. 197 asked on 23rd October 2012. That reply contains details, as advised to me by the Revenue Commissioners, of the total identifiable costs to the Exchequer relating to income tax and corporation tax allowances, reliefs, exemptions and tax credits available and the numbers of taxpayers availing of them. The information relates to 2008 and 2009, the most recent year for which the necessary detailed information is available.

Mortgage Interest Relief Eligibility

190. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance the reason first time house builders are being treated differently to first time house buyers in terms of availing of mortgage relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47260/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The position is that a residence under construction may have various payments made throughout the course of construction in respect of which money may have been borrowed (e.g. on the purchase of the site and at various stages of the construction). On the understanding that the residence under construction will, when completed, become the individual's sole or main residence, tax relief is generally afforded on the interest paid on monies used to purchase the site and on interest paid on monies used to fund various stages of construction. However, where the residence when completed does not become the sole or main residence of the individual, any tax relief granted on interest paid will be recouped.

As the Deputy is aware, tax relief on interest paid on all qualifying home loans is being phased out. Tax relief on interest paid on qualifying home loans taken out in the period 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2012 will continue up to and including the 2017 tax year. However, tax relief is not available on interest paid on loans taken out on or after 1 January 2013. Likewise, where a residence is under construction, only the interest paid on monies drawn down on or before 31 December 2012 will qualify for tax relief.

A qualifying loan for mortgage interest relief is one which without having been used for any other purpose, is used in purchase, repair, development or improvement of a claimant's principal private residence.

As with all time-limited reliefs, there will always be people who just miss out, and that is why I have been as flexible as possible with the legislation within the current budgetary constraints. However, I do not intend to extend the parameters of mortgage interest relief any further.

Tax Yield

191. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance he total amount of vat collected at 13.5%, over the most recent year for which figures are available, for each of the following items; beauty treatments, massages, nail treatments, tanning or sunbed services, routine cleaning of residential property, non-oral contraceptive products, non-residential property building services related to non-residential property, including installation, routine cleaning of non-residential property, photographic services including photographic prints, works of art, antiques and literary manuscripts, cosmetic surgery, tattoo artists, tree surgery, valet cleaning of cars, collectors items and faith healers. [47271/12]

192. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the total amount of vat collected at 9%, over the most recent year for which figures are available, for each of the following items, green fees, membership of commercial and local government golf courses, admission to lap dancing, hot take away food and hot drinks, fair ground amusements and hair dressing. [47272/12]

193. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the total value to the economy of golf club membership fees; transactions of investment gold; hire of chauffeur driven vehicle; air craft leasing and directors fees; and the amount of VAT raised on these transactions.

[47273/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 191 to 193, inclusive, together.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that it is not possible to furnish figures of the VAT take from the goods and services specified, as the information furnished on VAT returns does not require the yield from particular sectors of trade to be identified.

I am further advised by the Revenue Commissioners that some of the items described by the Deputy may not be solely liable at the VAT rate mentioned. For example, green fees and golf membership fees may be exempt from VAT or liable to VAT at the 9% rate depending on the nature of the golf club and the supply of the services of an intermediary in relation to investment gold could be a VAT exempt financial services transactions in certain circumstances.

Equally for example, non-residential property building services related to non-residential property, including installation, could include items that are liable to VAT at the 23% standard rate in certain circumstances.

Furthermore, with regard to the value to the economy of golf club membership fees; transactions of investment gold; hire of chauffeur driven vehicle; air craft leasing or directors fees, the CSO does not provide a breakdown of economic activity by this level of disaggregation.

Banking Sector Remuneration

194. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will respond to the following query (details supplied) regarding bankers salaries [47278/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): A review of remuneration practices and frameworks at the State supported banks – a programme for Government commitment - is presently underway. I have noted the concerns raised by the Deputy's constituent in relation to bankers pay in that context.

Bank Debt Restructuring

195. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to reports that Allied Irish Banks, in which he is the shareholder of 99.8% of the shares, has sold a portfolio of loans with a nominal value of €675m to Lone Star, if he will confirm the sale price of portfolio; if AIB will book an additional loss on the sale compared with the existing book value of the loans net of provisions, and if so, the quantum of the additional loss. [47279/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The sale of loan portfolios is a commercial matter for the management and the board of the bank. I do not have a role in this function. AIB has informed me that EBS Limited has contracted to sell to Vesta Mortgage Investment Limited, (an affiliate of Lone Star), approximately €660m nominal of loan assets as part of its continuing strategy to meet its non-core deleveraging targets. The portfolio is primarily comprised of non-core Irish commercial real estate loans originated by EBS Limited.

The sale price is a matter of confidentiality between the parties. It is normal course of practice that sales processes are conducted under appropriate confidentiality constraints in order to protect the interests of all parties.

AIB is satisfied that it has maximised value for the bank and its stakeholders as the portfolio was sold following the completion of a comprehensive two stage competitive auction sales process involving a number of credible international investors.

This transaction facilitated the deleveraging of a substantial non-core portfolio and subject to completion of closing conditions is expected to close prior to year end.

This sale brings AIB's total net non-core deleveraging to date to 80% of AIB's three year PLAR deleveraging target of €20.5 billion. AIB remains on course to complete the majority of its total 2013 deleveraging targets by year end 2012 and to achieve this target in line with PCAR capital requirements assumed under the March 2011 exercise.

Bank Debt Restructuring

196. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to reports that Allied Irish Banks, in which he is the shareholder of 99.8% of the shares, has sold a portfolio of loans with a nominal value of €675m to Lone Star, if he will confirm that arrangements will be made to ensure borrowers whose loans have been acquired by Lone Star, do not suffer inconvenience or loss. [47280/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The sale of loan portfolios is a commercial matter for the management and the board of the bank. I do not have a role in this function. AIB has informed me that EBS Limited has contracted to sell to Vesta Mortgage Investment Limited, (an affiliate of Lone Star), approximately €660 million nominal of loan assets as part of its continuing strategy to meet its non-core de-leveraging targets. The portfolio is primarily comprised of non-core Irish commercial real estate loans originated by EBS Limited.

Communication with affected borrowers has been a priority for the Bank and each Borrower will receive, in addition to verbal notification, a written communication from EBS notifying them of the sale. Subsequent to completion they will also receive further written communication from EBS and separately from Vesta Mortgage Investment setting out the arrangements for the management of their loans going forward. Affected borrowers will continue to remain liable for the full amount of their debt. Their loan terms and conditions remain unchanged and are not impacted by the sale of their loans.

This sale brings AIB's total net non-core de-leveraging to date to 80% of AIB's three year PLAR de-leveraging target of €20.5 billion. AIB remains on course to complete the majority of its total 2013 de-leveraging targets by year end 2012 and to achieve this target in line with PCAR capital requirements assumed under the March 2011 exercise.

Bank Debt Restructuring

197. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to reports that Allied Irish Banks, in which the he is the shareholder of 99.8% of the shares, has sold a portfolio of loans with a nominal value of €675m to Lone Star, can he confirm the regulations that govern the relationship between Lone Star and the borrowers whose loans have been acquired. [47281/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The sale of loan portfolios is a commercial matter for the management and the board of the bank. I do not have a role in this function. AIB has informed me that EBS Limited has contracted to sell to Vesta Mortgage Investment

Limited, (an affiliate of Lone Star), approximately €660 million nominal of loan assets as part of its continuing strategy to meet its non-core de-leveraging targets. The portfolio is primarily comprised of non-core Irish commercial real estate loans originated by EBS Limited.

The purchaser was selected following the completion of a comprehensive two stage competitive auction sales process involving a number of credible international investors. AIB has informed me that it is satisfied that by selecting the purchaser following this sale process, it has maximised value for the bank and its stakeholders. This transaction was approved by the Boards of both EBS and AIB and AIB's de-leveraging committee which includes non-voting observers from my Department and the Central Bank.

The loan terms and conditions of borrowers whose loans form part of the sale remain unchanged and are not impacted by the sale of their loans. The purchaser is not a regulated entity. It should be noted that this portfolio principally comprises commercial real estate loans which are not subject to the same level of regulation that applies to home loans.

Communication with affected borrowers has been a priority for the bank and each borrower will receive, in addition to verbal notification, a written communication from EBS notifying them of the sale. Subsequent to completion they will also receive further written communication from EBS and separately from Vesta Mortgage Investment setting out the arrangements for the management of their loans going forward. Affected borrowers will continue to remain liable for the full amount of their debt. Their loan terms and conditions remain unchanged and are not impacted by the sale of their loans.

This sale brings AIB's total net non-core de-leveraging to date to 80% of AIB's 3 year PLAR de-leveraging target of €20.5 billion. AIB remains on course to complete the majority of its total 2013 de-leveraging targets by year end 2012 and to achieve this target in line with PCAR capital requirements assumed under the March 2011 exercise.

Bank Debt Restructuring

198. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to reports that Allied Irish Banks, in which he is the shareholder of 99.8% of the shares, has sold a portfolio of loans with a nominal value of €675m to Lone Star, if he will confirm the quantum of fees and commissions that AIB is paying to organisations which were engaged to assist with the sale, including fees paid to Morgan Stanley and legal fees. [47282/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The sale of loan portfolios and the appointment of advisors is a commercial matter for the management and the board of the bank. I do not have a role in this function. However, AIB has informed me that EBS Limited has contracted to sell to Vesta Mortgage Investment Limited, (an affiliate of Lone Star), approximately €660 million nominal of loan assets as part of its continuing strategy to meet its non-core de-leveraging targets. The portfolio is primarily comprised of non-core Irish commercial real estate loans originated by EBS Limited.

The purchaser was selected following the completion of a comprehensive two stage competitive auction sales process involving a number of credible international investors. This transaction was approved by the boards of both EBS and AIB and AIB's de-leveraging committee which includes non-voting observers from my Department and the Central Bank.

AIB has further informed me that it typically engages external parties to advise it on sale processes in order to avail of relevant and necessary experience and expertise. AIB does not disclose the amounts paid to these advisors for commercial reasons. As AIB has a strong focus

on minimising the costs to the bank of these expert advisors, in each case, the bank undertook a competitive tendering process to select the advisors to assist in this sale process. These processes focused on relevant experience, product knowledge, quality of advisory team and fee structure. Furthermore, in the case of the sales advisor, fees were structured to incentivise the advisor to assist in maximising value for the bank and its stakeholders.

This sale brings AIB's total net non-core de-leveraging to date to 80% of AIB's three year PLAR de-leveraging target of €20.5 billion. AIB remains on course to complete the majority of its total 2013 de-leveraging targets by year end 2012 and to achieve this target in line with PCAR capital requirements assumed under the March 2011 exercise.

Customs and Excise Protocols

199. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will ensure that marked gas oil MGO / green diesel is assigned a separate commodity code by the Revenue Commissioners to enable the Central Statistics Office and its users to separate imports of MGO from normal diesel products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47268/12]

200. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will introduce an arrangement for users of marked gas oil MGO / green diesel to seek tax rebates annually rather than providing the fuel to the qualified consumer at a separate price, thus encouraging illegal diesel laundering which is increasingly costly to multiple enforcement agencies, damaging to the persons forced to work in these plants, damaging to the environment where the waste is dumped and the State Exchequer when sold; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47269/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 199 and 200 together.

I have been informed by the Revenue Commissioners who have responsibility for mineral oil tax that they do assign a separate code to marked gas oil imports in their regular return of data to the Central Statistics Office. In addition, details of all hydrocarbon oils, including marked gas oil, retained for home use are included in Revenue's annual statistical report, which is published on www.revenue.ie.

My understanding of the Deputy's second question is that it envisages a movement away from the current system of marking of oil to which a reduced rate of tax applies to one in which certain users would be given refunds as part of the mineral oil tax paid by them in respect of fuel used for non-auto purposes. The issue of the introduction of a rebate scheme for users of marked gas oil has been addressed in previous parliamentary debates. A change to a system of this nature would involve the establishment of an expensive repayments system and would give rise to significant costs and place an administrative burden on oil traders, users and the Revenue Commissioners. It would also pose significant cash-flow costs for those currently using marked gas oil. Marked gas oil has a wide range of uses such as the propulsion of trains, the operation of agricultural, construction and industrial machinery, commercial sea-navigation (including fishing) and for commercial and home heating purposes. Any change in the existing system would therefore impact across a wide range of users.

Enforcement action is taken by the Revenue at all stages of the fuel supply chain, targeting those involved in laundering and those selling laundered fuel. Legislation introduced this year includes provision for the strengthening of licensing requirements for the sale of auto-fuel as well as the introduction of a new system of licensing for the sale of marked gas oil. There will

also be a new requirement, from January 2013, for all fuel traders to make monthly returns to Revenue detailing their fuel transactions. This will be an important new source of information on the fuel supply chain and will assist in the identification of unusual or suspicious patterns of activity.

In addition, the Revenue Commissioners are working closely with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs in the UK on the development of a more effective fuel marker. An invitation to make submissions was issued jointly by both administrations in June. This has generated considerable interest across a number of countries and I am advised that it is expected that a significant number of proposals will be submitted by the closing date of 30 November.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

201. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47294/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Information regarding the number of retired public servants who have been re-hired is detailed in the Appropriation Accounts. The Appropriation Accounts are available online at www.audgen.gov.ie. During the period January 2012 to date, no staff member was rehired. However, one former staff member provided contractual services to this Department for 1.5 days and was paid at a *per diem* rate.

Exchequer Revenue

202. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Finance the current Exchequer account balance; the estimated cost of maintaining such a large amount of cash on hand; the plans for the use of these funds for 2012, 2013 or 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47327/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): It has been clarified with the Deputy that the question refers to the cash balances held in the Exchequer account and the use to which these will be put. The Exchequer had available cash balances of €22.5 billion at end-October 2012. Funds in the Exchequer are used for the ongoing payments necessary for running the State. The April stability programme update, SPU, estimated that the cumulative Exchequer deficit over the years 2013-2014 would be close to €25 billion. In addition to these day-to-day costs, there are large debt redemptions that are scheduled from early 2013, including a €5.6 billion bond repayment in April 2013 and a €7.6 billion bond repayment in January 2014. The continuing budget deficits and debt redemptions must be adequately and prudently funded.

The cash reserves held in the Exchequer come from a number of different sources such as tax revenue, non-tax revenue, and borrowings by the State from the market and under the EU/IMF Programme. As the Exchequer is an omnibus account, it is not possible to derive a single robust cost figure in relation to the balances maintained. A cost, for example, of not maintaining an adequate and prudent cash balance would include the risk that the Exchequer would be unable to meet its obligations and that market interest rates would possibly be higher than would otherwise be the case due to the perception that the State had a precarious liquidity position.

Exchequer cash reserves are an important component in bolstering investor confidence in Ireland as it continues on the path to full independent market access at sustainable interest rates. The EU/IMF programme ends in 2013 making such market access of critical importance.

Tax Yield

203. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount that could be raised for the Exchequer if the imputed distribution percentage on approved retirement funds and PRSAs was increased from 6% to 8% where the asset values are in excess of €2 million and from 5% to 7% where the asset values are between €1 million and €2 million. [47348/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): An annual imputed distribution rate of 5% applies to approved retirement funds, ARFs, with asset values of €2 million or less and, from this tax year, to ‘vested’ personal retirement savings accounts, PRSAs, where benefits have commenced) on the same basis. A higher imputed distribution rate of 6% applies from this tax year to ARFs and/or ‘vested’ PRSAs with asset values of more than €2 million. I assume the Deputy is suggesting an increase in the imputed distribution from 6% to 8% for ARFs and/or ‘vested’ PRSAs of more than €2 million in value and an increase from 5% to 7% where the asset values are greater than €1 million and less than €2 million. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that information provided to them in the context of the tax paid on these deemed or imputed distributions does not include information on the value of the ARFs and/or ‘vested’ PRSAs out of which the distributions are deemed to arise. There is therefore no basis on which a definitive estimate of the impact on the Exchequer of the change mentioned in the question could be compiled.

As an exercise that might provide some indication of the scale of the additional tax yield involved, data made available to my Department from private sector sources provides a breakdown of ARFs by value in respect of a number of providers representing an estimated 40% of the ARF market. There is no similar data available in relation to ‘vested’ PRSAs.

Out of a total value of some €2.4 billion in ARFs under management by these providers where the average ARF value was just over €127,000, the total value of those ARFs representing individual funds of over €1 million and under €2 million was €274 million. The total value of those ARFs representing individual funds of over €2m was €137 million. Based on a very rough extrapolation of these figures to arrive at a broad potential estimate for the total value of ARFs with assets in excess of €1 million, the estimated additional tax yield from applying increased imputed distribution rates to such ARFs as set out above would be about €8 million in a full year.

It is important to note that the deemed or imputed distribution measure is designed to encourage draw downs from ARFs and ‘vested’ PRSAs so that they are used, as intended, to fund a stream of income in retirement in the same way as a retirement annuity, for which ARFs are supposed to operate as a more flexible alternative. The measure, in itself, does not give rise to significant tax revenues as it does not apply to actual draw-downs from ARFs and ‘vested’ PRSAs, which are taxed in the normal way. Moreover, increasing the annual percentage notional distribution for ARFs and ‘vested’ PRSAs as suggested in the question would further increase the risk that the retirement income derived by the owners from such funds could be depleted before death.

Fiscal Policy

204. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Finance if any analyses are being undertaken in view of the IMF World Economic Outlook note on multipliers to establish the short-term multiplier for Government spending. [47386/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): At the outset, I want to stress that the

Government's key objective of supporting economic growth that delivers jobs remains to the forefront in framing fiscal and economic policy. Fiscal consolidation reduces the fiscal deficit and increases investor confidence which in turn lowers the cost of borrowing and helps to put public debt on a declining path. Having said that I fully recognise that there will be a short term reduction in output before these medium term benefits are realised. So it is a difficult balancing act between the need for consolidation on the one hand and the need to support the emerging recovery on the other. There is, I think it is fair to say, an acknowledgement among many commentators that we in Government are getting this balance right.

The recent IMF World Economic Outlook suggests that the average size of fiscal multipliers (the effect of consolidation on growth) across countries may have been underestimated in recent years. More recently, senior IMF staff tasked with monitoring developments in Ireland pointed to the multiplicity of factors at play in acting as a dampener on growth and acknowledged that there was no convincing evidence that the fiscal multiplier for Ireland was underestimated compared with that assumed under the programme.

Ireland is a small, open economy with imports accounting for over three quarters of GDP. This means that a considerable amount of consolidation leaks out through reduced demand in countries we import from. We can already see this in the Balance of Payments figure, which shows the current account moving from a deficit of -5.7% of GDP in 2008 to a surplus of 1.1% in 2011.

Fiscal multipliers vary according to the fiscal instruments used, and the impact on aggregate demand as a result of expenditure changes can differ from tax changes. I would reiterate the Government's cognisance of this and its commitment to implementing consolidation in as growth-friendly a manner as possible.

In order to correct our excessive deficit and minimise the cost to the taxpayer through sustaining investor confidence and keeping the cost of borrowing as low as possible, Ireland is committed to implementing further consolidation over the next three years. Evidence of the rewards associated with this approach is already visible through the lowering of bond yields since early summer and the successful return of the NTMA to the debt market.

Tax Reliefs Cost

205. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the savings to the Exchequer from reducing the maximum tax free lump sum upon retirement from €200,000 to €100,000. [47331/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The following arrangements currently apply to retirement lump sums paid under pension arrangements approved by the Revenue Commissioners. Lump sum amounts up to €200,000 are paid free of tax. They are also paid free of USC. The portion of a lump sum between €200,001 and €575,000 is taxed on a ring-fenced basis at 20%. This means that no tax credits or other tax reliefs can be set against this portion of the lump sum. No USC is chargeable. Any amount of a lump sum in excess of €575,000 is taxed at the individual's marginal rate of tax (credits and other tax reliefs are available). In this instance, USC is chargeable on the excess. These amounts are lifetime amounts with prior lump sums aggregating with later lump sums. I assume from the Deputy's question that he is proposing that retirement lump sums in excess of €100,000 be taxed as outlined above. As there is no general requirement for data on the number of persons who are receiving payments of retirement lump sums of less than €200,000 to be returned to my Department or to the Revenue Commissioners, I am not in a position to provide definitive figures on the Exchequer impact of

reducing the tax-free retirement lump sum amount from €200,000 to €100,000.

As an exercise that might provide some indication of the scale of the savings involved, it is estimated that just over 33,000 individuals in the public service would be on salaries of over €67,000 and less than €133,500 which, under existing pension scheme arrangements generally applying across the public service, would deliver retirement lump sums of between €100,000 and €200,000 to persons retiring after a full 40 year career. If it is assumed that these individuals would retire in line with retirement trends from the public service in a normal year (about 2.5%), then the additional tax yield from taxing lump sums in excess of €100,000 at 20% could be about €8 million in a full year.

I have no data on which to provide a similar estimate in relation to the private sector. I should point out, however, that one significant difference between public sector and private sector pension schemes is that private sector schemes invariably allow scheme members the option of commuting part of their pension fund for a tax-free lump sum. The option of receiving benefits in the form of pension only is not available to members of public sector schemes. Depending on the impact of any tax charge on retirement lump sums, the option to commute part of a pension fund may no longer be exercised by private sector pension scheme members or may be exercised in a manner that reduces the value of the lump sum taken to minimise or avoid any immediate tax charge.

Tax Reliefs Cost

206. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the savings to the Exchequer from reducing the maximum tax free lump sum upon retirement from €200,000 to €100,000 and taxing the margin over €100,000 at 41% rather than 20% between €200,000 and €575,000 which currently exists. [47332/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The following arrangements currently apply to retirement lump sums paid under pension arrangements approved by the Revenue Commissioners. Lump sum amounts up to €200,000 are paid free of tax. They are also paid free of USC. The portion of a lump sum between €200,001 and €575,000 is taxed on a ring-fenced basis at 20%. This means that no tax credits or other tax reliefs can be set against this portion of the lump sum. No USC is chargeable. Any amount of a lump sum in excess of €575,000 is taxed at the individual's marginal rate of tax (credits and other tax reliefs are available). In this instance, USC is chargeable on the excess. These amounts are lifetime amounts with prior lump sums aggregating with later lump sums. I assume from the Deputy's question that he is proposing that retirement lump sums in excess of €100,000 be taxed at 41% instead of 20% as outlined above. As there is no general requirement for data on the number of persons who are receiving payments of retirement lump sums of less than €200,000 to be returned to my Department or to the Revenue Commissioners, I am not in a position to provide definitive figures on the Exchequer impact of reducing the tax-free retirement lump sum amount from €200,000 to €100,000.

Based on broad assumptions and an extrapolation of certain available data, it is estimated that the additional tax yield from taxing lump sums in excess of €100,000 at 41% in respect of the public service could be about €20 million in a full year. I have no data on which to provide a similar estimate in relation to the private sector. I should point out, however, that one significant difference between public sector and private sector pension schemes is that private sector schemes invariably allow scheme members the option of commuting part of their pension fund for a tax-free lump sum. The option of receiving benefits in the form of pension only is not available to members of public sector schemes. Depending on the impact of any tax charge on

retirement lump sums, the option to commute part of a pension fund may no longer be exercised by private sector pension scheme members or may be exercised in a manner that reduces the value of the lump sum taken to minimise or avoid any immediate tax charge.

Bank Debt Restructuring

207. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to his announcement on 23 April 2012 that the 17% stake in the National Asset Management Agency, or specifically National Asset Management Agency Investment Limited, owned by what was Irish Life and Permanent in the residue of which, the Minister controls 99.5% of Permanent TSB and 100% of Irish Life was sold; if he will confirm that the party to whom his April 2012 announcement related was the same as the party whom NAMA announced was its new stakeholder in October 2012. [47437/12]

208. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance to confirm the actual sale price of the 17% stake in the National Asset Management Agency, or specifically National Asset Management Agency Investment Limited, owned by what was Irish Life and Permanent, which had a nominal value of €17m, and whether Irish Life booked any loss in its accounts on the transaction; in addition if Irish Life has retained any exposure on the stake after the sale, including a commitment to buy-back the stake or to guarantee a minimum return to the buyer. [47438/12]

209. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement of the sale of the 17% stake in the National Asset Management Agency, or specifically National Asset Management Agency Investment Limited, owned by what was Irish Life and Permanent, the sales process undertaken by Irish Life so as to secure the best deal for the taxpayer. [47439/12]

210. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement of the sale of the 17% stake in the National Asset Management Agency, or specifically National Asset Management Agency Investment Limited, owned by what was Irish Life and Permanent in the residue of which, the Minister controls 99.5% of Permanent TSB and 100% of Irish Life if he will confirm the costs incurred by Irish Life in selling its stake including fees paid to promoters and external providers of legal and other advice. [47440/12]

211. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement of the sale of the 17% stake in the National Asset Management Agency, or specifically National Asset Management Agency Investment Limited, owned by what was Irish Life and Permanent in the residue of which, the Minister controls 99.5% of Permanent TSB and 100% of Irish Life if he will set-out the terms of the share holding; the entitlement to dividends and the method by which any ultimate value of the stake will be determined when NAMA is wound up. [47441/12]

212. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement of the sale of the 17% stake in the National Asset Management Agency, or specifically National Asset Management Agency Investment Limited, owned by what was Irish Life and Permanent in the residue of which, the Minister controls 99.5% of Permanent TSB and 100% of Irish Life; the consideration given to acquiring the stake by the Bank of Ireland, in which the Minister controls 15% of the ordinary shares and further controls preference shares recently valued at €1.5bn. [47442/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 207 to 212, inclusive, together.

I can confirm that the transaction recently completed was not the transaction referred to in the Dail in April 2012 as a decision was subsequently taken, that Irish Life would engage a financial adviser to perform a wider marketing of the stake to Irish and international investors. Irish Life appointed Davy Corporate Finance to run a competitive sales process which ultimately resulted in a company owned by the Partners of Walbrook Capital acquiring the 17% shareholding in NAMAIL. I am informed by Irish Life that the costs incurred by it in selling its stake in NAMAIL are commercially sensitive.

Irish Life does not now retain any interest in NAMAIL. I am not in a position to disclose the consideration paid by the buyer due to contractual confidentiality restrictions. Details of the terms of the shareholding are outlined on page 140 of NAMA's Annual Report for 2011.

Mortgage Interest Relief Eligibility

213. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance if he will permit special mortgage relief for applicants who have contracts agreed and mortgage approval granted but will not be able to take possession of the dwelling until after 31 December 2012. [47457/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The position is as I stated in my budget day speech and on many occasions in this House that mortgage interest relief for principal private residences will no longer be available to house purchasers who purchase after the end of 2012 and will be fully abolished from 2018. This means that the qualifying loan will have to be drawn down on or before 31 December 2012 in order to qualify for this relief. I have no plans to review this decision. A qualifying loan for mortgage interest relief is one which without having been used for any other purpose, is used in the purchase, repair, development or improvement of a claimant's principal private residence.

Tax Reliefs Cost

214. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the savings that could be made for the State from reducing the pensions related earnings cap from €115,000 to €60,000. [47481/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I assume that the Deputy is referring to the current annual earnings cap of €115,000 which operates to limit the level of tax-relieved personal pension contributions in any one year. The annual earnings cap acts, in conjunction with age-related percentage limits of annual earnings, to put a ceiling on the annual amount of tax relief an individual taxpayer can obtain on pension contributions. A breakdown of the cost of tax relief on employee contributions to occupational pension schemes is not available by income tax rate, as tax returns by employers to the Revenue Commissioners of employee contributions to such schemes are aggregated at employer level. An historical breakdown is available by tax rate of the tax relief claimed on contributions to personal pension plans — Retirement Annuity Contracts, RACs, and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts, PRSAs — by the self-employed and others, to the extent that the contributions have been included in the personal tax returns of those taxpayers. There is, therefore, only a limited statistical basis for providing definitive figures. However, by making certain assumptions about the available information, the Revenue Commissioners inform me that the combined estimated full year yield to the Exchequer from reducing the current annual earnings cap of €115,000 to €60,000 in respect of individual contributions to occupational pension schemes, RACs and PRSAs would be about €175 million.

Tax Reliefs Application

215. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the assertion made by the Irish Association of Pension Funds, where it claims that the Programme for Government outlined the States intention to apply a cap of €60,000 on pensions that receive State support; anyone who wants and can afford a pension income in excess of €60,000 can then provide for it themselves through unsupported savings, the vast majority of ordinary pension savers, 98%+, will continue to be unaffected as they are average workers saving average amounts, the introduction of this measure could ensure the same rules apply to all those saving for retirement - whether they public servants, private sector workers or the self-employed; critically, this measure will save the State over €400m per annum and enable it to exceed the revenue target set for the pensions sector; the impact will only be felt by approximately 27,000 higher paid taxpayers rather than the 555,000 that would be hit by a change to the marginal rate of tax relief; those affected are employees typically earning in excess of €125,000 per annum, to state whether the assertion is correct; if the figures tally with his Department's figures; the way this €60,000 cap would apply; and if the Government is considering implementing such a proposal. [47486/12]

221. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Finance his views in relation to comments (details supplied) regarding a pensions cap for the purposes of tax relief; if he will explain how this would work; and if this approach is being considered instead of reducing tax reliefs as was provided for in the National Pensions Framework. [47778/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 215 and 221 together.

Officials of my Department and the Revenue Commissioners have for some time been engaged in a process with representatives of certain of the professional stakeholders in the pensions sector, including the Irish Association of Pension Funds, about the potential for securing savings in the area of supplementary pension reliefs implicit in the EU/IMF agreement. That engagement is ongoing.

Research carried out on behalf of these stakeholders leads them to suggest, in broad terms, that changes to the existing maximum allowable pension fund for tax purposes at retirement (the Standard Fund Threshold - SFT) affecting individuals on earnings of over €125,000 per annum would deliver savings broadly equivalent to what would be achieved by reducing marginal rate tax relief on employee pension contributions to the standard rate while impacting on a much smaller number of taxpayers.

I would point out that the scale of pension saving reliefs available to higher earners, in particular, has been significantly restricted over recent years. Aside from the reduction in the SFT from over €5.4 million to €2.3 million in the budget and Finance Act 2011, the annual earnings cap which operates in conjunction with age-related percentage limits to determine the annual amount of tax-relievable contributions that can be made by an employee or individual to pension savings has been reduced from over €275,000 in 2008 to its current level of €115,000 per annum. This means that higher earners can only benefit from tax relief on their pension contributions on a percentage of their earnings (based on age) up to €115,000 per annum which is already below the earnings level being targeted in the research referred to in the question. The report on the research is being examined.

The debate around the incentive regime for pension saving has tended to focus either on a further reduction in the maximum allowable pension fund for tax purposes at retirement or on a reduction in the rate of tax relief on pension contributions. These approaches are not, of course,

mutually exclusive. In my 2012 budget speech in December last, I said that I did not propose to make changes to the existing marginal rate relief at that time but that the incentive regime for supplementary pension provision will have to be reformed to make the system sustainable and more equitable over the long term. I said that my Department and the Revenue Commissioners would work with the various stakeholders in the next year to develop workable solutions. On foot of this, a broad informal consultation was undertaken this year across a spectrum of stakeholders in the pensions sector, in addition to the professional stakeholders mentioned earlier, to establish their views on further changes to the incentive regime for pension saving.

I will give due consideration to the views of all interested parties in the pensions sector in the context of any proposals I may make to Government regarding the incentive regime for pension saving.

Customs and Excise Controls

216. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance the number of requests received by the Revenue Commissioners to increase their number of customs dogs in each of the past three years; the number of requests that have been approved; the number of requests that were refused; if refused, the reasons for the refusal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47548/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that their Customs Service currently deploys 13 detector dog teams at strategic locations throughout the country. The dogs are used to detect drugs, tobacco and cash and are used at ports, airports, mail centres, express courier depots and are also used to assist in the course of certain investigations. “Passive dogs” are used as this maximises their capability, enabling the screening of passengers in addition to merchandise and baggage. The commissioning and deployment of dog detector teams is subject to ongoing evaluation by Revenue, two additional dog teams are currently undergoing training and will be fully operational in December 2012. When these new teams are operational the number of dog teams will stand at 15 (an increase of 9 since 1993). The Deputy may also be interested to note that where previously dogs were trained and deployed to detect only one commodity, where feasible newly deployed dogs are now trained to detect more than one.

Tax Reliefs Cost

217. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance the tax reliefs and breaks that remain open; the savings to the Exchequer if each tax relief and breaks were discounted; the number and savings to the Exchequer of the reliefs and breaks that were discounted in the past two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47549/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As regards tax reliefs currently available, a comprehensive summary of these was provided recently in my reply to PQ 197 of 23rd October. As the Deputy will be aware, virtually all of the area-based and property tax incentive schemes have ended and this year’s Finance Act provided for a cap on property-based Accelerated Schemes (in line with the tax life of the particular scheme) to be introduced from 1 January 2015. Many reliefs were terminated at a date prior to period to which the Deputy refers, although in some cases transitional arrangements apply. However the reliefs that were terminated in the last two years are set out below along with the estimated annual Exchequer saving:

Relief	Amount
Rent relief (phased abolition)	€97 million
Patent royalty exemption	€50 million
Loans to acquire an interest in certain companies (phased abolition)	€49 million
Consanguinity relief for residential property	-
First time buyer's relief	-
Low value properties (residential property below €127k and non-residential property below €10k)	-
Purchase of new houses	-
Site to child relief	-
Estimate (combined)	€39 million
Trade Union Subscriptions	€26 million
Exemption that applies to the first 6 weeks of	-
Illness Benefit and Occupational Injury	€13 million
BIK exemption for employer provided childcare	€6 million
BIK (Benefit-in-kind) exemption on certain	-
Professional subscriptions	€5 million
Farm consolidation relief	€1 million
Approved Share Options Schemes	€0.5 million
Purchase of new shares by an employee	€0.3 million

Banking Sector Remuneration

218. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will deal with a matter (details supplied) regarding bankers pay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47612/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): A review of remuneration practices and frameworks at the State supported banks – a Programme for Government commitment - is presently underway. I have noted the concerns raised by the Deputy's constituent in relation to bankers pay in that context. The present cap on remuneration remains in place. In relation to the suggestion of a tax on bonuses I would point out that existing legislation allows for a special Universal Social Charge rate of 45% - in addition to income tax and PRSI statutory deductions - to be applied to the payment of bonuses exceeding €20,000 to an employee of a State supported covered institution. The payment of bonuses at these institutions is presently prohibited.

Tax Code

219. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence regarding the cider industry (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47686/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Under EU law (Art 13(2) of Council Directive 92/83/EEC) we are obliged to apply the same rate of excise duty to all other fermented beverages, which include cider. Ireland has however used the option under paragraph (3) of that article, to apply two lower rates to cider below 8.5% vol and 6% vol. In addition, a further reduced rate of tax for low strength cider was introduced, with effect from 15 October 2008, for cider of a strength not exceeding 2.8% alcohol by volume, as provided for Under Article 5 of

the Directive. The Deputy refers to the UK in his question, the UK exemption is a historical one which was in operation prior to the implementation of the Directive in 1992. Under the current EU legislative framework, a reduced rate can only be applied on the basis of strength, and there is no provision for exemption based on size of operation. The Deputy should note that a cider manufacturer's licence is also required for the production of cider on a commercial basis under the Finance (1909-1910) Act 1910.

Tax Rebates

220. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if a tax refund is due in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47757/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that a refund is due to the person concerned for the tax year 2011. PAYE Balancing statement (P21) and refund will issue shortly.

Question No. 221 answered with Question No. 215.

Mortgage Resolution Processes

222. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Finance if he will put in place measures to enable couples where each partner owns a residence and both are in negative equity to allow them both to sell in order to buy a joint residence. [47825/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank has advised me that they wrote to all mortgage lenders in 2010 to ascertain whether they were offering, or intended to offer, a mortgage product that would allow home owners to sell their existing home and transfer the negative equity portion of the original loan to the new loan. In order to ensure that proposals in relation to such mortgages were consistent with the Central Bank's consumer protection and prudential policy objectives, the proposed criteria for any such facility would need to be agreed in advance between mortgage lenders and the Central Bank. In response to the Central Bank's letter, only a small number of mortgage lenders said that they would consider offering such a facility. A trial period commenced in mid-2011 and was due to be assessed by the Central Bank and the institutions involved before the end of 2011. However the low level of activity made it difficult to conduct a meaningful review.

The Central Bank also advised me that, following the issue of the report of the Inter-Departmental Mortgage Arrears Working Group in September 2011- which included a recommendation on trade down mortgages - several lenders contacted the Central Bank with regard to offering negative equity mortgages. This included trade up, trade down and trade down where the customer was in arrears.

In light of this and of the low level of take up in 2011, the Central Bank revised some of its criteria and communicated this revision to the main lenders. While the provision of negative equity mortgages may facilitate people in moving homes and may generate transactions in the housing market, it is not expected that there will be a large take up of this product. All sales must comply with the affordability and suitability provisions set out in the Consumer Protection Code. I expect that the Central Bank will continue to assess the impact of these measures as part of their general oversight of the banks' activities in the mortgage market.

NAMA Debtor Agreements

223. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance if there are any debtors of the National Assets Management Agency in receipt of salaries from NAMA who are being pursued by said organisation for personal guarantees. [47856/12]

224. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance if there are any debtors of the National Assets Management Agency in receipt of salaries from NAMA who are being pursued by said organisation for recovery of assets transferred to a third party. [47857/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 223 and 224 together.

The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) advises that it does not pay salaries to debtors as it is not their employer. The Agency advises that, in certain cases, it permits debtors to retain part of the income from their income-producing assets to pay overheads where necessary for the preservation and enhancement of the value of property securing its loans. These costs may include an allowance for the remuneration of debtors and the staff employed by the debtor to manage the assets when the Agency decides that this offers the best and most cost effective option for the taxpayer.

The Agency advises that the decision as to whether to work with a debtor, and whether to approve the retention of overheads to include an allowance for the remuneration of a debtor, is determined on an individual case basis by its assessment of how it can best optimise debt recovery. A number of factors are taken into account in this regard, including a debtor's level of co-operation with the Agency and, where applicable, the voluntary reversal of asset transfers and pledging of unencumbered assets.

The Agency advises that it does not permit an allowance for the remuneration of a debtor in circumstances where that debtor's business plan is unacceptable or the debtor is not co-operating, including in circumstances where a debtor refuses to grant charges over unencumbered assets and/or to reverse asset transfers to relatives and others. As previously advised, the Agency is also currently pursuing a number of cases in the Courts to effect the reversal of asset transfers by debtors that appear to have been designed to put the assets beyond its reach.

The Agency similarly advises that, as the legal pursuit of personal guarantees generally occurs in the context of enforcement, the retention of overhead costs by a debtor does not arise. As advised to the House recently, to date the Agency has secured charges over unencumbered assets controlled by its debtors with a total value of €514 million. This amount includes arrangements with certain debtors that the transfer of assets to connected parties be reversed.

Fuel Sales

225. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance the number of litres of petrol and diesel that were sold in the State in the past five years for which the data is available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47882/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the number of litres of petrol and diesel that were sold in the state in the past five years is not available. However, the number of litres of petrol and diesel where mineral oil tax was paid in the calendar years 2007 to 2011 is as follows:

Year	Petrol	Auto Diesel
-	Litres	Litres
2007	2,377,727,280	3,025,245,030
2008	2,310,695,880	2,959,932,690
2009	2,117,044,957	2,714,349,687
2010	1,930,179,524	2,559,664,467
2011	1,829,164,922	2,563,433,251

Banking Sector Staff Issues

226. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff who have left Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Limited since January 1 2011 to join AIB and Bank of Ireland; if he will provide details of the posts which these persons vacated at IBRC and the posts they took up in AIB and Bank of Ireland. [47863/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised that 384 staff across Ireland, UK and the US have left IBRC from 1st January 2012 to 2nd November 2012. Some of these staff would have been replaced. Any information which IBRC receives about employees who leave the Bank to join other organisations is based on individuals volunteering such information to the Bank before they leave. The Bank does not have validated information regarding the future plans of such ex-employees and is therefore not in a position to supply a detailed response to this question.

Banking Sector Remuneration

227. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff that are on a total remuneration package including pension payments, allowances and benefits of between €100,000 and €200,000, between €200,000 and €300,000, between €300,000 and €400,000, between €400,000 and €500,000; and the number with more than €500,000 at IBRC. [47864/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Bank of the following numbers in relation to total remuneration. These figures include the pension payments, allowances and benefits.

Total Remuneration	Staff Nos in UK & IRL
€0 - €99,000	774
€100,000 - €149,000	146
€150,000 - €199,000	44
€200,000 - €299,000	24
€300,000 - €399,000	12
€400,000 - €499,000	0
€500,000+	6

NAMA Staff Remuneration

228. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff that are on a total remuneration package including pension payments, allowances and benefits between

€100,000 and €200,000, between €200,000 and €300,000, between €300,000 and €400,000, between €400,000 and €500,000; and the number with more than €500,000 at the National Assets Management Agency. [47865/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The National Asset Management Agency has no employees. Rather, under Section 42 of the NAMA Act 2009, the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) assigns staff to the Agency. As of end-October 2012, some 227 staff had been assigned by the NTMA to the Agency. The Agency reimburses the NTMA the costs incurred in assigning these staff and in providing other business and support services. The legislation which established the NTMA in 1990 deliberately positioned it outside of the wider public service structures with the operational freedom to negotiate market-competitive salaries to enable it to compete with the private sector to attract and retain staff with specialist and highly marketable skills. Under this business model, there are no general pay grades and no pay scale and all staff are on individually negotiated contracts.

Other than a small number of staff reassigned from other functions within the NTMA, Agency staff are employed by the NTMA on the basis of specified purpose contracts – their employment lasts for as long as their particularly skills and experience are required. The total remuneration of NTMA staff assigned to the Agency, which is set out below in tabular format, reflects the fact that, given the nature of the Agency’s activities, this staffing complement is primarily composed of experienced professional staff with substantial private-sector experience. The total remuneration delineated below includes gross salary, employer pension contribution and, where applicable, other benefits. Agency staff members are subject to the Public Service Pension Deduction.

NAMA Staff Pensions

229. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff departures there have been from National Assets Management Agency since it was established in December 2009. [47866/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) that in the period from its establishment in December 2009 to end-October 2012 there have been 23 staff departures.

Property Taxation Application

230. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Finance if in the context where people have a number of apartments where they are compelled to pay the home tax levy on each apartment and the household charge on each apartment, if he will consider allowing these as illegitimate deductible expenses as charges on the business, particularly when the holding of such properties are pure business with no other source of income available to the person who owns them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47954/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am assuming that the reference to the “home tax levy” is a reference to the Non Principal Private Residences (NPPR) charge payable under the Local Government (Charges) Act 2009. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that a person in receipt of rental income is assessed to income tax on the profit amount of the rents received (i.e. the gross rents less allowable expenses incurred in earning those rents). In computing the profit 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 paid on borrowed money used to purchase, improve or repair the property (in the case of residential property, the deduction is restricted to 75% of the interest and is subject to compliance with PRTB registration requirements for all tenancies that existed in relation to the property in the relevant year); and
- payment of local authority rates in the case of rateable properties used for commercial purposes.

In addition, wear and tear allowances are available in respect of expenditure incurred on fixtures and fittings provided by a landlord for the purposes of furnishing rented residential accommodation. These allowances are granted at the rate of 12.5% per annum of the actual cost of the fixtures and fittings over a period of 8 years. I have no plans to amend the deductible expenses to include the home tax levy or the household charge.

Tax Clearance Certificates

231. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will expedite a tax clearance application in respect of a person (details supplied) that has been waiting on their certificate for a considerable period of time and is causing them concern. [47980/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Revenue Commissioners have confirmed that the application for a Tax Clearance Certificate from the person (details supplied) was received by them on 24/10/2012 and approved and the Tax Clearance Certificate issued electronically on 25/10/12. There was no delay on the part of Revenue in this matter.

Tax Yield

232. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide in tabular form the effective tax rates paid by companies in annual profit bands of €0 to €20,000, €20,001 to €50,000, €50,001 to €75,000, €75,001 to €100,000, €100,001 to €150,000, €150,001 to €200,000, €201,000 to €300,000, €301,000 to €500,000, €500,001 to €1,000,000, €1,000,001 - €2,000,000, €2,000,001 - €3,000,000, €3,000,001- €5,000,000, €5,000,001- €10,000,000, €10,000,001 - €50,000,000, €50,000,001 to €100,000,000, and more than €100,000,000. [47998/12]

252. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he has considered introducing a minimum effective tax rate for businesses in legislation; if so, the effective rate he has considered and the financial outworking of same; if he will set out in tabular form the potential revenue raising for the Exchequer could be if a minimum effective rate of 5%, 6%, 6.5%, 7%, 7.5% and 8% was legislated for. [48522/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 232 and 252 together.

There are different ways of measuring the effective rate of corporation tax depending on the variables that are used. As there is no single internationally agreed comparative measure in place, I am not in a position to provide the information on effective tax rates sought in either of the Deputy's questions.

In answer to previous questions, I have acknowledged that one estimate of the effective rate of corporation tax in Ireland is 11.9%. This figure came from a 2011 *Paying Taxes* study produced by the World Bank and PriceWaterhouseCoopers as part of an annual *Doing Business* report and includes a measurement of effective tax rates across 183 countries. This effective tax rate was calculated based on the tax obligations of a standardised company operating in each country of the study and using standard assumptions regarding exemptions, deductions and allowances.

Another recent study by the European Commission – *Taxation Trends in the EU 2011* - also indicates that Ireland has an effective corporate tax rate which is close to, or indeed higher than, the statutory 12.5% rate (the rate identified is, in fact, higher than 12.5% perhaps because of the higher 25% tax rate that applies, generally, to non-trading profits).

The above calculations are to give the Deputy examples of the differences that exist in comparative studies on effective tax rates, depending on how the rate is calculated or who carries out the calculation. However, the fact that these effective tax rates are close to our headline rate is reflective of the strong transparency around Ireland's 12.5% corporation tax regime. Neither I, nor my Department, have considered the possibility of introducing a minimum effective tax rate for businesses.

Tax Reliefs Cost

233. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the tax reliefs available to companies; the individual costs to these reliefs to the Exchequer in each of the years 2007 to date in 2012. [47999/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Companies are chargeable to corporation tax on their profits, wherever arising, after taking account of allowable deductions and reliefs as provided for under the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (TCA). The TCA requires a company's trading profits to be computed in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice subject to any adjustment required by law in computing such profits. Expenses that are incurred wholly and exclusively for the purposes of the trade are deductible in computing trading profits, while allowances are available for capital expenditure on plant and machinery, industrial buildings and certain intangible assets used in the trade, with such allowances treated as a trading expense. It is assumed that the Deputy is only asking about the main tax expenditures available under the TCA to companies operating in Ireland. These reliefs are listed as follows:

- Tax credit for expenditure on research & development - sections 766, 766A and 766B
- Relief for start-up companies - section 486C
- Exemption for profits from occupation of certain woodlands - section 232
- Relief for investment in renewable energy generation – section 486B

The following table shows the estimated corporation tax cost for the reliefs outlined above, for the tax years 2007 to 2010, the latest year available. Due to the Revenue Commissioners obligation to observe confidentiality in relation to the tax affairs of individual companies the

cost for investment in renewable energy projects is not shown in the following table.

Tax relief Provision	2007	2008	2009	2010
Research and Development tax credit	€165.6m	€146m	€216.1m	€223.7m
Relief for startup companies	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	€4.6m
Exemption for profits for occupation of certain woodlands	€0.2m	€3.2m	€2.4m	€0.3m

Tax Yield

234. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the top ten corporation tax payers in here in the last full accounting year; the amount they paid in corporation tax collectively and individually; what those companies collective and individual profits were in the relevant year answered; if he will provide an estimate of what they received in tax reliefs collectively and individually, with a breakdown of the tax reliefs. [48000/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that for reasons of taxpayer confidentiality and the possibility that this information could be used to identify the corporations concerned, they are not in a position to provide the information on an individual basis as sought by the Deputy. The collective figures for profits and tax reliefs claimed as requested by the Deputy will be examined to see if these figures can be released on a collective basis without compromising taxpayer confidentiality. However, it was not possible to complete this examination within the timeframe available.

As respects corporation tax payments, the latest information available relates to accounting periods ending in 2010 when the corporation tax paid by the top ten companies totalled €1.126 billion.

Customs and Excise Controls

235. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will allocate funding to purchase two additional mobile x-ray scanners for the Revenue Commissioners in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48022/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners, who are responsible for the collection of taxes and duties and for tackling the smuggling of dutiable and prohibited goods, that they regard anti-smuggling prevention as a high priority area. The use of enforcement equipment such as mobile X-ray scanners and other detection technologies is just one part of a multi-faceted strategy employed by Revenue to tackle smuggling. This strategy includes ongoing analysis of the nature and extent of smuggling activity and developing and sharing intelligence on a national, EU and international basis. It necessitates ongoing review of operational policies and optimum deployment of resources at points of importation and inland to intercept contraband product. Revenue continually monitors ongoing developments in available X-ray and other technologies and the selection and deployment of detection equipment is constantly reviewed. Revenue has made use of the European Union's Hercule II programme to part-fund the acquisition of detection equipment and will apply for further funding, where appropriate, in the future. The actual technology selected and the operational deployment of that technology are matters for the Revenue Commissioners.

Under the present rules of the Hercule II programme, Ireland would have to fund a minimum of 50% of the capital cost and 100% of the ongoing operational costs of a new container scanner. The capital cost of such a scanner would be of the order of €3 million and the running costs would be approximately €320,000 a year.

Revenue currently has two mobile X-ray container scanning systems, which are based at Dublin Port and Rosslare Ferry Port. However, both scanners are available for deployment at other ports and at warehouses etc as required, and Revenue utilises them, on a risk assessment basis, at various locations throughout the country. Revenue is satisfied that the container ports are adequately serviced by these scanners and has no plans at present to acquire any additional scanners of this kind.

Revenue also uses smaller static baggage/parcel scanners at all major ports, airports and postal depots and are currently in the process of replacing units in Dublin Airport, Shannon Airport and Rosslare Ferry Port. In addition, it expects to take delivery shortly of a mobile x-ray van, which will enhance scanning capabilities at airports, ports and warehouses. The acquisition of this equipment is being supported by the Hercule II programme.

Departmental Agencies Board Appointments

236. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 141 of 23 October 2012, if a person (details supplied) has been appointed to the National Development Agency, and if he will provide a brief background on this appointee. [48093/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I wish to clarify that it was Mr Gerry Murray who was appointed to the Board of the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) in July 2012 and not Mr Gerry Murphy as stated in reply to Parliamentary Question No 141 of 23 October 2012. Mr Murray is the Chief Executive of Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI), which is the representative body for thirteen of Ireland's Institutes of Technology. He was formerly the Head of the PPP Unit in the Department of Education and Skills and has direct experience of PPPs and project management.

NAMA Debtor Agreements

237. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance the average wage for developers or project facilitators in the National Assets Management Agency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48105/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As previously advised to the House (Parliamentary Question, 39693/12, 20 September 2012) and restated by the National Asset Management Agency's Chairman before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform in recent weeks, the Agency has permitted 168 principals to retain salaries from rental and other income generated by their cash producing assets where it has determined that this represents the best and most cost effective option for the preservation and enhancement of the value of property securing its loans. As further advised the Agency's analysis shows that 17% or 29 principals retain income of up to €49,000; a further 43% or 73 principals retain income of between €50,000 and €99,000; 23% or 38 principals retain income of between €100,000 and €149,000; 15% or 25 principals retain income of between €150,000 and €190,000; and 2% or 3 principals retain income of €200,000. The Agency advises that, based on this breakdown, the total principal salaries retained from income producing assets in

2012 will be of the order of €15.5 million. The Agency advises that it takes a large number of factors into account before approving the overhead allocation for any debtor to operate its business. These include the overall value of the assets, the debtor's level of co-operation, knowledge of the assets, experience and the Agency's view of the extent to which he can add value.

Tobacco Smuggling

238. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Finance if Customs and Excise or the Revenue Commissioners have conducted an assessment on the impact the introduction of plain or standardised packaging for cigarettes here would have on the illicit cigarette trade here; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Department of Health supports international developments in relation to plain or standardised packaging for tobacco products; if he or his officials or the Revenue Commissioners have participated in any consultation with the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive regarding the proposed EU Tobacco Products Directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48147/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The requirements in relation to cigarette packaging are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Health.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they have not, at this point, conducted a detailed assessment of any impact that the introduction of plain or standardised packaging might have on their work to combat the illicit trade in cigarettes. They will, however, examine the matter further in light of any specific proposals on that issue that may be brought forward in the context of forthcoming proposals for amendment of the EU Tobacco Products Directive. Among the factors to be considered in that context will be the requirement that all cigarettes that are offered for sale in the State must carry a tax stamp containing a range of sophisticated security features designed to prevent counterfeiting. An examination of whether a pack of cigarettes carries a genuine tax stamp is a key means for Revenue officials to distinguish between legal and illegal products, and this will continue to be the case irrespective of the way in which cigarettes are packaged.

Pension Provisions

239. **Deputy Paudie Coffey** asked the Minister for Finance the appeal mechanisms open to persons who currently have a pension bond who now wish to liquidate this bond in order to reinvest in a business, however the pension company are refusing to accede to the request; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48148/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Revenue approval of occupational pension schemes is given on the basis that retirement benefits may, generally, be paid at normal retirement age which cannot fall before age 60 or after age 70. Most schemes would have a normal retirement age of 65. Revenue approval may also provide, however, for early retirement from age 50 where scheme rules allow and with the employer's consent. In such situations benefits are restricted. In the case of personal pensions such as retirement annuity contracts (RACs) and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSAs) benefits can be taken from age 60 with no retirement condition. Buy-out bonds, are Revenue approved policies or contracts of assurance into which occupational scheme benefits have been transferred and which can be availed of by members of occupational pension schemes leaving service or where schemes are winding-up. Benefits can be taken at the same time as were available under the original occupational scheme.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that in relation to all of these pension arrangements benefits can be taken at any stage where retirement is due to serious ill-health or incapacity.

Where retirement benefits are taken in any of the circumstances outlined above, pension benefits drawn down by an individual (after taking any tax-free retirement lump sum that may be due) are subject to tax, generally at the individual's marginal rate of income tax.

I have no plans to amend the above arrangements for accessing pension benefits.

There are a number of reasons why, under existing policies, early withdrawals of pension savings are not permitted, the principal one being that pension schemes and plans (and the associated tax reliefs) are designed as long term savings vehicles to provide an income in retirement based on the principle that the savings will be "locked away" until that time. This, in effect, is the quid pro quo for the tax relief which is available to encourage long term saving for retirement.

There are also issues around pension funds investing in a beneficiary's own business. The first is the protection of pension benefits. In other words it would not be possible to protect pension and death benefits if the pension funds were to be invested in a company or business resulting in the possibility that the pension scheme or plan might ultimately be unable to pay the pension benefits on the retirement of the beneficiary or beneficiaries. Secondly, tax legislation in relation to pension saving arrangements seeks to ensure that the investment transactions of the pension arrangements are conducted on a commercial 'arm's length' basis. It does this by effectively rendering transactions that are not arm's length tax inefficient by deeming the amount or value of the pension schemes assets used in such transactions to be a pension payment and, therefore, subject to income tax.

Tax Code

240. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the fact that Ireland currently does not have legislation on controlled foreign companies which would allow the State to declare a tax haven subsidiary of a parent company to be resident for tax purposes in this country despite most advanced industrial countries having legislated for this; his views on the fact that this lack of legislation allows large multi-national companies to use Ireland to avoid paying tax on large profits that are booked in Ireland and instead filter them through tax havens like Bermuda and the Netherlands, and costs the Exchequer, as well as other countries, much needed tax revenue (details supplied); if he has costed the amount of money lost to the Exchequer each year due to lack of legislation in this area. [48162/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Controlled foreign company legislation is considered necessary by countries where the opportunity exists for companies to set up subsidiaries in foreign jurisdictions that have very low, or no, corporate tax; to then accumulate tax-free profits in those foreign jurisdictions; and, in time, to repatriate those profits as tax-free dividends to the home country. Where such opportunities exist, controlled foreign company legislation enables the home country, subject to various conditions, to treat the subsidiary's profits as accruing directly to the parent company as chargeable profits of the parent company. Ireland does not exempt dividends, received by Irish parent companies from foreign subsidiaries, from corporation tax. While a common method of preventing double taxation, i.e. taxation in the source country and taxation in the receiving country, of dividends is for the receiving, or "residence", country to exempt the dividends concerned, Ireland relieves any double taxation, that would otherwise arise, by giving credit for the tax, if any, suffered in the source country

against the Irish corporation tax on the dividends concerned. On that basis, where the dividends are received from a jurisdiction that has taxed neither the “underlying” profits nor the dividends used to repatriate them, those dividends will be fully chargeable to Irish corporation tax. There will not be the opportunity to accumulate tax-free profits in a foreign subsidiary and then to repatriate them as tax-free dividends, which controlled foreign company legislation seeks to address in other countries.

The Deputy’s question appears to refer to structures that have been outlined in recent media reports. Where companies in foreign countries own valuable assets, such as patented intellectual property, it is reasonable that there should be full remuneration for the licensing of those assets to Irish companies. It would be incorrect to assume that the foreign companies concerned are subsidiaries of the Irish licensee companies. In the structures described in media reports the Irish companies would appear to be the subsidiaries of the intangible asset-owning foreign companies concerned. While it is appropriate, in any event, that Irish companies should pay for the licensed use of assets owned by companies resident in other jurisdictions, it is not clear what relevance controlled foreign company legislation could have in such circumstances.

Tax Reliefs Cost

241. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance the extra cost to the Exchequer that would arise if mortgage interest relief was extended to 50% for persons with net income of less than €30,000, and extended to 40% for person’s with net income between €30,000 and €40,000. [48212/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that based on associating incomes and mortgage interest data for 2010, and applying derived ratios to the estimated cost of mortgage interest for 2012, the full year cost to the Exchequer of extending the rate of tax relief for mortgage interest paid by claimants with income of less than €30,000 to 50%, and of extending the corresponding rate for claimants with income between €30,000 and €40,000 to 40%, is tentatively estimated to be of the order of €145 million and €65 million respectively.

Bank Charges

242. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the new branch service charges (details supplied) in the banks are discriminating against older persons who are unable to use or avail of these online services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48280/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As Minister for Finance, I have no statutory role in relation to the issues raised by the Deputy. The issues raised are a commercial matter for the banking group concerned. However, I have been informed by the Central Bank that, as part of the group’s model for delivering self service and automated arrangements for routine customer transactions, the group carried out a pilot scheme in this regard in a number of branches in June 2012, whereby these services would not be available in the branch. Alternative options such as internet/telephone banking, direct debit payments, lodgment and withdrawals at ATMs were available. The branches which took part in the pilot scheme advised that there were very few issues encountered and little or no adverse customer reaction. The banking group concerned then decided to roll out these changes with effect from 22 October 2012.

Customers were advised a minimum of 30 days in advance of the proposed changes through

in-branch posters and leaflets detailing alternative options. All staff received training in advance of the rollout to enable them to deal effectively with customer queries. The decision to migrate these branch services to the alternative options mentioned is a commercial decision made by banking group. The group must ensure that the proposed changes are in line with the National Payments Strategy which states that any move towards electronic banking should not discriminate against older people or persons with disabilities.

EU Treaties

243. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the ESM Treaty which has been ratified by Dáil Éireann provides a legal basis for the ESM to directly recapitalise eurozone banks or to buy equity stakes in eurozone banks from member states; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48333/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Legislation was required for Ireland to ratify the ESM (European Stability Mechanism) Treaty, and the ESM Act (No 20 of 2012) passed all stages of the Oireachtas, and was then signed into law by the President on 3rd July 2012. Ireland deposited its instrument of ratification of the ESM Treaty on 1st August 2012. The ESM Treaty, at Article 48.1 provides that the ESM will enter into force when instruments of ratification, approval or acceptance have been deposited by signatories whose initial subscriptions represent no less than 90% of the total subscription. The ESM Treaty accordingly entered into force on 27th September 2012 following its ratification by 16 of the 17 Euro area member states, representing over 99.8% of its subscribed capital base. All 17 Euro Area Member States have now ratified the ESM Treaty.

As you will be aware, the Euro Area Summit Statement of 29th June affirmed that it is imperative that the vicious circle between banks and sovereigns be broken. The Statement of 29th June also stated that it has been agreed that when an effective single supervisory mechanism is established, involving the ECB, for banks in the euro area, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) could have the possibility to recapitalise banks directly. This would rely on appropriate conditionality, including compliance with state aid rules, which should be institution specific, sector-specific or economy-wide and would be formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding.

The European Commission stated on July 2nd 2012 that the ESM Treaty does not need to be changed in order to allow the direct recapitalization of banks. They pointed out that Articles 14 - 18 of the Treaty set out the instruments that may be used to guarantee the Eurozone's financial stability, and that Article 19 provides that the Board of Governors may review that list of instruments and decide to make changes to it.

The ESM Treaty, therefore, provides for a review by the Board of Governors of the financial instruments available to it, and to make changes to that list. The decision on any such change would be made by the Board of Governors acting by mutual agreement, in accordance with Article 5 of the ESM Treaty.

Work is continuing at a technical level to put in place both the single supervisory mechanism, and the European Stability Mechanism's direct banking recapitalisation facility, at the earliest possible date. Ireland is participating constructively in these technical discussions. Any proposal to change the list of financial instruments provided in the ESM Treaty must be consistent with that Treaty.

The most recent European Council on 18/19 October 2012 concluded that:

“The Eurogroup will draw up the exact operational criteria that will guide direct bank re-

capitalisations by the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), in full respect of the 29 June 2012 euro area Summit statement. It is imperative to break the vicious circle between banks and sovereigns. When an effective single supervisory mechanism is established, involving the ECB, for banks in the euro area the ESM could, following a regular decision, have the possibility to recapitalize banks directly.”

It is important from Ireland’s perspective, that progress towards these goals is made as quickly as possible.

VAT Rates Application

244. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Finance if VAT is payable on a used vehicle imported from the UK, noting that VAT had previously been paid in UK when purchased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48336/12]

245. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Finance if VAT is payable on a used vehicle imported from an EU member state, noting that VAT had previously been paid in the country of origin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48337/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 244 and 245 together.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the VAT treatment of motor vehicles is subject to European VAT law with which Irish VAT law must comply. Under EU law, the circumstances in which a particular supply is made will determine the VAT treatment to be applied to it.

The terms, ‘used vehicle’ or ‘second-hand vehicle’, apply generally to pre-owned vehicles, provided they are over 6 months old and have travelled over 6,000 km before they are supplied in the State. A motor vehicle which does not meet both of these conditions is regarded as a ‘new means of transport’, a specific concept in European VAT law.

There is no liability to VAT in Ireland where a private individual purchases a second-hand vehicle, as defined, from a motor dealer or a private individual in another Member State.

New means of transport, including those vehicles deemed second-hand but not qualifying under the definition above, are subject to Irish VAT at the standard rate, currently 23%. A person who purchases such a vehicle may, in certain circumstances, be able to claim a refund of the VAT paid in the Member State in which the vehicle was first supplied.

Detailed information including the rules relating to VAT on the supply of motor vehicles in Ireland is contained on the Revenue website at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/vat/leaflets/vat-and-vrt-on-motor-vehicles.html>.

Regulation of Accountants

246. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the Revenue Commissioners, under current legislation, provide sufficient protection for the tax payer if incorrect accounts and information are submitted by the tax payer’s accountant to the Revenue Commissioners without the taxpayer’s agreement. [48350/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As I informed you in my reply to you on

the 18th September 2012 in relation to your earlier related question [Ref No: 48350/12], where a taxpayer engages the services of an accountant in relation to taxation matters, that contractual relationship is a private one between the taxpayer and the accountant – the Revenue Commissioners are not involved. Accordingly, it is considered that the appropriate forum for resolution of any dispute by a taxpayer regarding alleged negligence on the part of his or her accountant is either the accountant's relevant accountancy professional body or the Courts. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that taxpayers are the persons legally responsible for filing their tax returns and accounts. Taxpayers can either prepare their tax returns and accounts personally or they can engage the services of an accountant to do so. It is reasonable to expect that a taxpayer would take any necessary steps to ensure the reliability of the accountant selected for this purpose – including that the accountant would only submit material to Revenue with the client's agreement.

Any taxpayer who submits incorrect accounts or information to the Revenue Commissioners, whether personally or through an accountant is, of course, obliged by law to correct the position, without delay. Errors corrected promptly may not have any impact on a taxpayer beyond possibly having to pay any additional tax liability due (but no more than would have been incurred if the correct accounts or information were submitted originally). However, if corrections are not made promptly an interest charge may be incurred and, depending on the nature of the incorrect accounts or information submitted, a penalty may also be incurred. In this regard, I explained in my earlier reply that the Revenue Commissioners will consider all factors leading to any adverse tax consequence, but it is important to note that the Revenue Commissioners will not relieve a taxpayer of an adverse tax consequence solely on the grounds that an accountant was in some way responsible.

I am satisfied that the Revenue Commissioners provide significant information in relation to the operation of the tax system and indeed the Revenue On-line System facilitates the calculation and filing of tax returns by taxpayers and their agents.

Budget Submissions

247. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a pre-budget submission (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48376/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have received a pre-Budget submission from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Its contents will be considered in the context of the forthcoming Budget and Finance Bill. As Deputies are aware it would not be appropriate for me to comment in advance of the Budget on possible Budget decisions.

Budget 2013

248. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a breakdown of which taxes will make up to €300 million carry-over as a result of last year's budget measures. [48431/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Last November's *Medium-Term Fiscal Statement* estimated that revenue raising measures of €1.25 billion would be required as part of the overall consolidation package in 2013 in order to adhere to the 2013 General Government deficit limit of 7.5% of GDP. It was estimated at that time that this would be made up of €0.95 billion in new revenue measures introduced in 2013 and €0.3 billion in carry-over from the measures introduced in 2012. There were however minor revisions to this estimate in *Budget*

2012 where the carry-over effect into 2013 of the revenue measures introduced in 2012 was estimated at €220 million. This information is set out on page D.17 of Budget 2012.

The estimated full year yields and/or costs of the tax revenue measures introduced in *Budget 2012* are set out on pages B5 – B11 of the *Summary of 2012 Budget and Estimates Measures Policy Changes* section of the Budget 2012 book.

The difference between the estimated yield/cost of a measure in 2012 and in a full year is effectively the carry-over impact.

The biggest source of carry-over in 2013 is from the 2% standard increase in the VAT rate which it is estimated will yield an additional €110 million in 2013. The increase in carbon tax is expected to deliver an additional €29 million next year. The increase in the capital acquisitions tax (CAT) is also expected to deliver an additional €25 million in 2013 and the increase in DIRT an additional €15 million. These are the main sources of carry-over. For further details the Deputy should consult pages B5 – B11 of the *Summary of 2012 Budget and Estimates Measures Policy Changes* section of the Budget 2012 book.

In the context of producing the *Budget 2013* tax revenue forecasts in the coming weeks, the Revenue Commissioners will advise my Department if the estimated full year costs and/or yields of the tax revenue measures introduced in *Budget 2012* need to be revised further.

Universal Social Charge Payments

249. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding universal social charge in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48436/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The position is that for 2012 individuals are liable to pay the Universal Social Charge if their income exceeds the threshold of €10,036 per annum. As the taxpayer's gross income from a pension fund exceeds this threshold, the taxpayer is liable to pay Universal Social Charge of 2% on the first €10,036, and 4% on the balance of the taxpayer's gross pension.

Mortgage Arrears Rate

250. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance if figures exist in relation to the number of buy to let mortgages in the system here at present; and the percentage of these mortgages that are currently in arrears. [48519/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank has advised me that it will be formally publishing statistics on buy-to-let arrears before the end of this year. The Central Bank has stressed that the data it currently has on buy-to-let arrears are provisional and are based on best estimates at present. At the end June 2012, there were approximately 150,000 residential mortgage accounts for buy-to-let properties held in the State, to a value of €32 billion. Of this stock of accounts, approximately 38,000 (25%) were in arrears. The total value outstanding on these accounts was €11 billion. Approximately 30,000 accounts (20%) were in arrears of more than 90 days. The total value outstanding on these accounts was €9 billion.

Universal Social Charge Exemptions

251. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of people who would be affected if the universal social charge threshold was changed to take all those earning below the minimum wage out of the charge. [48520/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The current minimum wage is €8.65 per hour. On an annualised basis, this is equivalent to €17,542 assuming a 39 hour working week. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the additional numbers of income earners that would be exempted from the Universal Social Charge (USC) if the existing exemption threshold of €10,036 per annum was increased to €17,542 per annum would be of the order of 296,000 by reference to 2013 incomes .

This figure is an estimate from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using actual data for the year 2010 adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends in the interim. It is, therefore, provisional and may be revised.

Question No. 252 answered with Question No. 232.

North-South Implementation Bodies

253. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48545/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy may be aware the North South Co-operation unit which was in the Department of Finance, transferred with its responsibilities, to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, when that department was established. Up until then Officials within my Department worked closely with the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) in Northern Ireland as joint sponsors of the Special EU Programmes Body, one of the North South implementation bodies established under the Good Friday Agreement. My Officials also worked closely with the Special EU Programmes Body and DFP with regard to the management and implementation of the EU co-funded cross border programmes, PEACE III and Interreg IVA. This work was undertaken within the framework of the North South Ministerial Council which I regularly attend meetings of.

Bullying in the Workplace

254. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to any complaints of bullying, mis-selling or malpractice made against any of the executives of the pillar banks or their subsidiaries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48559/12]

255. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to any investigations of bullying, mis-selling or malpractice in Irish banks or their subsidiaries, which have been carried out while the institutions were in public ownership, and if he is satisfied with the findings or such report and its conclusions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48570/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 254

and 255 together.

As the Deputy will be aware under the Relationship Frameworks agreed between myself and the Covered Banks responsibility for the day-to-day operations of each Bank rests with the Board of the Bank. The Banks are obligated to notify me of a number of matters under the terms of their respective Relationship Frameworks. However some of the issues raised in your query are not notifiable to me.

I can inform the Deputy however that my attention has been drawn to current investigations regarding potential mis-selling of Payment Protection Insurance in the Covered Banks and to matters relating to the misreporting of customer data to the Irish Credit Bureau by both AIB and Permanent TSB. I have also been made aware from time to time of investigations and instances of overcharging and other related matters. I cannot provide any further information as such matters are commercially sensitive for the banks.

You will appreciate that customers of each of the banks can and do complain about mis-selling and malpractice of the respective banks to the banks themselves and to the Financial Service Ombudsman and in certain cases take legal actions. I may from time to time be aware of such actions.

My attention hasn't been drawn to any particular bullying of employees in the covered banks since they came into Government ownership as such matters would generally be dealt with on a confidential basis within each of the relevant institutions.

If the Deputy is aware of any instance of bullying, malpractice or mis-selling he should report it to the appropriate authority as a matter of urgency. If such matters fall within the notification requirement of the Relationship Framework I will be notified in due course.

NAMA Staff Numbers

256. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to parliamentary Question No. 311 of 18 September 2012, the number of staff recruited by the National Assets Management Agency, via the legal entity the National Treasury Management Agency, whose immediately prior employer was Irish Bank Resolution Corporation. [48602/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The National Asset Management Agency informs me that since its inception it has, through the National Treasury Management Agency, recruited 227 staff, 14 of whom have been recruited directly from the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation or its predecessor entities.

Banking Sector Staff Issues

257. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of Bank of Ireland, if he will confirm the number of employees and total remuneration including benefits for the six months ending 30 June 2012 and for the 12 months ending 2011, 12 months ending 2012 and in the annual accounts for the previous two years. [48606/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Bank of Ireland that the information the Deputy seeks is as follows:

Period	Staff Costs (€m) *	Reported Staff Numbers at period end
6 Months ended 30 June 2012	443	13,397
Year ended 31 Dec 2011	862	13,234
12 month period ended 31 Dec 2010	1,003	14,235
9 month period ended 31 Dec 2009**	780	14,847
For the year ended 31 March 2009	1,197	15,487

* Staff costs includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- * Wages and Salaries
- * Pension Costs
- * Social Security Costs
- * Share Based Payment Costs

** Reflecting the change in the Group's year end.

All figures are as listed in the end of year Report and Accounts and the Interim Report for the 6 months ending June 2012, which are available on the Group's website.

Banking Sector Staff Issues

258. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of Irish bank Resolution Corporation, the number of employees and total remuneration including benefits for the six months ending 30 June 2012 and for the 12 months ending 2011. [48607/12]

259. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of Anglo Irish bank and Irish nationwide, the number of employees and total remuneration including benefits for the 12 months ending 2009 and 12 months ending 2010 and in the annual accounts for the previous two years. [48608/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 258 and 259 together.

I have been advised by the bank of the following information regarding the number of employees and remuneration for Anglo Irish Bank, Irish Nationwide and IBRC.

-	12 mths	12 mths	15 Mths	12 mths	12 mths	6 mths
-	Sep-07	Sep-08	Dec-09	Dec-10	Dec-11	Jun-12
Anglo / IBRC Staff Costs	€'m	€'m	€'m	€'m	€'m	€'m
- Salaries & Benefits	169	143	114	97	90	41
- Share based incentives	24	21	31	0	0	0
- Pension scheme payments	15	16	21	13	0	6
- Social Welfare	21	18	14	10	9	4
- Other staff costs	6	8	6	10	8	3
INBS Staff Costs	20.2	22.3	16.4	21.9	8.8*	n/a
TOTAL	255.20	228.30	202.40	151.90	107.00	54.00

-	12 mths	12 mths	15 Mths	12 mths	12 mths	6 mths
Anglo/IBRC Headcount (average)	1714	1864	1681	1332	1186	1132**
INBS Headcount (average)	400	385	399	464	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	2114	2249	2080	1796	1186	1132

Note: INBS 2008 numbers are as at December

Note: *INBS 2011 staff costs are for H1 2011 only

Note: ** This number reflects average headcount for H1 2012. Actual headcount at 30 June 2012 was 1,031.

All figures reported are as per published IBRC, Anglo and INBS Annual Report & Accounts.

Banking Sector Staff Issues

260. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of Irish Life and Permanent, the number of employees and total remuneration including benefits for the 12 months ending 2010 and 12 months ending 2011 and in the annual accounts for the previous two years. [48609/12]

261. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of Permanent TSB, the number of employees and total remuneration including benefit for the six months ending 30 June 2012. [48610/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 260 and 261 together.

I am advised by the institution that the information the Deputy seeks is as follows:

Period/Institution	Staff Costs (€m) *	Average number of Staff reported at period end
6 Months ended 30 June 2012 (Ptsb)	72	2,176
Year ended 31 Dec 2011 (IL&P)	410	4,323
Year ended 31 Dec 2010 (IL&P)	342	4,338
Year ended 31 Dec 2009 (IL&P)	208	4,694
Year ended 31 Dec 2008 (IL&P)	578	5,053

* Staff costs includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- * Wages and Salaries
- * Pension Costs
- * Social Security Costs
- * Share Based Payment Costs

All figures are as listed in the end of year Report and Accounts and the Interim Report for the 6 months ending June 2012, which are available on the institution's website and provide a more detail breakdown of staff costs.

Banking Sector Staff Issues

262. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of Irish Life, the number of employees and total remuneration including benefits for the six months ending 30 June 2012. [48611/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I can inform the Deputy that Irish Life provides disclosure on the number of its employees and the total remuneration each year in its financial statements. It does not disclose this information in its interim accounts. The total wages and salaries for staff in 2011 was €138 million and the average number of employees for that year was 2,185. The Deputy will find this and additional information on Page 137 of the Irish Life 2011 financial statements which can be found at <http://www.irishlifegroup.ie/~media/Files/I/Irish-Life-Group/reports-and-presentations/IL-group-2011-annual-report.pdf>

Banking Sector Staff Issues

263. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of Allied Irish Bank and Educational Building Society, the number of employees and total remuneration including benefits for the six months ending 30 June 2012 for the 12 months ending 2011. [48612/12]

264. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of Allied Irish Bank, the number of employees and total remuneration including benefits for the 12 months ending 2010 and 12 months ending 2011 and in the annual accounts for the previous two years. [48613/12]

265. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of the Educational Building Society, the number of employees and total remuneration including benefits for the 12 months ending 2010 and the 12 months ending 2011 and in the annual accounts for the previous two years. [48614/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 263 to 265, inclusive, together.

I am advised by Allied Irish Banks that the information requested by the Deputy is as follows:

AIB Group – Incl. EBS

Period	Staff Costs (€m)*	Average FTE **
6 months ended 30 June 2012	730	14,840
Year ended 31 December 2011	956	14,612

AIB Group- continuing operations (BZWBK has been excluded for all years).

Year	Staff Costs (€m)*	Average FTE**
Year ended 2011	935	14,282
Year ended 2010	921	14,255
Year ended 2009	909	15,085
Year ended 2008	1,161	16,039

EBS Limited (Merged into AIB on 1/7/2011)

Year Staff Costs (€m)*Average FTE**

Year	-	-
Year ended 2011	21	617
Year ended 2010	47	657
Year ended 2009	45	666
Year ended 2008	48	692

*Staff costs includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Wages & Salaries
- Share based payment schemes
- Social Security Costs
- Retirement Benefits
- Other personnel expenses (1)
- Termination benefits relate to expected cost of voluntary severance and early retirement as at 30 June 2012

** Full Time Equivalent

All figures are listed in the end of year Report and Accounts and the Interim Report for the 6 months ending June 2012, which are available on the institution's website.

Tax Code

266. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to insert a new provision in the tax code to ensure that tax units with incomes over €250,000 must comply with a minimum effective tax rate of 30%. [48631/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): It is a long-standing practice of the Minister for Finance not to comment, in advance of the Budget, on any tax matters that might be the subject of Budget decisions. However, the Deputy will be aware of the high income individuals' restriction, which is already in place. The most recent report by the Revenue Commissioners on the restriction is in respect of the 2010 tax year. This report was published by my Department on 1 August 2012 and is available on the Department's Tax Policy website <http://www.taxpolicy.gov.ie>. The restriction, since 2010, applies to a greater number of individuals. The adjusted income threshold at which the restriction begins to apply is €125,000 and the relief threshold is €80,000 or 20% of adjusted income, whichever is higher. The objective of these changes was to achieve an average effective rate of income tax of 30 per cent where the restriction applies in full i.e. for those with adjusted incomes of €400,000 or greater. This effective rate does not include amounts payable in respect of PRSI and other levies and charges i.e. the Income Levy

and Health Levy which applied in the tax year 2010 and the Universal Social Charge which applies from the tax year 2011.

Universal Social Charge Payments

267. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding the universal social charge in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick. [48632/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The position is that payments made in lieu of Department of Social Protection payments, such as Community Employment Schemes paid by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, are exempt from the Universal Social Charge. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that Revenue records indicate that the individual concerned commenced with the employment scheme on 15 Oct 2012 and was not in possession of a Tax Credit Certificate. The employer therefore, in accordance with PAYE Regulations, operates the emergency basis of tax deduction by deducting the appropriate amount of tax, PRSI, if applicable, and Universal Social Charge. The individual concerned subsequently submitted a tax return and a tax credit certificate based on this return will issue shortly. On operation of this tax certificate, any amounts of tax and/or Universal Social Charge overpaid should be refunded by the employer.

Tax Reliefs Abolition

268. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance the actions that have been taken since March 2011 in relation to the legacy property reliefs and his plans to completely abolish these reliefs. [48633/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Department of Finance conducted an extensive economic impact assessment during the summer and autumn of 2011 relating to “legacy” property-based tax relief schemes. This involved:

- An analysis of all available data from the Revenue Commissioners on claims to date in respect of legacy property reliefs;
- An analysis of Central Bank and financial institution data in respect of mortgage arrears and defaults in the residential buy to let sector
- The production of a detailed consultation paper which presented all preliminary analysis of the data from Revenue Commissioners as well as Department’s own internal economic modelling.
- A six week consultation period was held to enable all interested parties to submit their views. In addition a copy of the consultation paper was provided to all members of the Oireachtas
- The production and publication of a detailed economic model on how a removal of the legacy property reliefs would impact on individuals
- Reviewing and analysing some 750 responses to the consultation paper.
- Detailed analysis of the impact on various investor types and on jobs and business in a number of economic sectors (healthcare, hotels, student accommodation)

The analysis and findings in the final report were reviewed and validated by the Central Expenditure Evaluation Unit (CEEU) of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and by economic consultants Indecon International Economic Consultants.

I published the Economic Impact Assessment Report along with Finance Bill 2012, and a copy of the report can be found on my Department's tax policy website (<http://taxpolicy.gov.ie/>).

Finance Bill 2012 contained two measures related to property reliefs designed to reduce the ongoing cost of these schemes to the Exchequer and to eliminate it in as short a time as possible.

With effect from 1 January 2012, a USC surcharge will be introduced on all investors with annual gross incomes over €100,000. The surcharge will apply at a rate of 5% on the amount of income sheltered by property reliefs in a given year and will be in addition to any normal USC payable on this income. This USC surcharge will apply to all investors with this level of gross income regardless of whether they invested in Section 23 type investments or accelerated capital allowance schemes.

In addition, investors in accelerated capital allowance schemes will no longer be able to use any capital allowances beyond the tax life of the particular scheme where that tax life ends after 1 January 2015. Where the tax life of a scheme has ended before 1 January 2015 no carry forward of allowances into 2015 will be allowed. The delayed implementation of this measure is designed to give individuals time to adjust to the absence of the carry forward provision.

There are now only two property based tax incentive schemes remaining in the tax code: the Mid-Shannon Corridor Tourism Infrastructure Investment scheme (only 80% of expenditure can qualify in certain areas) and the Qualifying Specialist Palliative Care Units scheme, which was not commenced.

All other such schemes have been terminated, subject to transitional arrangements for certain schemes where projects were already in the pipeline. However, due to their nature these reliefs continue to entail ongoing costs on the Exchequer in terms of tax foregone.

Tax Reliefs Abolition

269. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to phase down the amount of interest that can be offset against rental income for tax purposes to 25%. [48634/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The level at which interest repayments can be claimed against tax for residential rental properties was reduced from 100% to 75% in section 5 of the Finance Act 2009. There is no specific proposal in the Programme for Government to decrease the amount of interest on borrowings that can be offset against rental income for tax purposes, however, as a matter of course all such taxation measures and reliefs are considered in the context of the budgetary process.

Tax Yield

270. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of extra tax revenue that would be raised by placing a 5% levy on all income for people who earn in excess of €100,000 per annum, estimated by reference to 2012 incomes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48645/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the full year yield, estimated by reference to 2012 incomes, from imposing a further income levy of 5% on all income that is currently liable to the Universal Social Charge (USC) would be of the order of €920 million. The estimated yield is based on applying a 5% levy to all the income of income earners who earn in excess of €100,000, that is, to the income they earn below €100,000 as well as to the income earned above €100,000. The figure is an estimate from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using actual data for the year 2010 adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends in the interim. It is, therefore, provisional and likely to be revised.

Tax Yield

271. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Finance the amount raised in 2011 from the domicile levy; the amount raised in each year since its introduction; the number of persons who have paid the levy each year since 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48649/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the Domicile Levy was introduced by section 150 of the Finance Act 2010. Returns and payments in respect of the Domicile Levy for any tax year are made in the following year. In 2011, returns and payments in respect of the Domicile Levy for the tax year 2010 (the first year for which the levy applied) were made by 11 persons who paid a total of €1,667,011.

As the Domicile Levy return and payment date for the tax year 2011 is 15 November 2012 (for persons who file their income tax returns using the Revenue Online System (ROS)), it is not possible, at this stage, to provide full details of the number paying the levy or the yield for the tax year 2011.

Tax Yield

272. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the level of tax generated by house sales for the Exchequer during 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and up to the end of September 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48716/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been provided by the Revenue Commissioners with information in relation to the amounts of value added tax on new housing and on the amounts of stamp duty on residential property for the years 2008 to 2012 to date. Based on data published by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, the estimated yield of Value Added Tax from residential property transactions, which includes sales of new and social housing, is set out in the following table.

Year	VAT yield
-	EURm
2008	1,289
2009	652
2010	333
2011	159
2012*	141

The figures of yield from stamp duty on transfers of residential properties are set out in the

following table.

Year	EURm
2008	445
2009	150
2010	107
2011	50
2012 (to end September)	39 (Provisional)

As regards Capital Gains Tax, the precise information requested by the Deputy is not available.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme Numbers

273. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the total number of persons in receipt of the vocational training opportunities scheme in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; his plans for the future of the payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47526/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The VTOS programme provides second chance education and training courses of up to two years duration for people who are 21 years of age or over, and who are at least six months unemployed.

People participating in VTOS who are in receipt of Jobs Seekers Benefit (JA) or Job Seekers Allowance (JB) receive a payment in lieu of this from the VEC for the duration of their course. These payments are funded by my Department. People participating in VTOS who are in receipt of a Disability Allowance or One Parent Family Payment continue to receive their payment from the Department of Social Protection.

My Department provided a total of €79 million in each of the years 2010 and 2011 for the VTOS programme. This included pay and non-pay costs and included €47 million for allowances paid to learners who were formerly in receipt of JA/JB payments. A similar budget has been provided for 2012.

In 2010, there were 5,702 learners enrolled on the VTOS programme, 4,251 of whom were in receipt of a VTOS training allowance from VECs. In 2011, there were 5,650 learners enrolled on the VTOS programme, 4,211 of whom were in receipt of a VTOS training allowance from VECs.

The breakdown of VTOS learners by County in 2010 and 2011 is listed as follows. The breakdown for 2012 is not yet available.

Learners by County	-	-
County	2010	2011
Carlow	70	75
Cavan	39	36
Clare	159	152
Cork	517	514

Learners by County	-	-
Donegal	176	166
Dublin	1,820	1,804
Galway	298	305
Kerry	190	159
Kildare	263	258
Kilkenny	113	118
Laois	104	94
Leitrim	40	39
Limerick	276	259
Longford	30	39
Louth	110	110
Mayo	147	162
Meath	64	67
Monaghan	40	40
Offaly	39	61
Roscommon	89	81
Sligo	55	54
Tipperary	167	164
Waterford	292	292
Westmeath	97	97
Wexford	209	210
Wicklow	298	294
Total	5,702	5,650

Youthreach Programme

274. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 134 of 2 May 2012, if a person (details supplied) has been registered with Youth Reach; and if they are currently attending full time with Youth Reach. [47790/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The person referred to by the Deputy is attending a Youthreach centre operated by County Meath Vocational Education Committee since 13 September 2012 on a full time basis.

Childcare Education and Training Scheme Administration

275. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will consider expanding the childcare employment and training support scheme to include students participating in third level education courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47848/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Childcare assistance was introduced in the late 1990s as a way of providing assistance to people with low skills (i.e. less than upper second level education) who faced barriers to returning to education and were distant from the labour market. As a result of a Budgetary decision, this programme has, in recent years, been restructured into the Childcare Education and Training Scheme (CETS) adminis-

tered by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

The programmes targeted by the original programme were Youthreach, the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) and later, the Back To Education Initiative. These programmes, with the exception of STTCs which have now closed, remain the focus of the CETS programme. It is not intended to extend the scheme further at this point.

Graduate Medicine Programme Fees

276. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the difficulty medical graduate entrants are having in securing bank loans in order to complete their qualifications; if the situation is being examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48102/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy may be aware Graduate Entry Medicine students are liable for the cost of their tuition fees, which are set by each individual institution. However the costs for EU students are partly subsidised by the Irish State through a state grant provided by the Higher Education Authority. For the 2012/13 academic year this amounts to €10,000 per student.

A number of financial institutions offer student loan packages that can be availed of by students which can offer more competitive rates in select disciplines such as medicine. However such arrangements are a matter for individual students and the financial institution concerned and my Department has no role in relation to the matter.

Home-School Liaison Scheme

277. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason there is only 20 hours a week of home tutoring available for two siblings with autism. [48617/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that the purpose of the Home Tuition Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme was extended in recent years to facilitate tuition for children awaiting a suitable educational placement and also to provide early educational intervention for pre-school children with autism.

The combined allocation to siblings is reflective of the family situation whereby a tutor can provide collective tuition to members of the one family. As home tuition is intended to compensate for school based provision it is reasonable to reflect the school grouping principle and reduce allocations to siblings accordingly.

Site Acquisitions

278. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 140 of the 25 of September 2012, if he will respond to a query; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47214/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can confirm to the Deputy that officials in my Department are in contact with the Chief State Solicitor's Office, who are currently working with the Solicitors acting on behalf of the landowners on the legal procedures and mechanisms required to facilitate as soon as practicable, the transfer of the land in the case to which he refers.

Third Level Staff Recruitment

279. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of persons of Professor or Associate Professor grade who have left each university in the State since January 2011; if they have been replaced or a replacement has been sanctioned or agreed and if so at what level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47242/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Higher Education Authority has been asked to obtain this information from the universities. I understand that the data is still in the process of being collated and I have asked that it be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

School Staffing

280. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) in County Waterford will have their position reinstated on the panel for teachers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47245/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts to schools includes the provision whereby schools experiencing rapid increases in enrolment can apply for additional mainstream posts on developing grounds, using projected enrolment. The retention of such posts in the current school year is subject to schools' having achieved their projected enrolment on 30 September. If the enrolment is not achieved the post allocated on developing grounds is suppressed. The school referred to by the Deputy applied for an additional post under developing grounds criteria. As the school did not meet the required enrolment numbers to sustain this post, the post was suppressed.

The teacher concerned has been successfully redeployed to a vacancy in another school.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

281. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47292/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): On occasion my Department re-engages retired staff on a short-term basis to carry out certain tasks that require their particular experience and expertise. As appropriate, such engagements are subject to the abatement principle whereby the fees payable are set at a level that ensures that the individuals' pension plus fees do not exceed the salary level of their positions prior to retirement.

The information in question is compiled retrospectively on an annual basis. The relevant information for 2011 was compiled earlier this year and the information for 2012 will be compiled in early 2013. However, my Department has information to hand in respect of the first

quarter of 2012 and the following table includes 2011 and quarter one of 2012. Full information for 2012 will become available in early 2013.

Names, Grades and Cost of DES Staff rehired following retirement in 2011 and 2012 (1st Quarter)

Name:	Grade at Retirement:	Amount Payable in 2011 (€)
Dermot Ryan	Principal Officer	€230.00
Frank Murray	Principal Officer equivalent	€1,923.18
Tadhg O'Ruire	Assistant Principal Officer	€690.00
Eamonn Stack	Chief Inspector	€13,000.00
Lorcan Mac Conaonaigh	Assistant Chief Inspector	€7,315.09
Ian Murphy	Assistant Chief Inspector	€22,364.90
Con Ó Caoimh	Assistant Chief Inspector	€927.81
Liam Ó hEigearta	Assistant Chief Inspector	€6,720.45
Torlach O'Connor	Assistant Chief Inspector	€15,088.00
Sean MacConmara	Divisional Inspector Primary	€1,714.50
Sean Ó Cearbhaill	Divisional Inspector Primary	€1,858.65
Mícheál Ó Lionáird (Michael Leonard)	Divisional Inspector Primary	€1,314.17
Eamonn Ó Breacáin (Eddie Bracken)	Divisional Inspector Primary	€654.93
Joan Williams	Senior Inspector Post Primary	€2,901.51
Caitlín Ní Bhraonáin (Kathleen Brennan)	Post Primary Inspector	€3,315.30
Name:	Grade at Retirement:	Amount Payable in 2012 (€)
Lorcan Mac Conaonaigh	Assistant Chief Inspector	€4,571.93
Ian Murphy	Assistant Chief Inspector	€10,097.12
Michéal Ó Lionaird (Michael Leonard)	Primary Divisional Inspector	€367.95
Caitlín Ní Bhraonáin (Kathleen Brennan)	Post Primary Inspector	€384.00
-	-	€15,421.00

Energy Conservation

282. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to require all schools in receipt of capitation funding to implement targeted energy efficiency programmes to cut wasteful usage of lighting, heating and electronic equipment in view of the fact that existing voluntary and piecemeal projects show the potential to save 15-40% of schools energy costs within two years at most, using models and guidance provided by Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland but unknown to most schools; his views on whether such energy efficiencies could save up to €15 million a year of the €200 million cost of capitation funding, thereby reducing cuts to vital educational services by the same sum and thus make cuts that do not hurt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47303/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): For the past fifteen years the planning and building unit of my Department has been using a process called the DART approach to develop sustainability and energy efficiency in educational buildings. This acronym focuses on four key areas, namely, Design, Awareness, Research and Technology. The policy is informed by the building unit professional and technical staff, driven by its technical guidance

documents and updated by continued energy research and development.

It has been demonstrated that all schools designed and built in line with the above policy and the technical guidance documents can have an energy performance that is more than twice as efficient as international best practice.

Under my Department's Summer Works Scheme, in excess of €182m has been spent since 2009 on improvements to mechanical and electrical installations, toilets, windows and roofs in both primary and post-primary schools across the country, which is contributing to the energy efficiency of these buildings. In addition, €15 million has been spent under my Department's 2009 energy efficiency scheme and further €7.4 million under the 2010 water conservation scheme. In total in excess of €204 million has been provided to school to assist with energy efficiency and conversion since 2009 which represents 16% of the total overall capital spend on school building since 2009.

My Department, in conjunction with Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has developed an "Energy in Education" website (www.energyineducation.ie) which I launched recently. The website is designed to help school boards of management, principals, teachers, administrators, care-taking staff, pupils and parents to improve energy use practices and to reduce school operating costs, along with helping to protect the environment for future generations.

School Transport Provision

283. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) in County Kerry has had one of their remote area grant payments stopped and if it is possible to have it reinstated. [47325/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme children are eligible for transport where they meet the minimum distance criteria and are attending their nearest school, as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

An eligible child for whom no transport service is available may, following an application for transport within the prescribed time limits, receive a remote area grant towards the cost of private transport arrangements.

This grant is payable annually at a fixed daily rate, to each eligible family, regardless of the number of children from the same family travelling to a particular school.

The family in question is in receipt of the maximum daily rate of grant.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

284. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Carlow will receive a decision on their Student Universal Support Ireland application and if he will expedite an answer. [47355/12]

328. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Carlow will receive an answer to their application to Student Universal Support Ireland; and if he will expedite an answer. [47867/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions

Nos. 284 and 328 together.

Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that additional documentation requested was received on 2nd November, 2012. The documentation is currently awaiting review and the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Third Level Fees

285. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in tabular form for the academic years 2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 in Dundalk Institute of Technology, the number of students who received grants for fees; the number who paid fees in full; the number of students who received maintenance grants for those years; the total amounts paid for fee grants; the total amount paid for maintenance grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47382/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): All of the information sought by the Deputy is not readily available in my Department. Officials of my Department have asked the Higher Education Authority to contact the institute seeking details and I will forward the information to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Special Educational Needs Staff Remuneration

286. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason there is a differential between the rate of pay for special needs assistant €88.50 and teacher/lay persons €112.04 who act as readers for State examinations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47333/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Duties such as assisting students and acting as reader / scribe for a student who is doing a state examination form part of the normal duties of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) and attract no additional payment. However, some students require a special centre to complete their examinations. It is the policy of the State Examinations Commission (SEC) that a Superintendent be present for all State Examinations centres. There are specific rules governing this role as set out by the SEC.

The SEC acknowledges that school authorities are in the best position to put the arrangements in place to cater for the needs of individual candidates for whom the use of a special centre has been approved. These arrangements include the appointment of superintendents to these special centres. If an SNA is appointed by a school to the role of Superintendent of a special centre for a state examination, a fee of €85.50 per day will be paid to the SNA for the discharge of the full range of additional duties and responsibilities associated with the role of superintending the special centre.

This rate was settled in an agreement reached with the Unions representing SNAs in 2008, and has regard to the fact that the normal duties of an SNA include acting as scribe or reader with children with special education needs. In addition the agreed contract of employment provides that SNAs are required to work the month of June on examinations or other work appropriate to the grade.

School Staffing

287. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a teacher was removed from the system a primary school (detail supplied) in County Meath; if this decision will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47399/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts to schools includes the provision whereby schools experiencing rapid increases in enrolment can apply for additional mainstream posts on developing grounds, using projected enrolment. The retention of such posts in the current school year is subject to schools' having achieved their projected enrolment on 30 September. If the enrolment is not achieved the post allocated on developing grounds is suppressed. The school referred to by the Deputy was approved for an additional post under developing grounds criteria. Pending confirmation of the enrolment numbers on 30 September, the school was permitted to fill the post in a fixed term temporary capacity until 26 October. However, as the school did not meet the required enrolment numbers to sustain this post, the post was suppressed.

The staffing schedule also includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria including developing grounds to an independent Appeal Board. The school referred to did not avail of the appeal process.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

288. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will expedite a higher education grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; his views on whether it is acceptable that students are accumulating debts while waiting for their grants to be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47432/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Decisions on eligibility for new student grant applications from the 2012/13 academic year are a matter for the new centralised grant awarding authority, SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland).

Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that the student referred to by the deputy was issued with a decision on the 31/10/2012 advising him that he was ineligible for a grant for the 2012/13 academic year.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she or he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that SUSI has not interpreted the scheme correctly in his or her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the Student Grant Appeals Board. The relevant appeal form is available on request from SUSI.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

289. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a decision on a student grant application will be made in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47444/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI, the new centralised grant awarding authority, that the student referred to by the Deputy has been awarded a grant and an award letter issued on 2 November, 2012.

School Staffing

290. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current staffing schedule in respect of a school (details supplied) in County Wicklow for the current and previous school years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47451/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The statistics section of my Department's website contains extensive data at individual school level in county order. The most recent published information relates to the 2011/2012 school year. The criteria used for the allocation of teachers to schools is published annually on my Department's website. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September. The staffing schedule for the 2012-2013 school year, Circular 0007/2012, is available on my Department's website. The staffing arrangements in schools for the 2012/2013 school year can also be affected by changes in enrolment, the impact of budget measures and reforms to the teacher allocation process.

A key part of the reforms of the allocation process was to facilitate a long overdue updating of the GAM (learning support) allocation for all schools. The criteria for the allocation of GAM hours by school type are outlined in circular 007/2012.

Teaching Qualifications

291. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will seek to have a special needs assistant (details supplied) in Dublin 12 registered as a teacher and moved to the teaching pay scale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47462/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy 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 attending special schools. The NCSE operates within my Department's policy in allocating this support. Circular 0042/2011 provides information to schools regarding the staffing arrangements which apply in special schools for the 2012/13 school year. I understand that the correspondent is employed as a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) in the school. While I appreciate that the correspondent has an interest in a specific subject area, there is no provision for the regrading of the SNA role to that of a teacher, or for adjusting the number of teaching staff in the school outside of the mechanisms outlined in Circular 0042/2011. It is open to the correspondent to seek employment through the normal mechanisms for teacher recruitment in Special Schools, subject to the normal conditions that apply including the requirement that teachers are registered with the Teaching Council and have qualifications appropriate to the sector and suitable to the post for which they are proposed to be employed.

Student Grant Scheme Application Numbers

292. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of student grant applicants still awaiting a decision on their application; when he expects the grants to be fully processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47538/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy may be aware, all new applications for the 2012/13 academic year are being processed by SUSI, the new

centralised grant awarding authority. Continuing students who are renewing their grant for attendance on an existing course with their existing awarding authority, which will be either a local authority or a VEC, will continue to have their applications processed by the relevant grant awarding authority.

In total, SUSI has received just over 66,000 completed application for student grants this year and 18,000 applications are now complete. This includes 9,000 applications which have been refused and 9,000 which have been awarded, or awarded pending submission of final course details by the student. SUSI is awaiting documentation on 21,000 applications and the remaining 27,000 are applications on hand with SUSI for processing. This data has been supplied to my Department by SUSI.

The 66 grant-awarding authorities as at 19 October, 2012 received 40,286 renewal applications and made decisions on 33,007 applications. Applications still awaiting a decision with the 66 grant-awarding authorities include applications yet to be processed and applications where further documentation has been requested from the students in support of their application. This data has been compiled from information supplied to my Department from the 66 grant-awarding authorities.

The migration of the new applications to SUSI has enabled the 66 grant-awarding authorities to process renewal applications on a more efficient basis - these are generally more straightforward and require significantly less documentary evidence.

Processing of student grant applications by SUSI and the 66 grant awarding authorities is ongoing and subject to the timely receipt of all the requested supporting documentation.

Student Grant Numbers

293. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide the figures per county of the number of student grant applicants who have been awarded the student grant but are still awaiting payment as of 23 October 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47539/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy is aware, all new applications for the 2012/13 academic year are being processed and paid by SUSI, the new centralised grant awarding authority. Continuing students who are renewing their grant for attendance on an existing course with their existing awarding authority, which will be either a local authority or a VEC, will continue to have their applications processed and paid by the relevant grant awarding authority. Continuing students on a level 6 or level 7 course in the Institutes of Technology will continue to be paid their grant directly by their institution. The first table provides a breakdown of new applications awarded student grants by county and the number that are awaiting payment of the maintenance element of their student grants as of 5 November, 2012. The data in the table has been provided to my Department by SUSI, the new centralised grant awarding authority. Payment of the maintenance grant is contingent on the supply of bank account details by the student and confirmation of registration by the institution being attended. The second table provides a breakdown of renewals applications awarded by county and the number of renewal applications that have been paid as at 19 October, 2012. The numbers paid directly by their Institute of Technology is shown separately at the bottom of the table. The data in this table has been compiled from information supplied to my Department by the 66 grant-awarding authorities and the Institutes of Technology. A breakdown of data in relation to renewal students awarded fees-only grants by the 66 grant-awarding authorities is not available.

Figures per county - SUSI – New Applications

County	Awarded Fees Only	Awarded Maintenance	Maintenance Paid	Awaiting Maintenance Payment
Carlow	12	98	25	73
Cavan	5	134	55	79
Clare	16	183	67	116
Cork	38	577	239	338
Donegal	40	333	121	212
Dublin	115	975	328	647
Galway	46	374	89	285
Kerry	25	217	83	134
Kildare	24	242	92	150
Kilkenny	16	125	46	79
Laois	13	104	43	61
Leitrim	7	58	16	42
Limerick	29	240	95	145
Longford	8	63	22	41
Louth	18	209	86	123
Mayo	20	216	69	147
Meath	9	238	100	138
Monaghan	5	107	37	70
Offaly	14	147	57	90
Roscommon	5	124	36	88
Sligo	9	76	18	58
Tipperary	25	246	104	142
Waterford	28	175	82	93
Westmeath	14	183	75	108
Wexford	27	274	130	144
Wicklow	16	201	75	126

Figures per county - 66 Grant Awarding Authorities – Renewals

County	Renewals Awarded	Renewals Paid
Carlow	388	216
Cavan	701	437
Clare	1,041	510
Cork	3,395	956
Donegal	1,625	643
Dublin	3,840	1,588
Galway	2,120	1,568
Kerry	1,580	1,028
Kildare	1,261	573
Kilkenny	767	348

Questions - Written Answers

County	Renewals Awarded	Renewals Paid
Laois	658	369
Leitrim	412	284
Limerick	1,450	612
Longford	366	198
Louth	1,133	532
Mayo	1,508	517
Meath	792	222
Monaghan	716	455
Offaly	564	359
Roscommon	779	523
Sligo	721	375
Tipperary	1,312	824
Waterford	974	470
Westmeath	794	573
Wexford	1,149	697
Wicklow	1,003	619

Schedule of payments in respect of Level 6 & Level 7 students in the academic year 2012/13

Institute	Date	No. of Students
Athlone Institute	12/10/12	223
Blanchardstown Institute	02/11/12	75
Carlow Institute	26/10/12	250
Cork Institute	30/10/12	689
Dun Laoghaire Art & Design	31/10/12	32
Dundalk Institute	30/10/12	283
Galway/Mayo Institute	18/10/12	698
Letterkenny Institute	02/11/12	407
Tralee Institute	19/10/12	284
Limerick Institute	27/10/12	273
Sligo Institute	12/10/12	569
Tallaght Institute	26/10/12	123
Waterford Institute	06/10/12	288
Dublin Institute of Technology	26/10/12	216

Student Grant Scheme Application Numbers

294. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in tabular form, the number of students who have applied, those that have been granted and those that have been refused the student grant for 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47540/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy is aware, all new applications for the 2012/13 academic year are being processed by SUSI, the new cen-

tralised grant awarding authority. Continuing students who are renewing their grant for attendance on an existing course with their existing awarding authority, which will be either a local authority or a VEC, will continue to have their applications processed by the relevant grant-awarding authority. A survey completed by the the grant awarding authorities in January each year provides details in relation to processing of grant applications. The accompanying table provides details supplied to my Department by the grant awarding authorities as at week ending the third week of January for 2009, 2010 and 2011. Further decisions in later months may have resulted in additional awards. In relation to the 2012/13 academic year SUSI has received just over 66,000 completed applications for student grants this year to date. Approximately 18,000 applications are now complete and have either been provisionally awarded, awarded or refused. This includes 9,000 applications which have been refused and 9,000 which have been awarded, or awarded pending submission of final course details by the student. The processing position for the 2012/13 academic year in relation to renewals as at 19 October 2012 is that the 66 grant-awarding authorities have dealt with 40,286 renewal applications. A total of 31,049 applications have been awarded and 1,958 applications have been approved. The data in relation to renewals has been compiled from information supplied to my Department by the 66 grant-awarding authorities The Deputy will appreciate that the data in relation to the 2012/13 academic year is not directly comparable as it does not cover the same time frame. The statistics for the previous years are as of the third week in January and therefore include three additional months processing by the various awarding authorities. In addition, the migration of the new applications to SUSI has enabled the 66 grant-awarding authorities to process renewal applications on a more efficient basis - these are generally more straightforward and require significantly less documentary evidence.

66 Grant Awarding Authorities – Processing Position as per January Survey

2009/10 Academic Year(Position as at 21/01/2010)	Total	Awarded	Refused
New applications	57,133	30,591	5,730
Renewals	36,391	30,969	882

2010-2011

2010/11 Academic Year(Position as at 21/01/2011)	Total	Awarded	Refused
New applications	62,040	31,239	8,065
Renewals	44,495	34,678	1,240

2011-2012

2011/12 Academic Year(Position as at 21/01/2012)	Total	Awarded	Refused
New applications	66,479	32,152	6,932
Renewals	45,082	37,874	1,952

Applications not decided as at third week in January each year would include applications where documentation was outstanding, incomplete applications, applications transferred to another assessing body and applications yet to be processed.

Third Level Staff Deployment

295. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline his position in relation to a personnel situation at a third-level institution (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47484/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the Universities Act 1997 University College Cork is an autonomous statutory institution and its management authorities are responsible for the organisation and deployment of the university's staff. As I have no function in the operational affairs of the university it would not be appropriate to comment on the matter raised by the Deputy.

School Staffing

296. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the number of new teachers who were hired and commenced employment in primary and post primary schools since September 2012; if details will be provided of the number of teachers who had availed of the early retirement scheme last February but to date continue to teach in primary and post primary school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47592/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information requested by the Deputy is being compiled and will be forwarded to him.

Disadvantaged Status

297. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) in County Donegal no longer qualifies for DEIS status despite considerable levels of economic disadvantage in the area as a result of the decline in the main industry in the locality; if he considered the level of economic disadvantage of the area in determining the appeal of the vocational education committee in relation to the allocation of WTEs for the school; his plans to carry out a full assessment of the needs of the school in terms of supports for disadvantaged students in view of the relatively recent decline of the main industry of the town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47608/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Following an independent identification process in 2005, 875 schools were selected for inclusion in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the Department's initiative to combat educational disadvantage.

The school to which the Deputy refers was among a number of schools that was judged not to have a sufficient level of disadvantage to warrant inclusion in DEIS. Furthermore, an appeal by this school to the independent review body confirmed that the level of disadvantage did not warrant the school's inclusion in the DEIS process.

Staffing arrangements for post-primary schools is set out in circular 0009/12, which includes an appeals mechanism under which schools/VECs can appeal against the allocation due to them. The appeal board operates independently of the Department and its decisions are final. The level of economic disadvantage is not a criteria in determining appeals by schools/VECs under the appeals process.

With regard to an assessment of schools, a key priority for my Department is to prioritise and target resources in schools with the most concentrated levels of educational disadvantage. That challenge is significant given the current economic climate and the target to reduce public expenditure. This also limits the capacity for any additionality in the DEIS programme and in this context I have no immediate plans to undertake the type of assessment to which the Deputy refers.

Special Educational Needs Staffing

298. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an embargo on the employment of special needs assistants; and if he will review the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47618/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to clarify for the Deputy that there is no embargo on the employment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) or on the filling of SNA posts.

A total of 10,575 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) SNA posts have been made available for allocation to schools by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) throughout the current school year, subject to qualifying applications being received.

The NCSE is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including SNA support. The NCSE operates within my Department's established criteria for the allocation of such supports and the staffing resources available to my Department.

All schools were advised to apply to the NCSE for resource teaching and SNA support for the 2012/13 school year by 16 March, 2012. All schools, including the school referred to by the Deputy, have now been advised by the NCSE of their SNA staffing allocation for the current school year. Details of the allocations which have been made to each school are available at www.ncse.ie.

To date, the NCSE has allocated 10,311 WTE SNA posts to schools based on the number of valid applications received and the extent of the care needs of qualifying children. The remaining 264 posts are available for allocation throughout the school year for new assessments of disability, new entrants, or emergency or late applications, in accordance with the terms of the SNA scheme. The NCSE has estimated that based on the experience of last year, that these 264 posts should be sufficient to meet demand during the school year.

Where schools have enrolled new pupils with special educational needs who were not considered at the time that the allocations for the 2012/13 school year were made, or where schools are in a position to demonstrate that they cannot cater for the care needs of qualifying children from the level of SNA support which has been assigned to them, they may apply to the NCSE for additional SNA support or for a review of their SNA allocation.

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.

The NCSE has advised my Department that it has not received an application from the school concerned for SNA support for the pupil in question.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

299. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will expedite a higher education grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47561/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Decisions on eligibility for

new student grant applications from the 2012/13 academic year are a matter for the new centralised grant awarding authority, SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland).

Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that on a letter issued to the student referred to by the Deputy requesting outstanding documentation. When the documentation is returned to SUSI the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

300. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reasons students who take out UK loans in order to fund themselves at college in England are refused student grants by Student Universal Support Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47613/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Decisions on eligibility for new student grant applications are a matter for the central grant awarding authority SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland).

Under my Department's student grant scheme, eligible students may receive funding towards maintenance if studying in the UK provided they are attending an approved course at an approved institution, as defined in the scheme. The student grant scheme does not extend to postgraduate courses pursued outside of Ireland. In addition, tax relief is available for tuition fees. Full details of this relief are available from the Revenue Commissioners.

Capitation Grants

301. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the year in which the additional capitation funding for children with special educational needs was introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47637/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that enhanced rates of capitation funding are paid in respect of children with special educational needs who attend special schools or special classes attached to mainstream schools. The special rates vary, depending on the categorisation of the particular school or class. Rates of up to €879 per pupil are payable in comparison with the standard capitation rate of €178 per pupil. Additional capitation of €7.5m was provided for pupils in special schools and special classes attached to mainstream schools in 2011.

My Department's Circulars 40/2009 and 48/2009 clarify issues relating to the allocation of funding for schools. Schools have flexibility and discretion on how to target funding to the school's own priorities, based on its knowledge and understanding of the needs of the students it serves.

As the information requested by the Deputy relates to the introduction of the additional capitation funding many decades ago, it is not readily available and will involve retrieval and analysis of archived files, following which the information requested will be forwarded to the Deputy.

Special Educational Needs Expenditure

302. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the total funding allocated for special needs education in each year since 1997 including this year. [47638/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that this Government remains committed to the protection of frontline services for pupils with special educational needs. The programme for Government sets out that education will be a priority for this Government and that we will endeavour to protect and enhance the educational experience of children, young people and students. The continued commitment of this Government to special education provision, at a time when savings are being required across a range of expenditure areas, has ensured that children with special educational needs can continue to have access to educational facilities in line with their requirements.

Approximately 15% of the entire budget of my Department – some €1.3 billion – was spent in support of children with special educational needs in 2011. Provision for the current year is in line with expenditure for last year showing that, despite the current economic difficulties, the overall level of funding for special education has not been cut. The equivalent spends for 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 are €468m, €605m, €706m, €838m, €900m, €1bn and €1.2bn respectively.

The Deputy will be aware that expenditure in relation to supports provided for children with special educational needs occurs across a number of separate divisional areas such as, for example, salary costs for additional teaching and Special Needs Assistant (SNA) supports, school building adaptations, assistive technology, transport arrangements and enhanced capitation payable. From 2004 onwards, the particular spend on special education within the various categories has been differentiated and aggregated. However, details of the disaggregated expenditure made for children with special educational within various categories of expenditure provision was not separately recorded prior to 2004 and is therefore not readily available.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

303. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline the number of special classes in mainstream schools in each year since 1997. [47639/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Firstly, I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from primary and post primary schools for special educational needs supports. This includes the allocation of resource teaching hours to schools as well as the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas as required and the discontinuation of such classes where the need no longer exists. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such supports.

In respect of special classes, schools are required to observe Department policy in enrolling children to these classes. This includes having a professional assessment confirming that the child's attainment levels meet the Department's criteria and a recommendation for special class placement. Schools are eligible for resources for special classes when the pupils enrolled meet the Department's criteria and where there are enough eligible pupils to retain a class.

Information going back to 1997, as requested by the Deputy, is not readily available. However, I can advise the Deputy that the number of special classes rose from approximately 350 classes in 1998 to over 500 in 2010. The number of special classes in mainstream schools from

2010 to present is 516 in the 2010/11 school year, 549 in the 2011/12 school year and 640 in the 2012/13 school year.

National Educational Psychological Service Staff

304. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of educational psychologists working with National Educational Psychological Service; and the number in place each year since its establishment. [47640/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The table sets out for the Deputy's information a count and a whole-time equivalent when work-sharing is factored in, of the number educational psychologists employed by my Departments NEPS service by year, since its establishment in 1999.

No. of Educational Psychologists employed in NEPS by Year.

Year	No. Psychologists	Whole-Time Equivalent
1999	43	43.0
2000	69	68.0
2001	84	82.5
2002	118	116.1
2003	123	120.4
2004	127	122.9
2005	118	114.0
2006	124	117.8
2007	134	126.7
2008	155	148.5
2009	153	146.9
2010	165	158.9
2011	173	166.0
2012	167	158.8

I can inform the Deputy that an additional eight new psychologists are currently engaged with the public appointments service with a view to their being recruited to NEPS in the current academic year.

School Curriculum

305. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will examine the possibility of introducing driving lessons and driving theory as a compulsory component of the transition year programme in the interest of creating road safety awareness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47651/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I have no plans to introduce driver education in the form of driving lessons in schools and this is not the norm within the EU. Research available internationally is inconclusive on the benefits of teaching young people to drive at school. Particular issues highlighted include the gap arising between the time practical skills are learned initially and put into regular practice and the risks arising from more young

people taking up driving at an earlier age.

However, a road safety programme for transition year has been developed by the Road Safety Authority in collaboration with my Department, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Professional Development Service for Teachers and has been offered nationally as an option since September 2008. The programme is available in twenty hour and forty-five hour units. It features inputs from agencies such as the ambulance service, fire service and An Garda Síochána, as well as providing for visiting speakers, trips out of school, projects and case studies.

The programme provides for an introduction to road safety for pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and motorists and covers such issues as seat belts and airbags, driver fatigue, drink and drug driving, enforcement, basic first aid at road crashes, emergency services and rehabilitation. The programme is also supported by digital resources, including DVD support and access to international websites on road safety issues. Relevant driver theory test learning is included at the end of each module. The programme does not include driving lessons.

School Patronage

306. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline the methodology by which the patronage model was decided for the new post primary school (details supplied); if this methodology will be repeated in other parts of the country in similar situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47658/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware, in June 2011, I announced new arrangements for the recognition and determination of patronage of new primary and post-primary schools. The patronage of the post-primary school referred to by the Deputy was decided under these new arrangements and details of the decision making process in that case are available on my Department's website. It is my Department's intention to continue using these criteria to decide the patronage of new schools.

Broadband Services Provision

307. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the grants being provided to broadband suppliers to ensure that their services are connecting to schools in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47662/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the schools broadband access programme the Department provides for the supply of internet connectivity for all recognised primary schools and those post primary schools not connected under the 100 mbps programme.

All contracts under the schools broadband access programme were recently re-tendered under a public procurement competition. As a result of this the number of service providers has been expanded from six to 13, with the aim of ensuring that where available similar levels of service would be provided to all schools, where a certain level of service was not available for a particular school the next best solution was awarded. Services were not awarded on the basis of a school's location but on the basis of the most appropriate solution for that school. These contracts were signed in the last two months and the migration of schools onto the new services is currently under way. In 2012 it is expected that service providers will be paid approximately €3.7 million for the provision of this service.

A working group comprising representatives from the Department, HEAnet and the Department of Communications and Natural Resources has recommended a strategy for the roll out of 100 mbps to all post primary schools. The national roll-out will be completed over three stages with 202 schools being connected by the end of October 2012, a further 200 being connected next year and the remaining 250 schools being connected in 2014.

Broadband Services Provision

308. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) in County Meath may expect to receive faster broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47665/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the schools broadband access programme the Department provides for the supply of internet connectivity for all recognised primary schools. All contracts under the schools broadband access programme were recently re-tendered under a public procurement competition. As a result of this the number of service providers has been expanded from six to 13, with the aim of ensuring that where available that a preferred solutions would be awarded to a school. These contracts were signed in the summer and the migration of schools onto the new services is currently under way.

The Department is aware of the difficulty that some schools, such as Culmullen National School, have with their broadband service. Through the public procurement process the Department has sought as far as possible to reduce the reliance on satellite services and the number of schools reliant on a satellite connection has fallen from approximately 1,800 in 2005 to approximately 340 at present. Satellite connections and some other slower connections have only been awarded where no other solution was proposed and contracts for these connections have only been awarded for one year. These schools will be re-tendered next summer and in the interim the Department will liaise with service providers to try and ensure that where possible improved connections will be made available.

Site Acquisitions

309. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a site for a school (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47703/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department has sought the assistance of, and is working closely with, the relevant Local Authority in relation to identifying and acquiring a suitable site for the school to which the Deputy has referred. Due to commercial sensitivities attaching to site acquisitions generally, it is not possible to comment further on the site acquisition at this time.

School Staffing

310. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a vice-principal for a school (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47704/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Vocational Educational Committees are responsible for all staff appointments to vocational schools including that of deputy

principal subject to agreed procedures.

School Curriculum

311. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way he intends safeguarding the status of history in the proposed new junior cycle; the role of the History Teachers’ Association of Ireland in this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47666/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In the new Junior Cycle all students will be expected to achieve 24 statements of learning over the period of their Junior cycle. These include valuing local, national and international heritage and understanding the importance of the relationship between past and current event and the forces that drive change and understanding the origins and impacts of social, economic and environmental aspects of the world around him or her. It is clear therefore that historical awareness skills will be necessary to achieve the required outcomes.

The revised Junior cycle history syllabus will be implemented in schools from September 2017. When work begins on revision of the history syllabus, interested groups, including the History Teachers Association of Ireland, will be consulted. In conclusion, I would emphasise that I am in favour of leaving the decisions on what is offered to the discretion of the school and of students having as broad a range of options to choose from as possible.

Supervision and Substitution Scheme Expenditure

312. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost to the Exchequer in monetary terms of supervision and substitution allowances in the secondary education sector; if the allowance is paid even if no supervision and substitution work is carried out; if the payment is considered good value for money by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47706/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The cost of the supervision and substitution scheme (S and S) for voluntary secondary and community and comprehensive schools in 2011 was €35.2 million (including employers PRSI).

Teachers appointed prior to the 1 February 2012 who participate in the S and S scheme contract to be available for 37 hours over the school year (pro rata for part time employees) to cover for supervision and substitution. Under the terms of the Croke Park agreement second level teachers participating in the scheme must be available for three time-tabled class periods per week. This was previously two class periods per week. The details are outlined in Circular 25/2011 which can be accessed on my Department’s website.

The Croke Park agreement ensures that there is better utilisation of the scheme. The agreement also provides that in circumstances where a teacher is time-tabled for a class period with a group of students that are participating in an out-of-school activity which requires the absence from school of another teacher or teachers, the teacher may be reassigned, in accordance with his or her timetable to facilitate that absence.

The recent decision following the review of public service allowances and premium payments provides that any teachers appointed for the first time after 1 February 2012 and who participate in the supervision and substitution scheme in the 2012/13 school year and thereafter

must contract for forty nine hours instead of thirty seven to receive the same annual payment.

School authorities are obliged to administer the scheme in accordance with the terms of my Department circulars and ensure it is utilised in the most effective and efficient manner.

Schools Building Projects Status

313. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an update on a school (details supplied) in County Galway; if clarity from the lease holders of the site has been received; if it will progress to architectural planning stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47744/12]

342. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an update on the provisions of funding for a school (details supplied) in County Galway which has supplied his Department with all necessary documentation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48131/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 313 and 342 together.

A green field site for a new school building for the school, referred to by the Deputies has been identified. The current leaseholders of the site concerned have confirmed that arrangements are being made to vest the site in the school authorities. The timing of when the project can advance to the next stage of the architectural planning process can be considered when the site position has been finalised and in light of available funding.

The Deputies will be aware that in view of the need to prioritise available funding for the provision of additional school accommodation, the delivery of major school projects required to meet future demographic demand will be the main focus for capital investment in the coming years.

Education and Training Provision

314. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress that has been made on the Programme for Government commitment to provide 60,000 new education and training places. [47746/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The programme for Government committed the Department of Education and Skills to provide an additional 30,000 training places across the education and training system, distributed in line with the recommendations of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

To date over 28,000 additional places have already been provided across a number of initiatives which are set out below. FAS Specific Skills Training programme.

Higher Education Springboard programme

Back to Education Initiative

Post Leaving Certificate places

Labour Market Education and Training Fund

Springboard 2012

My Department and its agencies will continue to explore and develop innovative training and education initiatives that will further support the commitment under the programme for Government and will equip individuals with the necessary skills to avail of future job opportunities.

Teacher Recruitment

315. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will list in tabular form, the numbers of newly qualified teachers who have secured a full-time appointment on or after the 1 January 2011 and who are in receipt of a reduced salary scale and allowances. [47747/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information sought by the Deputy is not available in the format required. There are a total of 3,306 newly appointed primary teachers since 1 January 2011. This number includes qualified and unqualified appointees who were employed on permanent, fixed term and casual substitute contracts. The corresponding post-primary figures are being obtained and will be forwarded to the Deputy.

All teachers who are appointed to a teaching post for the first time after 1 January 2011 are paid on the new lower rates of pay.

Schools Building Projects Status

316. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position in regarding a new school building (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47752/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy has an application with the Department for a major building project. Information in respect of the current school building programme along with all assessed applications for major capital works, including this project, is available on the Department's website at www.education.ie.

Due to competing demands on my Department's capital budget imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of additional school accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements, it was not possible to advance all applications for capital funding concurrently.

Schools, including the one referred to by the Deputy, which have not been included in the five year construction programme but which are currently in the early stages of architectural planning will be progressed incrementally through the various stages of the architectural planning process within the context of the funding available.

Earlier this year, the school was invited to partake in the prefab replacement initiative which includes replacing the school's existing prefabs with a permanent structure. However, for various reasons, the school has indicated that it is unable to participate in this initiative.

Energy Conservation

317. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider making it mandatory for boards of management to factor in water harvesting facilities for all new school builds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47760/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department is at the forefront of design with respect to energy efficiency in school buildings. This performance has been recognised at both national and international level with sustainable energy awards for excellence in design and specification. Furthermore it has been demonstrated that all primary schools designed and built in line with my Department's technical guidance documents can achieve an energy performance that is 2.3 times more efficient than international best practice and nearly five times more efficient than schools built in the late 1980s.

A number of test projects were completed in recent years to establish the opportunity and associated issues with the use of rainwater recovery systems in schools. Following the evaluation of these schemes, rain water harvesting systems are now provided in all new schools and large extensions where it is feasible to do so.

School Transport Provision

318. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details regarding the number of school transport appeals submitted to the School Transport Appeals Board; the number granted and the criteria surrounding the appeals that were approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47766/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The full terms of reference for the School Transport Appeals Board, which is independent of my Department, are available on the Department's website at www.education.ie.

In the current year to date the board has considered 125 cases and in all but one of these cases found that the terms and conditions of the scheme were properly applied by the Department and Bus Éireann. The one case that was allowed related to the issuing of a ticket for a school transport service and was an operational matter for Bus Éireann.

School Transport Provision

319. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether a student who qualifies for free school transport and who with regard to the Irish language is now travelling to a school that is not the nearest post primary school, should have to pay for school transport; if it contravenes the criteria as determined by his Department and Bus Éireann having regard to ethos and language (details supplied) [47767/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Under the terms of my Department's post primary school transport scheme, children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 4.8 km from and are attending their nearest education centre, as determined by my Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language. Bus Éireann, which operates the school transport scheme on behalf of my Department, has advised that the pupil referred to by the Deputy is not attending his nearest education centre as determined by my Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Children who are not eligible for school transport under the terms of the scheme may apply to Bus Éireann for transport on a concessionary basis provided there are spare seats available

on the service and the appropriate annual charge is paid. Only eligible children who hold valid medical cards (GMS Scheme) are exempt from paying the annual charge.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

320. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department are working on a research document regarding the introduction and merits of applied behavioural analysis in respect of teaching students with autism. [47798/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department's position is that as each child with autism is unique, they should have access to a range of different approaches to meet their individual needs. Applied Behavioural Analysis, or ABA, is one of the approaches used in special classes for children with autism.

The use of ABA as part of the range of interventions is particularly useful for addressing behavioural issues. My Department supports the use of ABA and training is provided for teachers in its use. Therefore it is not researching its introduction. However, the Department does not accept, based on research, advice and best practice, that ABA should be the only approach used. While ABA helps to improve behaviour, other approaches, such as Treatment and Education of Autistic Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH), Picture Exchange Communications System (PECS) are just as important in developing children's communication and speech skills. It is important that children have access to a range of approaches so that their broader needs can be met.

The Deputy may be interested to note that teachers in special schools have been using ABA principles for more than 25 years. ABA involves the systematic application, at any time during the child's day, of behavioural principles to modify behaviour. The effectiveness of behavioural interventions to improve the performance of children with autism and to ameliorate behavioural difficulties has been recognized for decades. My Department's child centred policy is based on advice received from international experts on autism, NEPS, the Inspectorate and the report of the Irish Task Force on Autism.

School Transport Availability

321. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason concessionary students who are not allocated tickets under the school transport scheme in the lottery are not allowed to avail of the bus service on a first come first served basis on any day that the full complement of seats are not filled on the school bus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47776/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Bus Éireann operates the school transport scheme on behalf of my Department; it is responsible for the time-tabling and routing of services. Seats are allocated and tickets issued up to the maximum seating capacity of a school bus and once the seating capacity is reached, no further tickets can be issued.

On any given school day it is impossible to anticipate the exact number of ticket holders who will travel and absenteeism will sometimes result in a small amount of seats being available on a particular day. However, it is not possible to allow pupils who do not hold tickets to travel on an ad-hoc basis as this has the potential to result in an overload situation which would pose an unacceptable safety risk and contravene road traffic regulations.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

322. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the July programme in respect of a school (details supplied) [47816/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that participation in my Department's July Provision Scheme is an option for all special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism or severe to profound general learning disability that choose to extend their education services through the month of July.

Children with autism in mainstream classes are eligible to apply for home based tuition, but can, in limited circumstances participate in their school's programme if they can be accommodated within the school's existing autistic unit(s) and without incurring the need for additional resources. The number of classes providing the July extension should not exceed the number that is provided for by the school during the normal school year.

The school referred to by the Deputy had proposed to facilitate eligible children from mainstream classes by establishing a separate class in the school for the month of July 2012. In view of the mitigating circumstances and the likely incommode to parents, these additional resources were approved to the school in question as an exceptional matter for 2012 only. The school was however, advised that going forward the school based programme would be restricted to children within the specific units/classes, within the school.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

323. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the delay in issuing payment of a student maintenance grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47874/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The decision on eligibility for a student grant is a matter for the relevant grant awarding authority.

I understand from officials in County Longford VEC, the relevant grant awarding authority, that the student referred to by the deputy was issued with a decision on the 29/08/2012 advising her that she was ineligible in relation to her grant application for 2012/13 academic year.

If the applicant is unhappy with the decision in relation to her grant application she may appeal the decision of the grant awarding authority to its appeals officer.

Where the appeals officer decides to reject the appeal, the applicant may appeal this decision to my Department or the independent appeals board, as appropriate.

Adult Education

324. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to the decision to discontinue the adult refugee programme, if the services provided by the programme will be replaced by new schemes or if existing schemes will be enhanced to cover the gap in service; if staff employed under the adult refugee programme whose contracts are not now to be renewed will be retained under these schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47861/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Migrants, including workers and refugees, will continue to be able to access a range of courses that have always been provided by Vocational Education Committees (VECs) under the Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme (ALCES) and the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), both of which are funded by my Department. In 2011, some 12,000 people accessed English as a Second Language (ESOL) courses provided under the ALCES and BTEI programmes, including over 1,300 refugees. In this way, the needs of refugees can continue to be provided for by VECs.

Staff on the programme are employed directly by the VEC where programmes are located. It will be a matter for the individual VECs, as employers, to address employment matters.

Schools Refurbishment

325. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) in County Kildare has been refused funding for the installation of a fire alarm system and for the provision of exit doors to meet current fire safety standards; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that this funding was sought under the emergency grant system, the summer works scheme and was referred, on the advice of his Department, to its Capital Appraisals Unit, all of which refused funding; if it is normal for his Department to ignore requests for funding in respect of works to meet fire safety standards; if he will review this school's history of applications; if in the event of a fire it will be the board of management of the school or his Department which will carry responsibility for any loss; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47880/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department's Planning and Building Unit has requested further information from the school authority in relation to their application for emergency funding. When this information is received a final decision will be communicated to the Board of Management.

Home-School Liaison Scheme

326. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address an issue regarding the home tuition scheme raised in correspondence (details supplied). [47885/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The issues in the correspondence supplied by the Deputy appear to focus on the qualifications of home tutors in general with specific reference to teaching children with autism.

The Deputy will be aware that the purpose of the Home Tuition Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme was extended in recent years to facilitate tuition for children awaiting a suitable educational placement and also to provide early educational intervention for pre-school children with autism.

As home tuition takes place outside the school environment my Department's preference is that the tuition provider be a qualified teacher who is registered with the Teaching Council. Where this is not possible approval may be given for a tutor with alternative qualifications to undertake the tuition and these details are available on my Department's website. In such scenarios approval for nominated tutors is made on a temporary basis pending a qualified teacher

being sourced.

The qualification standard required by the home tuition scheme reflects that required in a school environment. Class teachers in schools are required to be fully-qualified with a qualification relevant to the sector in which they are teaching. All primary teachers are qualified to teach in any primary or special school/classroom. All initial teacher education (ITE) programmes would have regard to inclusion in their content - it's a theme that is integrated throughout course programmes. However, the level of content would vary between different providers. There would also be options for students to pursue additional study in the area of special education on an elective basis.

Recently, and for the first time, the Teaching Council's criteria for ITE providers stipulate mandatory elements of study, including special education. The learning outcomes of these ITE programmes also reflect the need for the teacher to be able to provide for the holistic development of students, to implement a range of teaching methodologies suitable to the students/class, to apply knowledge of the individual potential of students, their disposition towards learning and their backgrounds, identities and learning styles to their teaching, to evaluate learner progress, to act as an advocate for students, referring students for educational support and participating in the provision of that support, amongst other relevant outcomes.

Separately teachers have access through the Special Education Support Service to continuing professional development in a range of autism-specific interventions, including Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

327. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in view of the fact that the proposal to erode the current therapy services provision operating in special needs schools is vital to the holistic educational development, in this instance for children with moderate intellectual disability, the way he propose that these children will progress to the best of their educational and developmental ability. [47891/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that the provision of therapy services in schools is a matter for the Minister for Health.

I am aware that the Health Service Executive has recognised the need to increase the level of consistency and standardisation in the way both early intervention services and services for school-aged children with disabilities are delivered and to this end is currently engaged in a reconfiguration of existing therapy resources to geographic based teams for children (0-18 years). The National Programme on Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (0-18 years) has been established since 2010. It is supported by a National Coordinating Group which has representatives from the Department of Health and my Department in addition to other key stakeholders. The Programme is based on the recommendations of the Report of the National Reference Group on Multidisciplinary Services for Children aged 5-18 Years produced by representatives of the professions and management involved in delivering multidisciplinary services to children which is available on the HSE website www.hse.ie.

The long term goal of this Programme is to bring consistency in service delivery and a clear pathway to services for all children with disabilities according to need. Implementation of this Programme will have a positive impact on the provision of clinical services for all children re-

quiring access to health related supports, regardless of where they live or which pre-school or school they attend.

While the Programme supports the principle of providing access to mainstream education where appropriate, it also recognises a continuing role for special schools.

Question No. 328 answered with Question No. 284.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

329. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a grant application with Cork County Council in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47962/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand from officials in Cork County Council, the relevant grant awarding authority, that on 1st November a letter issued to the student referred to by the Deputy requesting outstanding documentation. When the documentation is returned to the awarding authority the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Special Educational Needs Staffing

330. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a special care assistant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47967/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support. The NCSE operates within my Department's established criteria for the allocation of such supports and the staffing resources available to my Department.

All schools were advised to apply to the NCSE for resource teaching and SNA support for the 2012/13 school year by 16th March, 2012. All schools, including the school referred to by the Deputy, have now been advised by the NCSE of their SNA staffing allocation for the current school year. Details of the allocations which have been made to each school are available at www.ncse.ie.

The NCSE allocates a level of SNA support for each school annually taking into account the care needs of all of the qualifying children enrolled in the school. SNAs should then be deployed by schools in a manner which best meets the care support requirements of the children enrolled in the school for whom SNA support has been allocated. It is a matter for schools to allocate support as required, and on the basis of individual need, which allows schools flexibility in how the SNA support is utilised. Where schools have enrolled new pupils with special educational needs who were not considered at the time that the allocations for the 2012/13 school year were made, or where schools are in a position to demonstrate that they cannot cater for the care needs of qualifying children from the level of SNA support which has been assigned to them, they may apply to the NCSE for additional SNA support or for a review of their SNA allocation.

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 con-

tact details available on www.ncse.ie.

School Equipment

331. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the grants available to schools, primary and post primary, for gym equipment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47977/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department is committed to the provision, maintenance and modernisation of physical education and physical activity facilities in our schools for our children and young people.

In a new school building or refurbishment/extension, PE facilities are included as an intrinsic part of the design. While my Department currently has no specific grant schemes in place to provide funding for the purchase of gym equipment, primary schools received €2,000 each in PE equipment grants in 2006, at a total cost of €6.5 million. A similar grant of €4,000 per school, at an overall cost of around €3 million, issued to post-primary schools in 2007. In 2010 grant aid in excess of €16m issued to both primary and post-primary schools to allow each school address its own specific PE and outdoor equipment needs.

Schools Building Projects Applications

332. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of funding available to build a new school (details supplied) in Dublin 7 now that planning permission has been granted by Dublin City Council; when he expects work to commence on this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47982/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The major school building project referred to by the Deputy is at an early stage of Architectural Planning. The project is included on the five year programme to progress to Tender & Construction in 2014/15. The Design Team were appointed on 25th October 2012. The cost of the project will be identified when the project proceeds to tender stage.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

333. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline his Department's response in relation to a proposal put forward by a school (details supplied) in relation to the provision of a unit for post primary aged students who are disabled or visually impaired; and if he will outline the engagement that has taken place to date with the Multiple Disabilities and Visual Impairment Steering Committee in respect of this project. [47987/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) met representatives of the school referred to by the Deputy recently to discuss the proposal in question. My Department is currently engaging with the NCSE regarding the proposal and will be in further contact with the school in due course.

Student Grant Scheme Delays

334. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason it is taking so long to process college grant applications to Student Universal Support Ireland, in some cases up to four months since applications were submitted. [47989/12]

339. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the provisions, being made to clear the backlog of 52,430 claims to Student Universal Support Ireland for third level grants; the way such a backlog, was allowed to build up; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48088/12]

340. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the delay in grant applications being processed through the new Student Universal Support Ireland website system; the number of these grants that are being held up due to delays by the applicant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48108/12]

363. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the on-going delays in the processing of grant applications by Students Universal Support Ireland; if he will provide figures on the current number of cases with SUSI; the number of applications that have been processed to date; the average processing time for same; the way these figures compare to the previous system; if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties applicants are having in securing accurate information on the status of their application and the hardship these delays and inaccurate information are causing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48322/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 334, 339, 340 and 363 together.

As the Deputy may be aware, all new applications for the 2012/13 academic year are being processed and paid by SUSI, the new centralised grant awarding authority. Continuing students who are renewing their grant for attendance on an existing course with their existing awarding authority, which will be either a local authority or a VEC, will continue to have their applications processed and paid by the relevant grant awarding authority.

In total, SUSI has received just over 66,000 completed application for student grants this year. Some 18,000 applications are now complete. This includes some 9,000 applications which have been refused and some 9,000 which have been awarded, or awarded pending submission of final course details by the student. SUSI is awaiting documentation on some 21,000 applications. Some 15,000 students have not responded at all to requests for documentation and a further some 6,000 have submitted incomplete documentation. The remaining some 27,000 are applications on hand with SUSI for processing. Of the remaining applications on hand with SUSI, the majority of these some 15,000 are being checked to ensure that all documentation has been submitted, however, based on the material received by SUSI to date they expect that 40% will be returned incomplete. Of the remainder some 6,000 are awaiting final assessment, some 600 have appealed the decision previously made on their applications and some 5,000 are new applications submitted after the closing date. This data has been supplied to my Department by SUSI.

The Deputy will appreciate that the average waiting time for the processing of grant applications is dependent on a number of variables including the volume of applications received, staffing resources, whether or not completed application forms have been received and how quickly complete further documentation requested is returned.

A survey completed by the the grant awarding authorities in January each year provides details in relation to processing of grant applications as the third week in January. The processing position as at the 21 January 2012 in relation to new applications was that a total of 66,479

applications were received. Some 32,152 new applications were awarded and some 6,932 applications were refused. The Deputy will appreciate that the data supplied by SUSI in relation to new applications in the 2012/13 academic year is not directly comparable as it does not cover the same timeframe. The statistics for the previous year is as at 21 January 2012 and therefore includes 3 additional months processing by the various awarding authorities. Measures introduced to increase the number of applications being processed and paid include the following.

Staffing levels in SUSI have been substantially increased in recent weeks, with an additional 20 staff members processing the documentation received from students, and extra staff have also been assigned to SUSI head office to work on continually improving the processes and speeding up processing times. SUSI has engaged with USI in relation to communicating to students the need to send in all documentation required to complete their application. A moderator is now in place on www.boards.ie to address issues raised by applicants through this forum. SUSI have commenced three additional waves of SMS and e-mail communications to encourage students who are awaiting responses from SUSI to get in contact quickly and with the correct documentation. SUSI have also put in place an additional call out service to students requesting them to submit their final course acceptance form. SUSI has also posted the top ten reasons on why students' documentation packs are incomplete on the www.cdvec.ie and the www.susi.ie websites.

In addition my Department has requested that the Higher Education Authority once again request institutions to show flexibility and consideration, as most have done in the past, to students who may be awaiting a decision on their grant application or payment of grants. The Higher Education Authority has also requested institutions to consider not withdrawing facilities such as library or exam access, given that those students are awaiting decisions on their grant applications.

In relation to information been provided to students by the SUSI helpdesk the deputy will appreciate that the SUSI helpdesk have received some 174,977 calls and some 30,746 e-mail queries to the SUSI helpdesk since it went live on the 13th February 2012. SUSI is seeking to constantly improve the information available both online and from its helpdesk email and telephone services.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

335. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills 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. [48002/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): 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 to schools to support children with special educational needs. SENOs also make recommendations to my Department where assistive technology support is required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in recommending such support.

I can confirm that an application for assistive technology support for the child referred to by the Deputy has been received in my Department. My Department has requested, and is awaiting, further information from the child's school in relation to the application, following receipt of which a decision will issue to the school as soon as possible.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

336. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will assign full special needs assistants hours in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48073/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support. The NCSE operates within my Department's established criteria for the allocation of such supports and the staffing resources available to my Department.

All schools were advised to apply to the NCSE for resource teaching and SNA support for the 2012/13 school year by 16th March, 2012. All schools, including the school referred to by the Deputy, have now been advised by the NCSE of their SNA staffing allocation for the current school year. Details of the allocations which have been made to each school are available at www.ncse.ie.

The NCSE allocates a level of SNA support for each school annually taking into account the care needs of all of the qualifying children enrolled in the school. SNAs should then be deployed by schools in a manner which best meets the care support requirements of the children enrolled in the school for whom SNA support has been allocated. It is a matter for schools to allocate support as required, and on the basis of individual need, which allows schools flexibility in how the SNA support is utilised.

Where schools have enrolled new pupils with special educational needs who were not considered at the time that the allocations for the 2012/13 school year were made, or where schools are in a position to demonstrate that they cannot cater for the care needs of qualifying children from the level of SNA support which has been assigned to them, they may apply to the NCSE for additional SNA support or for a review of their SNA allocation.

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.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

337. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the delay in receiving approval for a third level grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48083/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI, the new centralised grant awarding authority, that the student referred to by the Deputy has been awarded a grant and an award letter issued on 23rd October, 2012.

School Transport Provision

338. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application for school transport 2012/13 in respect of a person (details supplied)

in County Westmeath; the refusal of which is causing extreme hardship; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48084/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Under the terms of my Department's Post Primary School Transport Scheme, children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 4.8 kms from and are attending their nearest education centre as determined by my Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Bus Éireann, which operates the school transport scheme on behalf of my Department, has advised that the pupil referred to by the Deputy is not attending her nearest education centre as determined by my Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Children who are not eligible for school transport under the terms of the scheme may apply to Bus Éireann for transport on a concessionary basis provided there are spare seats available on the service, and the appropriate annual charge is paid. Only eligible children who hold valid medical cards (GMS Scheme) are exempt from paying the annual charge.

Questions No. 339 and 340 answered with Question No. 334.

Public Procurement Tenders

341. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the policy of his Department and schools in the procurement of stationery for use in schools; if there has been any instruction issued that procurement should be centralised; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that some vocational education committees are following a policy of centralisation for procurement which will adversely impact on local stationery suppliers. [48125/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Government's Public Service Reform Plan recognises the key strategic importance of public procurement and provides for the development of a new policy framework for procurement. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has recently notified Departments and public bodies of the mandatory requirement to use central contracts, put in place by the National Procurement Service (NPS), when procuring a range of commonly acquired goods and services. These national contracts are targeted at securing best value for money and facilitating Departments and agencies to deliver services within their budgetary constraints. Within the Education Sector, the mandatory arrangement relating to stationery currently applies to the Higher Education and VEC Sectors.

The NPS is supporting Small and Medium Business Enterprises (SMEs) through its education and guidance strategies and many Irish SMEs have been successful in winning NPS frameworks in areas such as stationery, managed print services and ICT consumables. These SMEs may, in turn, source many of their services and products from local manufacturers and agents.

While I appreciate the Deputy's concerns, given the budgetary pressures under which we all now operate, savings on the procurement of goods and services across the public sector can go some way to ensure that the level of service provided to the community is greater than what it might otherwise be.

Question No. 342 answered with Question No. 313.

Education Schemes

343. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a four day Saorview course can be accredited with a Fetac level 5 qualification; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48145/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I am informed by FETAC that they do not offer an award which would be referred to as a Saorview award, although it is possible that providers could refer to Saorview in promoting programmes of education and training leading to a particular FETAC award.

Regarding the duration of the programme, providers design and deliver programmes which are relevant to the profile of the learner group concerned and which are intended to lead to the learning outcomes associated with the particular award. Therefore programmes of very different length can lead to awards which are placed at the same level of the National Framework of Qualifications, depending on the existing knowledge, skill and competence of the learners and the breadth of knowledge which is required to receive the award. So, for example, both an Honours Bachelor Degree programme with a duration of 4 years and a Higher Diploma programme with a duration of 1 year can lead to awards at Level 8 of the Framework.

School Transport Provision

344. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the issue where a school bus has to collect 14 students to take them home and then return for the remaining six students waiting on the side of a regional road, unsupervised, for the bus to return (details supplied). [48154/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Bus Éireann operates the school transport service on behalf of my Department. Routes are planned in such a way to ensure that, as far as possible, eligible pupils have a reasonable standard of service with regard to pick-up points and travel and waiting times, while at the same time ensuring that school transport vehicles are fully utilised in the most efficient and cost effective manner.

My Department has been advised that the transport service referred to by the Deputy, in the details supplied, is operating within the guidelines of the school transport scheme. The school bus operates a double trip both morning and evening to accommodate the number of pupils offering for transport. The first trip in the afternoon carries pupils who reside south of the school and the second trip carries pupils who reside to the north of the school.

Double trips are a feature of the school transport scheme as operated throughout the country.

Teaching Qualifications

345. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in tabular form the number of teachers working in the education system who hold a BCBA or BCaBA qualification. [48167/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department does not maintain records of the number of teachers who have obtained the qualifications to which he refers.

Teaching Qualifications

346. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in tabular form the number of persons employed on the SESS Advisors Behaviour Team and the number of those advisors who hold a BCBA qualification. [48168/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware of the brief of the Special Education Support Service (SESS) in relation to the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) and support for teachers in the area of special educational needs in the learning and teaching context. Currently, there are eighteen full-time members on the SESS team together with one part-time specialist adviser.

The SESS has a number of teams involved in the provision of CPD and support to teachers of students with challenging behaviour; the Challenging Behaviour Team, the Autism Team and the Contemporary Applied Behaviour Analysis Team. Thirteen members of the SESS are directly involved in these teams. I am satisfied that the SESS are making appropriate provision to support teachers and schools in this area. One SESS team member holds a BCBA qualification with three others currently working towards obtaining this specific qualification.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

347. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he confirm that his officials received a submission from a person (details supplied) detailing a peer-reviewed academic study from Howard et al (2005) which demonstrated that for some children with autism, ABA has proven to be more effective than the implementation of an eclectic intervention. [48169/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department's policy is to provide for children with special educational needs, including those children with autism, in a range of settings within the existing network of special schools, special classes in mainstream schools and mainstream classes. The principal considerations underpinning this policy are the needs of the child and how to meet those needs with the minimum of segregation and maximum participation with peers, that is, in the least restrictive environment.

The practice and policy is to provide schools for children. It is not to provide schools for particular approaches, into which children will be fitted. Rather it is to identify children's needs and meet those needs in the existing school setting that is appropriate for meeting them. In the case of children with autism, this will be in the least restrictive environment, with trained teachers who have access to additional professional support, additional training in teaching children with special educational needs and in autism studies, and training in the principal approaches that are used in working with children with a diagnosis of autism.

The position is that each child's identified needs should determine the teaching approach and methodology that is to be used. As children differ significantly from one another and as children's needs vary and change over time, it is not possible to impose a method or approach that will work for all children with autism. The research evidence is clear that no matter what exclusive approach is followed, its success is limited. No one approach has a monopoly on success. Different approaches have been applied successfully with different children, and each approach has been shown to have limitations. This is why my Department does not establish schools to follow a particular approach including, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

The policy is based on advice received from national and international experts on autism

as well as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) as well as my Department's Inspectorate. My Department has considered published research, including the Report of the Task Force on Autism (2001) and the Evaluation of Educational Provision for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (2006), both of which are available on my Department's website. The report of the Taskforce includes a comprehensive list of contributions. My Department was also mindful of contributions of many others experts at international conferences/visits.

My Department's position is reflective that there is no universal agreement that conclusive research exists to support the exclusive usage of ABA or indeed, the exclusive use of any other approach, as a basis for national educational provision for children with autism. It is for this reason that my Department's preferred policy is for a child centred, rather than a method-centred, approach where the approach to be taken is based on the individual child's needs. The person referred to by the Deputy submitted, on request, a number of contributions to my Department.

State Examinations Reviews

348. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to the proposed junior certificate assessment by teachers, if he any procedures have been put in place to ensure teachers are not assessing pupils who are their own children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48172/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The revised assessment proposals rely on the professionalism of teachers. Principals and teachers will receive comprehensive professional development in educational assessment, including processes of moderation, and providing feedback to students. Assessment arrangements in schools will be subject to internal moderation to ensure that proper procedures are followed in all cases. Principals will have to formally confirm that moderation procedures were followed. Final assessment at the end of the three years is just one element of a broader school based approach to assessment.

The NCCA is developing an assessment and moderation toolkit which will provide teachers with assessment materials for classroom use, and will support the design of class and school assessment. It will also offer guidelines on in-school moderation, and show how professional dialogue between teachers in a school (and, where a teacher is the only teacher of a subject, between schools) can ensure that there is a shared and common understanding of the standards of work expected. The new forms of assessment will be phased in over eight years to give schools, students and parents the opportunity to gain confidence in and have an understanding of the new assessment system.

The results awarded on every School Certificate will be sent to my Department. My Department will monitor the national and school patterns along with the results in the standardised testing of reading, Mathematics and Science. This monitoring will provide further quality assurance and identify any local or national anomalies. A report on overall trends will be published regularly. I am confident that these arrangements are robust for all contexts, including where teachers may be assessing their own children, given the low stakes nature of the assessment envisaged in the new Framework for Junior Cycle.

Schools Building Projects Status

349. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he expects to have a contract awarded for the construction of an extension to a primary school (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will provide an estimate of when the project is likely

to commence and be completed by. [48185/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware from my previous correspondence to him in June 2012 that my Department in consultation with the Design Team and school authorities agreed to re-tender the project to which he refers. Subject to no issues arising, it is anticipated that the project will progress to construction in Quarter 2 of 2013.

School Patronage

350. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action being taken to cater for the provision of Church of Ireland schools, taking into account the absence of any secondary schools with a Protestant ethos being provided in County Kerry. [48211/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware, in June 2011, I announced that 20 new post-primary schools are to be established in the coming years across a number of locations to meet significantly increasing demographics in those areas. This announcement did not include a proposal to establish a new post-primary school in County Kerry. The Forward Planning Section of my Department will continue to analyse demographic trends to determine the level of additional school provision which will be required into the future. Overall school requirements in County Kerry will be fully considered in this context. If the demographics require the establishment of a school, then the process for the selection of the type of school should allow for different patrons/bodies to be considered as the patron of a new school.

Schools Building Projects Applications

351. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address the issue of the unsafe and substandard prefab accommodation in a school (details supplied) in County Dublin in view of the further deterioration and leaking as reported to his Department in October, by sanctioning a permanent extension to the school as part of the building programme or a devolved grant, as the only viable and cost effective solution to these ongoing problems. [48228/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy has an application with the Department for a major school project involving school refurbishment and the replacement of temporary accommodation. Information in respect of the current school building programme along with all assessed applications for major capital works, including this project, is available on the Department's website at www.education.ie.

The temporary accommodation, referred to by the Deputy, was considered to be in good condition and well maintained when acquired by my Department in December 2010. In the period since the purchase, my Department has been advised by the school of issues with the accommodation, which my Department have addressed. The Department will continue to liaise with the school with regard to any issues identified and seek appropriate remedial action where necessary. The Deputy will appreciate, that in view of the financial constraints imposed by the need, as outlined in the Five Year Plan, to prioritise available funding for the provision of essential school accommodation to meet demographic demand, it is not possible to indicate at this point when a further project for the school in question will be progressed.

Schools Building Projects Status

352. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position of a secondary school (details supplied) in County Mayo on his Department's school building list; if he will outline the next steps for the school in view of the fact that the school's whole school evaluation has highlighted a number of school building concerns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48230/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The proposed building project referred to by the Deputy is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning. Due to competing demands on my Department's capital budget, imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of additional school accommodation to meet those increasing demographic requirements, it was not possible to include this project in the five year construction programme announced earlier this year.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

353. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when persons (details supplied) in County Donegal may expect their applications for a higher education grant to be processed. [48235/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In relation to the first named candidate officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that the application of the student referred to by the Deputy is currently awaiting review and the student will shortly be notified of the outcome.

In relation to the second named candidate officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that on the 1st November a letter issued to the student referred to by the Deputy requesting outstanding documentation. When the documentation is returned to SUSI the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

State Examinations Issues

354. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason Leaving Certificate students sitting the honours maths paper in the Leaving Certificate in June 2013 are at unfair disadvantage as they are unable to source exam questions and material for the new revised project maths that is fully implemented for the 2013 Leaving Certificate honours maths paper and if he will expedite an answer. [48285/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations. In view of the above, I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

Languages Programme

355. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if schools with more than 20% of pupils requiring English as an additional language support are automatically entitled to an English as an additional language teacher; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [48290/12]

356. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number or percentage of pupils who require English as an additional language support that are required in a primary school to qualify a school for a full time English as an additional language teacher; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48291/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 355 and 356 together.

Circular 0007/2012, which is available on my Department website sets out the criteria for staffing allocations for schools including those for pupils that require language support for the current school year. Under the teacher allocation reforms the combined resources available for GAM (General Allocation Model) and language support (circa 4,100 posts) were used to create a single simplified allocation process to cover both the GAM and language support. Schools have autonomy on how to deploy the resource between language support and learning support depending on their specific needs. The new GAM arrangements also provided for additional permanent teaching posts (circa 370) to be given to schools with high concentration of pupils that require language support. Further additional temporary EAL support are also provided, as necessary, to schools that have high concentrations of pupils (at least 20% of total enrolment) that require language support in the 2012/13 school. These allocations are made on the basis of appeals by any of these schools to the Staffing Appeals Board.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

357. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will clarify comments made by the National Council for Special Educational Needs in recent days in which it claimed that the hiring of 10,300 special needs assistants this year, instead of the 10,575 which were budgeted to be hired, was due to a lack of demand, if this position will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48303/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOS), for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports including SNA support, to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department's established criteria for the allocation of such supports and the staffing resources available to my Department.

There are 10,575 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) SNA posts available for allocation in the 2012/13 school year, which is the same number of posts which were available for allocation for the 2011/12 school year. The NCSE initially allocated 10,311 WTE SNA posts to schools based on the number of valid applications received to date and the extent of the care needs of qualifying children. The remaining 264 posts are available for allocation throughout the school year for new assessments of disability, new entrants, or emergency or late applications, in accordance with the terms of the SNA scheme. The NCSE have estimated that based on the experience of last year, that these 264 posts should be sufficient to meet demand during the school year.

Every child who has met the criteria for access to Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support in the current school year to date is in receipt of support. In respect of new applications, the NCSE has capacity to allocate additional SNA posts throughout the school year, and will do so where valid applications are received. Where schools have enrolled new pupils with special educational needs who were not considered at the time that the initial allocations for the 2012/13

school year were made, or where schools are in a position to demonstrate that they cannot cater for the care needs of qualifying children from the level of SNA support which has been assigned to them, they may apply to the NCSE for additional SNA support or for a review of their SNA allocation.

Finally, I wish to confirm for the Deputy that this Government remains committed to protecting services for children with special educational needs. The number of SNA posts available for allocation to schools for the 2012/13 school year has been maintained, at a time when there has been a requirement to make savings across a range of expenditure areas.

Fee Paying Schools

358. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding fee paying schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48306/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The correspondence referred to by the Deputy concerns the arrangement whereby the salaries of teachers employed within the approved annual staffing allocation for fee charging schools by my Department, are paid by the State; an arrangement that pre-dates the introduction of the Free Education scheme and which exists since the foundation of the State. The estimated cost of these posts is in the order of €100m. This Government recognises the importance of ensuring that students from a Protestant or reformed church background can attend a school that reflects their denominational ethos while at the same time ensuring that funding arrangements are in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

With regard to the fee-charging Protestant schools, an arrangement exists whereby funding is provided by my Department to the Secondary Education Committee (SEC), an organisation run by the churches involved in managing the Protestant secondary schools. The SEC then disburses funds to the Protestant fee-charging schools on behalf of pupils who would otherwise have difficulty with the cost of fees and who, in the absence of such financial support, would be unable to attend a second level school of a reformed church or Protestant ethos. Funding amounts to €6.5 million annually. This fund ensures that necessitous Protestant children can attend a school of their choice.

The Deputy will be aware that I announced a review last December, in the context of the Budget 2012, where I made a further one point change to the staffing allocation of fee charging schools. I indicated at the time that that the purpose of the review would be to inform future policy in relation to exchequer support for these schools. The review will be included in the material used to inform Government deliberations on the next budget.

I would like to make it clear that there has been no decision relating to fee paying schools and any budget adjustments for this year. Given the extremely difficult economic circumstances that this country is facing and the fact that every Department has to find considerable cost-savings, all expenditure must be examined to see if cost-savings can be found. I wish to reiterate that no decisions in relation to the upcoming Budget have been made.

Schools Building Projects Status

359. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the provision of a second level school for the town of Kinnegad, County Westmeath; and if

he will make a statement on the matter. [48309/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware, in June 2011, I announced that 20 new post-primary schools are to be established in the coming years across a number of locations to meet significantly increasing demographics in those areas. This announcement did not include a proposal to establish a new post-primary school in the area referred to by the Deputy. The Forward Planning Section of my Department will continue to analyse demographic trends to determine the level of additional school provision which will be required into the future. Overall school requirements in the area referred to by the Deputy will be fully considered in this context.

Departmental Agencies Staff Remuneration

360. **Deputy Dara Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the institutions under the remit of his Department that have full-time, permanent staff with contract of indefinite duration without a pay scale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48313/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand that the deputy is referring to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) only in this question.

The position is that HEIs are autonomous institutions and it is a matter for the individual institutions to manage staffing and recruitment subject to compliance with the Employment Control Framework which limits the overall numbers employed in the sector. Under the terms of the ECF the HEIs are required to report wholetime equivalent permanent and temporary staff numbers on a quarterly basis. The particular information requested on those employed in the HEIs on contracts of indefinite duration is not available.

Schools Building Projects Applications

361. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a school building application by a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; his views on whether it would be more beneficial for the students and teachers at the school to incorporate the replacement of prefabs with a permanent structure and the upgrading of classrooms into one project as opposed to two separate projects which is currently being proposed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48314/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to confirm for the Deputy that my Department has received an application from the school to which he refers for capital works to provide an extension. My Department is currently in the process of acquiring additional land for school purposes in the area which can also facilitate an extension at the school in question in due course. This acquisition is at an advanced stage. However, due to commercial sensitivities associated with site acquisitions generally, I am not in a position to comment further at this time. Earlier this year, the school was invited to partake in the Prefab Replacement Initiative which includes replacing the school's existing prefabs with a permanent structure. However, for various reasons, the school has indicated that it is unable to participate in this initiative. The Deputy will appreciate, that in view of the financial constraints imposed by the need, as outlined in the Five Year Plan, to prioritise available funding for the provision of essential school accommodation to meet demographic demand, it is not possible to indicate at this point when a further project for the school in question will be progressed.

Schools Building Projects Expenditure

362. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will allow a primary school (details supplied) in County Mayo to spend money raised for a new school building project on a renovation of the present school building; if his Department will make matching funding available to the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48317/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The major school building project referred to by the Deputy is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning. It is a matter for the school authority to expend its own funds as it sees fit. However, due to competing demands on my Department's capital budget, imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of additional school accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements it was not possible to include this project in the five year construction programme.

Question No. 363 answered with Question No. 334.

School Curriculum

364. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the new curriculum for leaving certificate honours maths, project maths, keeps changing though students are expected to sit this paper in June 2013; the reason there seems to be no clarity on what is expected of the students. [48378/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Project Maths is a major programme of reform of mathematics in second level schools. Project Maths began in 24 schools in September 2008 and was rolled out on a phased basis to all mainstream schools from September 2010. As of September 2012 all five strands of Project Maths were rolled out to all mainstream schools. Information on the timing and phasing has been widely disseminated.

The purpose of the initial engagement with 24 schools and the adoption of a phasing in approach was to learn from the experiences in these project schools while using this period to work with the schools to develop materials and lesson plans and resource materials, which would then be available for mainstreaming to all schools. This phase of development has therefore been evolutionary in nature, with syllabuses and resources being developed and refined during the project phase. There has been ongoing professional development made available to schools by the Project Maths Development Team. As well as CPD, there are significant resources available on www.projectmaths.ie which provide clarity on what is expected from teachers and students.

National Educational Psychological Service Staff

365. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current number of psychologists in the national educational psychological service at present and the number in 2009, 2010 and 2011. [48438/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware 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). Schools that do not currently have NEPS psychologists assigned to them may avail of the SCPA, whereby the school can have an assess-

ment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved and paid for by NEPS. There are currently 169 psychologists employed within my Department's NEPS service (amounting to some 160.8 whole-time equivalents when working sharing is factored in). Employed numbers in this regard for 2010 and 2011 were 165 (158.9 w.t.e.) and 173 (166 w.t.e.) respectively. I can also inform the Deputy that an additional 8 new psychologists are currently engaged with the public appointments service with a view to their being recruited to NEPS in the current academic year.

School Accommodation

366. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools in the State currently in prefab buildings; the cost to the State on an annual basis of those schools continuing to remain in prefab buildings. [48439/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Currently, there are 545 primary and post-primary schools renting 1,421 prefab units throughout the country. (Please note that one prefab unit may consist of one or more classrooms and/or ancillary accommodation). The amount spent on renting temporary accommodation at primary and post-primary level throughout the country, including - but not limited to - prefabricated accommodation in the last 4 years is : 2012 - €29.3m (allocation), 2011 - €28.9m, 2010 - €29.3m, 2009 - €39m.

In March of this year I announced a new initiative to replace rented prefabs in both primary and post-primary schools. Over 170 schools have been approved to replace rented prefabs with permanent accommodation. A total of €41.8 million has been allocated for this initiative which will result in approximately 6,000 pupils moving from prefabs into permanent classrooms and resource rooms when building works are completed in all schools. It is expected that this initiative will achieve savings of up to €5m per annum on the rental of prefabs in the coming years.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

367. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a refund in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48447/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Arrears of salary will issue to the person referred to by the Deputy on the 22nd November.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

368. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on their application for Student Universal Support Ireland grant; the reason SUSI will not discuss the application with the applicant on the SUSI helpline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48526/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI, the new centralised grant awarding authority, that the student referred to by the Deputy has been awarded a grant and an award letter issued on 2nd November, 2012.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

369. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive a decision on their application for a student grant to Student Universal Support Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48528/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that the additional documentation requested from the student referred to by the Deputy was received on 16th October, 2012. The documentation is currently awaiting review and the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

370. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will expedite a grant application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon. [48534/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI, the new centralised grant awarding authority, that the student referred to by the Deputy sent incomplete supporting documentation in on the 17/10/2012. I understand that the SUSI support team are to contact the student directly in relation to the outstanding documentation.

North-South Ministerial Council

371. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48543/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department's North/South Co-operation Unit is responsible for the co-ordination and development of co-operation and common action in education between both parts of the island of Ireland, in the context of the Good Friday Agreement. The principal function of the Unit is to take forward this co-operation through the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) and to co-ordinate and develop, within that framework, common policies in the four designated priority areas of co-operation: special education needs, educational underachievement, teacher mobility and school, youth and teacher exchanges. The NSMC meets in Education Sectoral format about three times per year, and in Plenary session about twice yearly.

The NSMC, in Education Sectoral format, established in 2002 a number of Joint Working Groups, on which my Department is represented. They meet periodically to develop and advance cross-border co-operation through practical measures in special education, pupil attendance/retention, literacy/numeracy, teacher qualifications; and school, youth and teacher exchanges. The North/South Co-operation Unit also promotes co-operation through ongoing bi-lateral contacts with officials in the Northern Ireland Department of Education and Department of Employment and Learning. In addition, the Unit develops, supports and participates in a range of programmes and joint initiatives designed to increase mutual understanding and

promote closer co-operation. The North South Co-operation Unit reports to an Assistant Secretary within my Department and has the following staff. 1 (1 wte) Assistant Principal Officer - 1 (1 wte) Higher Executive Officer (vacancy)- 1 (1 wte) Administrative Officer (vacancy)- 2 (1.5 wte) Executive Officers - 1 (0.8 wte) Staff officer- 1 (0.5 wte) Clerical Officer whole-time equivalent. These resources are complemented as required by input of other sections within my Department.

Bullying in Schools

372. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in view of recent high profile deaths of school children, if he will outline the steps, if any, he intends to take to address the issue of cyber bullying; when the revised anti-bullying guidelines will be issued to schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48567/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I am fully aware of the seriousness of the issue of bullying and it was for that reason that an Anti-Bullying Forum was held in May this year. As a follow on to that Forum, I invited the stakeholders and any other interested parties to submit their views on this important topic to my Department by 29th June 2012. As part of this consultation, interested parties were requested to indicate their views and proposals on any changes to existing practices and policies in schools that could improve how bullying can be tackled in schools.

I have also established a working group to address the issue of tackling bullying in schools, including cyber-bullying. During the course of its work, the working group will be considering the outcomes from the Anti-Bullying Forum together with the submissions received. Over the last few months, the working group has been consulting with a range of stakeholders and with counterparts in Scotland and the UK. The Group is working on an action plan recommending further measures that can be taken to effectively tackle bullying in schools. The Group expects to complete its work by the end of the year.

Early Childhood Education

373. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to develop a comprehensive, national pre-school service that is focused on early childhood development. [48596/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy may be aware, the vast majority of support for preschool services is not provided by my Department, but is provided by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The principle vehicle for delivery of preschool education is the free Preschool Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme which was introduced in January 2010 and provides early learning to children in the year before they commence primary school. However, it is an accepted tenet that care and education are inextricably linked elements in a child's holistic development and younger children who attend early years services are also availing of a programme which must comply with Regulation 5 of the 2006 Child Care (Preschool Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006.

Regulation 5 covers the Health, Welfare and Development of the child and states that 'A person carrying on a preschool service shall ensure that each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the service through the provision of the appropriate opportunities, experiences, activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child and the child's cultural context.' It is

not within any administration's interests to develop a parallel system of preschool service that mirrors one that already exists.

Schools Building Projects Status

374. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to provide a second level Educate Together School in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48597/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware, in June of 2011, I announced that 20 new post-primary schools would be established over the coming years. This included a new post-primary school to open in Claregalway in 2013. Following on from that announcement, the different patron bodies, including Educate Together, were invited to apply to become patrons of the new schools in each area. Educate Together did not apply to become patron of the Galway school, and patronage was awarded to County Galway VEC.

The Forward Planning Section of my Department will continue to analyse demographic data to identify where new schools will be required over the coming years. Should the need for any new post-primary schools emerge in Galway county it will be open to Educate Together to apply for patronage in line with the established process.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

375. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in tabular form the current level of spending in his Department with respect to children with special educational needs and the comparative figures for 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. [48629/12]

376. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current number of special needs assistants in the system and the comparative figures for 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. [48630/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 375 and 376 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that this Government remains committed to the protection of frontline services for pupils with special educational needs. The Programme for Government sets out that education will be a priority for this Government and that we will endeavour to protect and enhance the educational experience of children, young people and students. The continued commitment of this Government to special education provision, at a time when savings are being required across a range of expenditure areas has ensured that children with special educational needs can continue to have access to educational facilities in line with their requirements.

Approximately 15% of the entire budget of my Department – some €1.3 billion – was spent in support of children with Special Educational Needs in 2011. The provision for the current year, 2012, is in line with expenditure last year and shows that despite the current economic difficulties, the overall level of funding for special education has not been cut. 10,575 whole time equivalent Special Needs Assistant (SNA) posts are available to the NCSE to allocate this year, in respect of valid applications received, which is unchanged over the number of posts available for allocation in 2011. The final details of spending for this year, and of the number of SNA

posts allocated, will not be known until the end of the year. The specific information requested by the Deputy in relation to 2007-2011 is attached in tabular format.

Year	Number of Special Needs Assistants 2007 - 2011	Special Educational Needs Spend
2007	9,824	€838m
2008	10,442	€900m
2009	10,342	€1b
2010	10,543	€1.2b
*2011	10,117 (10,320)	€1.3b

* The total number of SNA posts approved by the NCSE for the 2011/12 school year was 10,320. The figure of 10,117 represents the number of posts in place at the end of Dec 2011.

The NCSE allocated the bulk of SNA posts to schools at September 2011, based on the number of valid applications on hand at that time. This left 475 posts from the overall designated provision of 10,575 posts for later allocation throughout the school year to deal with emergency cases, new injuries or diagnosis, or new school entrants.

By the end of the 2011/12 school year, at June 2012, the NCSE had approved the allocation of 10,320 SNA posts to schools, from within the overall cap of 10,575 posts.

All children who qualified for access to SNA support, in accordance with the terms of the SNA scheme during 2011/12, received access to SNA support and there were sufficient posts to provide for such support from within the overall provision of 10,575 posts.

Education and Training Boards Issues

377. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the general criteria that will be used to determine the destination of a training centre or associated external provider under the formation of the new Education and Training Boards; if the situation relating to a case (details supplied) in Dublin 11 will be clarified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48636/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The recently published Education and Training Boards Bill 2012 sets out the functional areas for the proposed Education and Training Boards. Following the establishment of the Training Boards and SOLAS, it is intended that FÁS training centres and external facilities such as Community Training Centres will be transferred to the appropriate Education and Training Board on the basis of their geographic location. Provision for the creation of SOLAS and the transfer of FÁS facilities to the Education and Training Boards will be contained in the Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS) Bill. This legislation is currently being drafted by the Office of the Attorney General and I expect the Bill to be published during the Autumn session.

School Transport Provision

378. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school transport route can be altered slightly to accommodate a family (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48652/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):

Bus Éireann is responsible for the planning and timetabling of school transport routes. Bus Éireann endeavours, within available resources, to ensure that each eligible child has a reasonable level of school transport service in the context of the Scheme nationally. Where practicable, and subject to considerations of cost and logistics, routes are planned to avoid an eligible child having to travel more than 2.4 kms to or from a pick up/set down point. Parents are responsible for ensuring that children are brought safely to and collected safely from Bus Éireann designated pick up and set down points. As Bus Éireann has advised that the family in question have a service within the above guidelines, it not proposed to alter the current arrangement.

Access to Higher Education

379. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider a scheme whereby spare capacity, unfilled places in third level courses in EU third level institutions could be advertised within the EU to allow students who may be facing entry difficulties for similar courses in their home countries to receive the desired qualification, in a manner that would be keeping with the entry requirements in the individual member State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48663/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): A scheme to advertise spare capacity in more than 4000 higher education institutions across the European Union would be a significant logistical undertaking and would have to be managed at a central European level. As far as I am aware, no such scheme has ever been proposed by the European Commission for the consideration of member states. However the European Commission provide a very comprehensive website called Study in Europe which provides up to date information on higher education institutions in 32 European countries, details of courses and programmes which are available and the criteria for entry to them. The website should be of use to any student considering studying abroad and is at the following link: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/study-in-europe/>

At a global level, UNESCO produces an international guide to studying abroad. It includes a searchable on-line database of higher-education study opportunities and the scholarships offered by higher education institutions and international organisations in over 151 countries. It also has contact details and information on admission requirements, application deadlines, financial aid, fees, living expenses and other relevant information for all courses. Information on eligibility for student grants for Irish citizens who wish to pursue their education in the EU is available on www.studentfinance.ie.

Teaching Qualifications

380. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason Montessori teaching qualifications are not recognised as qualifying a person to teach in primary schools, and the action that needs to be taken to change this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48679/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Since March 2006, the recognition of teacher qualifications for the purpose of registration has been the responsibility of the Teaching Council. Teachers with a Montessori qualification are registered under Regulation 3 (Montessori and Other Qualifications) and are taken as analogous to 'Restricted Recognition' as set out in Circular 25/00 – Recognition of Teacher Qualifications for the Purpose of Teaching in National Schools. There are differences between Montessori teaching and Primary Teaching across the entire content and teaching methodology of the primary school curriculum. Teachers

with a Montessori qualification are at present given restricted recognition to teach in special schools and in the categories of special classes in mainstream national schools where Irish is not a curricular requirement and in resource posts for pupils with special needs in mainstream schools.

To change the situation such teachers would need to undertake further studies, suitable for qualification as a primary teacher. The Teaching Council has statutory responsibility for professional accreditation of initial teacher education programmes. It is open to any teacher education provider to submit proposals to the Teaching Council for the accreditation of courses leading to qualification as a primary teacher. My officials have discussed this issue with the Teaching Council and will engage with the initial teacher educators in the near future.

Teaching Qualifications

381. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding allowances in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [48693/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Any teacher who was employed in a teaching post in the public sector on or before 4 December 2011 and who was, on that date, undertaking a course of study leading to a degree level award is eligible to apply for qualification allowances in respect of that course of study. The person to whom the Deputy refers is not currently in receipt of the Honours Degree allowance as she was undertaking a course of study leading to a Level 8 honours degree on 5 December 2011. An allowance in respect of this qualification will be payable in accordance with the pre-December 2011 scheme of allowances once it has been achieved.

School Staffing

382. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of funding a school (details supplied) in Dublin 1 received in 2012 in respect of salaries, teachers, caretakers and so on; if they will have to increase fees if teachers' salaries are cut and if there is a plan to erode PTR. [48694/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The total gross salaries paid to teachers employed in the school referred to by the Deputy in the 2011/12 school year was €3.6081 million. The salaries of the special needs assistants employed in the school in the same period cost €75,754 and salaries of clerical officers cost €46,028. All options to achieve the necessary budgetary savings required in 2013 are being examined in my Department at present. Accordingly, it would not be appropriate to comment on the specifics of any possible potential cost saving measures at this time.

School Staffing

383. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will give an assurance that there will be no more cuts in teacher numbers as it would leave second level schools unable to provide the 28 hours of weekly classes that all students must receive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48700/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): At this point I do not propose to give any specific commitment on the allocation of teachers to schools for the 2013/14 school

year. The number of teaching posts that we can afford to fund in schools is a matter that I will have to consider with my colleagues in Cabinet in the context of the next budget. The Government will endeavour to protect frontline education services as best as possible. However, this must be done within the context of bringing our overall public expenditure into line with what we can afford as a country. The challenge will be to ensure that the resources that can be provided are used to maximum effect to achieve the best possible outcome for pupils.

Schools Building Projects Status

384. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide the full list of PPP schools to be built under the stimulus package; the status of each of these projects along with the projected timeframe for completion of each stage of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48704/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In July 2012 a planned investment in educational projects through the public private partnership process (PPP) was announced as part of the Government's economic stimulus package. As a result, a further 2 bundles of school projects will be rolled out consisting of a total of 12 individual schools worth a total of approximately €100m. The schools that make up bundles 4 and 5 have already been announced for delivery as part of the Department's five year schools capital investment programme. Delivering these schools through the PPP process will mean that the private sector rather than the State sector will bear the initial costs of the job rich schools projects with these schools being delivered more quickly. Accordingly, procurement of these 2 bundles is expected to commence on a rolling basis beginning in 2013 with the completion of the schools targeted for 2017 and 2018. Schools that make up Bundle 4 will consist of 1 primary and 5 post primary schools details of which are as follows:

Name	School Type
1 St Joseph's Secondary School, Tulla, Co Clare	New Secondary School.
2 Skibbereen, Co Cork.	New Community School.
3 Celbridge Co Kildare	New Primary School
4 Celbridge Co. Kildare.	New Post Primary School.
5 St Mary's College, Dundalk, Louth.	Secondary School.
6 Comeragh, Carrick-on-Suir	New VEC College.

Details of the 6 schools that are expected to make up Bundle 5 are currently being finalised.

Institutes of Technology Issues

385. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the various stages that form the plan to consolidate the Dublin Institute of Technology in Grangegorman; the work each stage involves; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48705/12]

386. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the stage one work to consolidate Dublin Institute of Technology's move to the Grangegorman campus as announced as part of the stimulus package; what this stage involves; the expected timeframe for work involved in this stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48706/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions

Nos. 385 and 386 together.

The Grangegorman project centres on the redevelopment of the Grangegorman 73 acres site as a new urban quarter with the capacity to transform Dublin's inner city. The Grangegorman Development Agency (GDA) prepared a master plan for the site which formed the basis for securing Strategic Development Zoning (SDZ) awarded by Dublin City Council in July 2011. The SDZ was appealed to An Bord Pleanála but was given approval in May 2012. Following the announcement of the stimulus package for the country in July 2012, some €180 million of the Government's estimated €2.25 billion stimulus package announced will go towards the Grangegorman project. DIT is currently located in 39 sites across the capital, some of which are in poor condition. The plan for Grangegorman is to combine these sites into one single educational facility. The GDA is progressing the renovation of several historic buildings and the construction of a new science research institute. It is proposed that this will result in an initial 1,050 students on the Grangegorman site by 2014. In parallel with this, the agency is advancing two quadrangles as Public Private Partnerships which will facilitate the relocation of an additional 10,000 students currently in various locations around the city. This will bring over 50% of DIT to Grangegorman by 2017. This initial investment including the first phase of the PPP investment is expected to give rise to a sizeable presence of students at Grangegorman. The College of Art and Tourism, the College of Sciences and Health and the College of Engineering and Built Environment (part) are expected to be relocated to the campus.

Public Sector Staff Issues

387. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49072/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In the vast majority of cases, no public sector employees associated with my Department are subject to rostering conditions of attendance. I understand that some educational facilities may operate rostered hours of attendance for caretakers/porters for administrative reasons. However, as my Department is not the employer, I am not in a position to provide detailed figures on this matter.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

388. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49084/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I will arrange for the information requested in relation to teachers employed in primary and secondary, community and comprehensive schools to be forwarded to the Deputy.

Election Management System

389. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total sums of money, in tabular form, paid out of Exchequer funds for the remuneration of polling station and count staff for the last local election, general election and referendum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47830/12]

390. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the figure for the average daily rate per person paid to polling station and count staff for the last local election, general election and referendum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47831/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 389 and 390 together.

The rates of pay for those taking the polls and counting the votes are laid out in the charges order approved by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in advance of each election or referendum event. The order details the basic rate and the rate for each additional hour worked. The rate varies if a number of polls are involved in the election event. The average amounts paid to each person for the three events specified are detailed in the following table, based on expected hours worked (per day in the case of counting staff). In line with Government policy on reducing expenditure, rates of remuneration have been reduced over the last number of events, as reflected in the data for the total costs of polling and counting staff.

-	Hours	Euro/Local 2009	Lisbon (2) 2009	General Election 2011
Special Presiding Officers	12	€563.09	€485	€427.02
Presiding Officers	16	€621.94	€537	€471.64
Supervisory Presiding Officers & Area Inspectors	16	€735.03	€635	€557.37
Poll Clerks	16	€484.61	€420	€367.50
(i) Count Supervisors	12	€525.03	€455	€398.13
(i) Count Calculators	12	€444.27	€385	€336.88
(i) Counters	12	€346.17	€300	€262.50

The total cost for polling and counting staff is included in the following table:

-	Euro/Local 2009	Lisbon(2) 2009	General Election 2011
Polling Staff	€8.016 million	€6.734 million	€5.977 million
Count Staff	€1.638 million	€0.835 million	€1.588 million

Public Sector Staff Increment Payments

391. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the savings accruing to the Exchequer from payroll charges from weekly to fortnightly and from biweekly to monthly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47975/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): My Department is examining the proposal to move weekly and fortnightly paid civil servants to a monthly pay cycle. This matter is the subject of discussions with staff side representatives.

Election Management System

392. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the final cost of the Dáil and Presidential elections in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48021/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The final cost of the Dáil and Presidential Elections in 2011 is in the table that follows this reply. The cost of the Presidential Election includes the Dublin West By-Election and the two Referendums which were held on the same day as the Presidential Election.

Expenses	General Election 2011	Presidential Election 2011
Returning Officers	€12,282,186.25	€16,465,511.19
OPW	€593,768.72	€945,749.45
An Post	€13,357,845.96	€12,040,308.96
Election Candidates	€2,842,806.64	€600,000
Total	€29,076,607.57	€30,051,569.60

Freedom of Information Legislation

393. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the progress he has made in extending the Freedom of Information Acts to more State agencies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47285/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In late July 2012, the Government approved my proposals to reform Freedom of Information and extend the Act to all public bodies. There are over 500 bodies, including some voluntary bodies, under the Act. It is anticipated that in excess of 100 additional public sector bodies will be brought within remit as a result of my legislative proposals. Subject to specific conditions, this will include, for example, An Garda Síochána, public financial bodies (NTMA, NAMA, NPRF, and the NDFA), the Central Bank of Ireland, public bodies with important regulatory, quasi-judicial and investigative functions (to include the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and the Refugee Applications Tribunal) and Vocational Educational Committees. The number of bodies will be further increased when I bring non-public bodies benefiting from significant State funding within remit on a case-by-case basis under criteria balancing the public interest with appropriate proportionality. I submitted the detailed General Scheme of a Freedom of Information Reform Bill to the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform in August for its views and recommendations. I expect to be in a position to publish the Freedom of Information Bill following careful consideration of the views to be furnished by the Joint Committee on the legislative proposals and the drafting of the Bill by the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel in due course.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

394. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47299/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was set up in July 2011. Since that time, no staff members from my Department have been rehired.

Public Sector Staff Issues

395. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the

sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis; and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [47401/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): No staff in my Department are currently employed on a roster basis. Likewise, in the offices and agencies under the aegis of my Department, there are no individuals employed on a roster basis.

Coastal Erosion

396. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will report on the serious coastal erosion occurring in Portrane, County Dublin; and if he will make provision under the Coastal Protection Fund for emergency measures to protect the dunes to be implemented. [47581/12]

397. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if funding will be allocated and works carried out by the Office of Public Works and or other relevant bodies, as a matter of urgency towards emergency coastal protection measures at the Burrow, Portrane, County Dublin in view of the rapid dune erosion in recent days and the imminent risk not only to family homes and business' but to public property, namely the coastal beach walkway, public toilets, and public roads; if the concerns and worries of local residents who fear losing their homes to erosion can be sympathetically addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47563/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): I propose to take Questions Nos. 396 and 397 together.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) administers the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme as part of its flood risk management responsibilities. This scheme provides funding to local authorities to undertake measures to alleviate localised flooding and coastal flooding or erosion problems within their administrative areas. There is no separate Coastal Protection Fund. It would be open to Fingal County Council to submit an application under the scheme for measures to address the erosion problems at Portrane. Any application received will be considered in accordance with the scheme eligibility criteria, which include a requirement that any measures are cost beneficial, and having regard to the overall availability of resources for flood risk management. Application forms and related guidelines are available on the OPW website.

Radio Spectrum Management

398. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform what he has projected as the expected yield from the sale of the 28 blocks of spectrum frequencies by ComReg; and if he has given consideration towards investing this in capital projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47663/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I understand from my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, that the management of the radio spectrum is a statutory function of the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) under the Communications Regulation Act, 2002 as amended. The level of spectrum fees that will be generated by the Multi-Band Spectrum Award process will be determined by the eventual level of demand expressed in the auction. I am advised that section 2.2.5 of the ComReg's Information Memorandum (Document 12/52) provides, among other

things, for the following reserve prices for spectrum lots being made available in the auction: €10.81 million for each lot in the 800 MHz and 900 MHz bands across both “time slices” (noting that 13 such lots are being made available); and €5.4 million for each lot in the 1800 MHz band across both time slices (noting that 15 such lots are being made available). The process of awarding of spectrum rights is entirely a matter for ComReg. In light of this and the extremely commercially sensitive nature of the process, I cannot comment further on the process which is ongoing at this time. Fees which are received by ComReg for spectrum access are transferred directly to the Exchequer in accordance with provisions of Section 30 of the Communications Regulation Act 2002, as amended. Proceeds from the sale will be taken into the Central Fund and used to fund Exchequer-financed expenditure.

National Lottery Licence Sale

399. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform prior to the appointment of Davy Corporate Finance as financial and commercial advisers to his Department with regards to the next National Lottery licence, if Davy’s tender disclosed any registerable interest; did the Tenderer disclose any conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest and if he will confirm that Davy were selected a number of months ago to complete a feasibility study for his Departments National Lottery Licence Section. [47664/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Request for Tender issued by my Department on 16 July 2012 specified, in accordance with the standard Request for Tender document, that any Registerable Interest involving the Tenderer/subcontractor and the Contracting Authority, members of the Government, members of the Oireachtas, or employees and officers of the Contracting Authority and their relatives must be fully disclosed in the Tender or, in the event of this information only coming to their notice after the submission of a Tender and prior to the award of the contract, it should be communicated to the Contracting Authority immediately upon such information becoming known to the Tenderer or subcontractor. The Request for Tender further specified, in accordance with the standard Request for Tender document, that any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest on the part of a Tenderer, individual employees, agents or subcontractors of a Tenderer must be fully disclosed to the Contracting Authority as soon as the conflict or potential conflict of interest is or becomes apparent. Davy Corporate Finance complied with the requirements of the Request for Tender in this regard to the satisfaction of the Tender Review Group which examined all the tenders received. In January 2012, my Department invited 15 economic consultants to tender for a short-term contract to carry out analysis on possible options regarding the next National Lottery licence. Five applications were received in response to this invitation. Following assessment of the applications on the basis of the criteria specified in the invitation, Davy Corporate Finance was awarded the contract for a fee of €615.

Flood Prevention Measures

400. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide an update on plans for dredging works at Rathbarry river, West Cork; if he will provide a timeline for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47685/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The Office of Public Works does not have any responsibility under the Arterial Drainage Act for the river in question. Generally, the maintenance of rivers which do not form part of an Arterial Drainage Scheme or Drainage District is a matter for the riparian landowners. The

OPW has indicated to Cork County Council that it may submit an application for funding under the OPW's Minor Works Scheme to address any flooding problems with the river in question and that this will be considered having regard to the schemes eligibility criteria and the availability of funds.

Public Sector Staff Issues

401. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to seek voluntary redundancies at the Office of Public Works as part of the targeted voluntary redundancy scheme to accelerate the reduction of public sector staffing levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47841/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Government is committed to creating a leaner and more efficient Public Service. To this end, the identification of staff surpluses is under way across the public service (including the Office of Public Works). Where surplus staff cannot be redeployed, exit mechanisms (including voluntary redundancy) will be employed. Final decisions on numbers reductions to be achieved in each sector will take account of the surpluses identified by Ministers in respect of their portfolios and of expected rates of retirements in those sectors, Departments and Offices over the next few years.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

402. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47873/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): No civil servants who have retired from my Department are back on the payroll in my Department. In the Office of Public Works, the number of staff retained under the abatement principle, for varying periods, since 1/1/2010 is 16. With regard to the other agencies and offices under the aegis of my Department no staff who retired are back in employment in those office or agencies.

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Expenditure

403. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if ex officio Commission Members receive the €9,500 per annum in commission member allowance. [47898/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The *ex officio* members of the Oireachtas Commission, who are the Secretary General of the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas, the Ceann Comhairle and the Cathaoirleach, are not in receipt of an allowance in respect of their membership of the Commission.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

404. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide in a tabular form a list of former Ministers currently in receipt of ministerial

Questions - Written Answers

and TD pensions; the names of the recipients; their gross annual pension payment taking into account the public service pension reduction and their gross annual pension payment excluding the public service pension levy. [48207/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The attached table details the former Ministers who are currently in receipt of a Ministerial and TD pension. Former Ministers who are currently gifting their pension in 2012 have been marked accordingly.

Forename And Surname	Person Reference	Annual Ministerial Pension	Annual PSPR	Annual Ministerial Pension less PSPR	Annual TD Pension	Annual TD Pension Less PSPR
GAY MITCHELL	1364383	4,627.12	0.00	4,627.12	gifting pension	
EOIN RYAN	1365398	5,929.48	0.00	5,929.48	€51,037.92	€47,884.56
JIM HIGGINS	1365045	5,973.12	0.00	5,973.12	€54,890.52	€51,390.36
SEÁN POWER	1366467	8,739.77	174.80	8,564.97	€29,076.08	€27,899.28
JOHN DONNELLAN	1362704	9,049.68	0.00	9,049.68	€33,306.96	€31,749.36
RICHARD BARRY	1361171	9,842.12	0.00	9,842.12	€71,054.64	€65,768.04
LIAM AYLWARD	1363948	10,258.74	0.00	10,258.74	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
THOMAS FITZPATRICK	1365185	10,991.31	0.00	10,991.31	€47,961.84	€45,085.32
DONIE CASIDY	1365436	11,505.91	0.00	11,505.91	€55,808.29	€52,225.54
MICHAEL FINNERAN	136698X	11,648.50	0.00	11,648.50	€53,557.07	€50,176.93
LORCAN ALLEN	1364995	11,684.40	0.00	11,684.40	€55,955.52	€52,359.48
CHARLES McDONALD	1362992	11,810.85	0.00	11,810.85	€49,725.72	€46,690.44
LIAM HYLAND	1365053	11,837.13	0.00	11,837.13	€52,801.92	€49,489.80
SEAN McCARTHY	1364944	11,843.84	0.00	11,843.84	€27,824.52	€26,760.36
DONAL CAREY	136501Y	12,049.87	2.99	12,046.88	€57,731.76	€53,975.88
BERNARD ALLEN	1364987	12,329.55	19.77	12,309.78	€55,787.07	€52,206.24
LIZ McMANUS	1365061	12,329.57	19.77	12,309.80	€49,474.47	€46,461.77
AUSTIN CURRIE	1365029	12,333.53	20.01	12,313.52	€50,143.32	€47,070.48
TODDY O'SULLIVAN	136434Y	14,886.42	173.19	14,713.23	€44,254.80	€41,711.88
IVOR CALLELY	1365916	14,929.99	175.80	14,754.19	€53,855.52	€50,448.52
AVRIL DOYLE	1364456	14,967.35	178.04	14,789.31	€48,248.40	€45,346.08
NED O'KEEFFE	1364871	15,326.03	199.56	15,126.47	€53,790.23	€50,389.08
SEAN HAUGHEY	1366831	16,992.39	299.54	16,692.85	€54,316.89	€50,868.37
MICHAEL D'ARCY, senior	136238Y	17,182.94	310.98	16,871.96	€55,541.16	€51,982.44
DONAL CREED	1362399	17,182.94	310.98	16,871.96	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
RORY KIELY	1366211	17,252.74	315.16	16,937.58	€37,304.04	€35,386.68
BRIAN O'SHEA	1363905	17,357.49	321.45	17,036.04	€53,291.04	€49,934.88

Forename And Surname	Person Reference	Annual Ministerial Pension	Annual PSPR	Annual Ministerial Pension less PSPR	Annual TD Pension	Annual TD Pension Less PSPR
EITHNE FITZGERALD	1365037	17,362.95	321.78	17,041.17	gifting pension	
THOMAS HUSSEY	1361287	17,433.86	326.03	17,107.83	€46,887.48	€44,107.56
CHRIS FLOOD	1364774	17,706.61	342.40	17,364.21	€40,647.12	€38,428.92
JOHN RYAN	1362496	17,744.79	344.69	17,400.10	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
PAUL CON-NAUGHTON	1362534	18,099.36	365.96	17,733.40	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
GEORGE BIR-MINGHAM	136264X	18,099.36	365.96	17,733.40	€20,677.80	€20,157.12
JACKIE FAHEY	1361325	18,464.84	387.89	18,076.95	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
EDWARD COLLINS	1362461	18,732.13	403.93	18,328.20	€47,961.84	€45,085.32
TOM MOFFATT	136529Y	18,867.95	412.08	18,455.87	€24,501.84	€23,736.72
HUGH BYRNE (Wexford)	1365304	18,867.95	412.08	18,455.87	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
TIM O'MALLEY	1366106	19,073.47	424.41	18,649.06	€12,578.76	€12,544.08
TOM PARLON	1366114	19,073.47	424.41	18,649.06	€12,578.76	€12,544.08
LIAM T. COSGRAVE	1365487	19,199.60	431.98	18,767.62	€38,287.92	€36,282.00
LIZ O'DONNELL	1365967	19,232.94	433.98	18,798.96	€42,488.76	€40,104.72
DENIS LYONS	1363344	19,981.30	478.88	19,502.42	€30,551.04	€29,241.48
FERGUS O'BRIEN	1362585	19,986.75	479.21	19,507.55	€50,797.28	€47,483.52
TED NEALON	1362631	19,986.75	479.21	19,507.55	€42,625.56	€40,229.28
JIM O'KEEFFE	1362801	19,986.75	479.21	19,507.55	€54,779.56	€51,289.32
PAT THE COPE GALLAGHER	1366335	20,251.32	495.08	19,756.24	€54,248.28	€50,805.96
NOEL DAVERN	136538X	20,745.52	524.73	20,220.79	€57,682.32	€53,930.88
VINCENT BRADY	1363328	21,273.21	556.39	20,716.82	€41,180.04	€38,913.84
DAN WALLACE	136541X	21,371.26	562.28	20,808.98	€55,871.64	€52,283.16
BRIAN MULLOOLY	1365533	22,549.33	632.96	21,916.37	€37,304.04	€35,386.68
NOEL AHERN	1366475	23,187.06	671.22	22,515.84	€50,854.38	€47,717.52
TRAS HONAN	1363018	23,755.69	705.34	23,050.35	€28,857.00	€27,699.84
SEAN CALLEARY	1363395	24,247.03	742.23	23,504.80	€52,634.04	€49,336.92
GER CONNOLLY	136331X	25,670.76	870.37	24,800.39	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
PATRICK POWER	1364979	27,026.08	992.35	26,033.73	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
JOHN O'CONNELL	1363514	27,401.10	1,026.10	26,375.00	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
MARY WALLACE	1366505	27,468.78	1,032.19	26,436.59	€54,472.35	€51,009.84
PROINSIAS DE ROSSA	1364308	28,340.17	1,110.62	27,229.55	gifting pension	
IVAN YATES	1366556	28,340.17	1,110.62	27,229.55	€50,733.00	€47,607.00
NORA OWEN	136496Y	28,351.13	1,111.60	27,239.53	€49,611.72	€46,586.64
JOE JACOB	1365401	30,495.13	1,304.56	29,190.57	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
MARTIN O'DONOGHUE	136149X	31,338.75	1,380.49	29,958.26	€21,969.96	€21,731.76
MICHAEL J. NOONAN (Limerick West)	136336Y	32,208.18	1,458.74	30,749.44	€53,291.04	€49,934.88

Questions - Written Answers

Forename And Surname	Person Reference	Annual Ministerial Pension	Annual PSPR	Annual Ministerial Pension less PSPR	Annual TD Pension	Annual TD Pension Less PSPR
TOM KITT	1366327	32,729.40	1,505.65	31,223.75	€54,068.64	€50,642.52
NOEL TREACY	1366416	33,820.38	1,603.83	32,216.55	€54,892.92	€51,392.52
RICHARD BURKE	136104X	34,876.40	1,698.88	33,177.52	€20,677.80	€20,157.12
JOHN GORMLEY	1366769	35,087.02	1,717.83	33,369.19	€37,166.78	€35,261.77
GEMMA HUSSEY	1362615	37,451.50	1,930.64	35,520.87	€31,974.60	€30,536.88
AUSTIN DEASY	1362666	37,451.50	1,930.64	35,520.87	€55,532.76	€51,974.76
NIAMH BHREATHNACH	1363883	37,501.50	1,935.14	35,566.37	€11,609.76	€11,609.76
TOM O'DONNELL	1361112	37,826.51	1,964.39	35,862.12	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
RICHIE RYAN	136112Y	37,826.51	1,964.39	35,862.12	€61,284.60	€57,170.40
BARRY DESMOND	1362739	38,515.04	2,026.35	36,488.69	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
BATT O'KEEFFE	1366777	39,016.97	2,071.53	36,945.44	€56,437.24	€52,797.89
MERVYN TAYLOR	1363891	39,901.60	2,151.14	37,750.46	€42,625.56	€40,229.28
MICHAEL D. HIGGINS	1363956	39,901.60	2,151.14	37,750.46	gifting pension	
LIAM KAVANAGH	1362712	40,251.61	2,182.64	38,068.97	€57,172.20	€53,466.72
PADDY O'TOOLE	1362755	40,926.64	2,243.40	38,683.24	€37,303.68	€35,386.32
RAY MacSHARRY	1362933	41,276.65	2,274.90	39,001.75	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
ALAN DUKES	1362623	45,626.83	2,666.41	42,960.42	€55,019.04	€51,507.36
BRENDAN DALY	1363581	46,264.35	2,723.79	43,540.56	€55,532.76	€51,974.76
JIM McDAID	1365568	50,584.22	3,112.58	47,471.64	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
PADRAIG FLYNN	136322Y	51,102.04	3,159.18	47,942.86	€41,479.44	€39,186.24
PATRICK LALOR	1360841	54,702.19	3,483.20	51,218.99	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
DESMOND O'MALLEY	1360825	56,252.25	3,622.70	52,629.55	€57,859.32	€54,092.04
GERARD COLLINS	1360906	56,252.25	3,622.70	52,629.55	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
PATRICK COONEY	1362542	56,252.25	3,622.70	52,629.55	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
SILE DE VALERA	1365576	57,442.42	3,729.82	53,712.60	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
RAY BURKE	1361295	57,652.31	3,748.71	53,903.60	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
DAVID ANDREWS	1361201	62,790.01	4,294.80	58,495.21	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
MÁIRE GEOGHEGAN-QUINN	1361252	64,502.58	4,500.31	60,002.27	gifting pension	
PETER BARRY	1362577	65,310.30	4,597.24	60,713.06	€71,054.64	€65,768.04
FRANK FAHEY	1366165	66,252.65	4,710.32	61,542.33	€54,913.49	€51,411.24
MARY HANAFIN	1366823	67,297.21	4,835.67	62,461.54	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
SEAMUS PATTISON	1366157	68,748.50	5,009.82	63,738.68	€57,172.20	€53,466.72
ROBERT MOLLOY	1360965	68,752.75	5,010.33	63,742.42	€53,291.04	€49,934.88

Forename And Surname	Person Reference	Annual Ministerial Pension	Annual PSPR	Annual Ministerial Pension less PSPR	Annual TD Pension	Annual TD Pension Less PSPR
MARY O'ROURKE	136384Y	72,502.90	5,460.35	67,042.55	€54,393.69	€50,938.32
RORY O'HANLON	136627Y	72,502.90	5,460.35	67,042.55	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
LIAM MAC COSGAIR	1360663	73,426.40	5,571.17	67,855.23	€71,054.64	€65,768.04
MICHAEL O'KENNEDY	1361236	74,565.48	5,707.86	68,857.62	€57,698.76	€53,945.88
MICHAEL SMITH	1363247	75,003.00	5,760.36	69,242.64	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
CHARLES JOHN Mc-CREEVY	1363786	75,003.00	5,760.36	69,242.64	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
JOE WALSH	1363867	75,003.00	5,760.36	69,242.64	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
SEAN TREACY	1364375	75,003.00	5,760.36	69,242.64	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
MICHAEL WOODS	1366033	75,003.00	5,760.36	69,242.64	€57,157.28	€53,453.16
JOHN O'DONOGHUE	1366564	75,003.00	5,760.36	69,242.64	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
MARTIN CULLEN	1366629	75,003.00	5,760.36	69,242.64	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
NOEL DEMPSEY	1366726	75,003.00	5,760.36	69,242.64	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
DERMOT AHERN	136675Y	75,003.00	5,760.36	69,242.64	€54,156.42	€50,722.44
DICK SPRING	1362518	77,196.77	6,023.61	71,173.16	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
MICHAEL McDOWELL	1366092	80,728.40	6,447.41	74,280.99	€31,653.36	€30,244.56
MARY HARNY	1366807	87,080.40	7,209.65	79,870.75	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
JOHN BRUTON	1362569	100,371.23	8,834.25	91,536.98	€53,673.00	€50,282.40
ALBERT REYNOLDS	1363271	109,733.52	10,706.70	99,026.82	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
BERTIE AHERN	1366297	111,235.20	11,007.04	100,228.16	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
BRIAN COWEN	1366912	111,235.20	11,007.04	100,228.16	€53,291.04	€49,934.88
Count: 116						

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

405. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the saving to the Exchequer if the following public services pension reduction rates were applied, up to €12,000 exempt; any amount over €12,000 but not over €24,000, 6 per cent; any amount over €24,000 but not over €60,000, 9 per cent; any amount over €60,000 but not over €80,000, 20 per cent; any amount over €80,000 but not over €100,000, 50 per cent; and any amount over €100,000, 100 per cent. [48208/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy may be aware, only around 1% of public service pensioners are in receipt of a pension in excess of €60,000 and only a few hundred have a pension in excess of €100,000. The average public service pension is estimated at around €25,000 and many of these pensioners do not have any entitlement to the social welfare pension. I would add that there would be legal issues arising from a proposal to introduce a 100% reduction for pensions above a certain level. The changes in rates and bands proposed by the Deputy would save approximately €10 million in a full year.

Labour Court Recommendations

406. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason he has requested the Department of Social Protection not to proceed with the approval of pension scheme for community employment supervisors/assistant supervisors as recommended by the Labour Court; if he will explain the role of his Department in dealing with this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48282/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The issue raised by the Deputy is not in the first instance the responsibility of my Department notwithstanding any deliberations that may have taken place with the Department of Social Protection on this matter in the context of public expenditure policy.

Leader's Allowance Issues

407. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to reduce the leaders allowance paid to independent members and ensure that it has to be vouched expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48515/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I intend to bring proposals to Government shortly in relation to reviewing the Party Leader's Allowance, and for any necessary amendments to the primary legislation underpinning the payment of the Allowance, the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices)(Amendment) Act, 2001.

Northern Ireland Issues

408. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48550/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): My officials and I are directly involved in ongoing and frequent North South engagement. Officials within my Department work closely with the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) in Northern Ireland as joint sponsors of the Special EU Programmes Body, one of the North South implementation bodies established under the Good Friday Agreement. Officials also work closely with the Special EU Programmes Body and DFP with regard to the management and implementation of the EU co-funded cross border programmes, PEACE III and Interreg IVA. This work is undertaken within the framework of the North South Ministerial Council and I regularly meet with my Northern Ireland counterpart at the North South Ministerial Council in Special EU Programmes format to advance this work.

My Department also works with DFP in other cross-cutting areas relating to the administration and governance of the North/South implementation bodies established under the British-Irish Agreement. I also attend the North South Ministerial Council when it meets in plenary format. The current priorities in this area are the management and implementation of the PEACE III and Interreg IVA programmes and beginning the planning for the new round of funding for

the 2014-2020 period.

Responsibility for North South issues is located within my Department's EU/North South Unit with 1 Principal Officer, 1 Assistant Principal Officer and 1 Higher Executive Officer specifically responsible for North South matters in a wider European funding context, with assistance and involvement of other officers as required on specific issues. There are no vacancies at present in the team.

Flood Risk Assessments

409. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform regarding repeated flooding in the Kilmoyley area (details supplied) in County Kerry, if the Office of Public Works will undertake a flood risk assessment and undertaken appropriate measures to prevent flooding which is impacting on local residents as well as the church and cemetery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48671/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): This area does not come under the remit of the Office of Public Works with regard to its maintenance responsibilities under the Arterial Drainage Acts. However, the site was visited by an OPW engineer and his assessment is that as there are no rivers or watercourses in the immediate vicinity and as the area concerned is flat and low lying, it would appear that the flooding relates to surface water drainage. It is not therefore, the responsibility of the OPW.

Public Private Partnerships Numbers

410. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a full, itemised list of the projects that will be advanced as part of the stimulus package announced earlier this year; the details of the work that is to be completed on each project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48702/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): On the 17th of July 2012, the Government announced its plans for an additional 2.25 billion euro stimulus package investment in public infrastructure projects in Ireland. This includes 1.4 billion euro to fund the proposed new Public Private Partnerships (PPP) programme. The list of projects selected for Phase 1 of this programme was published when the announcement was made and is available on my Department's website www.per.gov.ie and on the PPP website www.ppp.gov.ie.

This investment is directed towards projects that meet key infrastructural needs and are in line with the priorities in the Government's Investment Framework. These projects will form the first phase of a new programme of PPP's designed to stimulate economic growth and create employment. Ownership of the individual projects remains with the Sponsoring Department for each project. My Department chairs a PPP Steering Committee and is closely engaged with the relevant line Departments and their agencies, who are represented on the Committee, to ensure that projects are progressed promptly. Work is ongoing and a timetable of projects is currently being finalised.

This steering committee is also looking at how to streamline and shorten the PPP preparation processes and procedures to facilitate early roll out of tenders to the market. We are also seeking to maximise the job creation potential at all stages of the project lifecycle from preparation to tenders through to construction and delivery and encouraging the participation of the

SME sector in the programme. To this end, the NDFA are working with Enterprise Ireland to organise awareness raising events.

Proposed Legislation

411. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the progress he has made to update and modernise company law so that the accounting profession will be obliged to give an accurate account of the financial state of business, in view of the recent collapse of financial companies including banks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47330/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The onus in company law is for the Directors of companies to prepare the accounts of companies on an annual basis. There is a requirement for these accounts to give a “true and fair view” of the financial position and performance of the company. Accounting rules such as International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) adopted by the EU are required to be used in the preparation of the consolidated accounts of companies admitted to trading on a regulated market, in order to give a true and fair view. IFRS standards are set by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) an independent standard-making body. It is the function of external auditors to express their opinion as to whether these accounts provide a true and fair view.

Aspects of an accounting standard relating to the fair valuation of financial assets has been overhauled in a new standard, while issues in relation to loan loss-recognition continue to be examined by the IASB, with the intention of revising this standard. As regards the functions of external auditors, EU Commission proposals in the aftermath of the financial crisis to improve audit quality continue to be considered at Council Working Group level in Brussels. My Department is continuing its work as regards the implementation of a Quality Assurance provision in respect of the audit of Public Interest Entities.

Skills Shortages

412. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the plans, if any, he has to implement the recommendation of the report by Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation entitled A review of the ICT skills demand in Ireland, seeking the introduction of a Technology Visa for IT professionals to address the present temporary skills shortage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47215/12]

419. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to introduce a technology visa; if so the timeframe in which this may occur; and if he will outline the benefits the technology visa will be to the IT sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47445/12]

420. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding job creation. [47537/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 412, 419 and 420 together.

Since 2004, Irish labour market policy has been to ensure that general labour and skills needs are met from within the workforce of the European Economic Area (EEA). Current Government policy is to issue employment permits for the employment of non-EEA nationals for

specific vacancies and in response to employer demand for strategic skills and labour shortages in designated occupations in key economic sectors such as healthcare, information technology and financial services.

Ireland has to compete with other countries for migrant labour, particularly in respect of high-level skills. Skills required in the high-tech sectors are in demand and in short supply globally. While increasing the supply of high-level skills from domestic sources is the most sustainable way forward in the long term, in the short term, there continues to be a need to supplement Ireland's skills stock through employment permits and to ensure that Ireland's employment permits system is geared towards attracting such skills.

The Department of Justice and Equality is responsible for the implementation of policy in relation to the admission of non-EEA nationals to the State and their residence in the State. However, the employment permit regime provides for control of Ireland's labour market as well as powers for enforcement of employment rights. Deputies will be only too aware that economic migrants are a vulnerable class of people. Therefore, any actions affecting inward economic migration should be cognisant of the need to ensure that such migrants are protected and made aware of their employment rights.

The Employment Permits regime is supporting the enterprise sector and significant levels of applications are successful particularly those based on high skills levels. Figures indicate: A reduction in total applications in line with economic circumstances, but an increase in Green Card applications, in line with a greater emphasis on high value skills; An increase in the proportion of applications in respect of ICT job roles with applications in respect of ICT job roles being more successful than the norm. Over 90% of ICT related applications are successful and over 1,000 ICT related applications have been approved so far this year.

My Department has reviewed its processes with a view to attracting more ICT related applications and is confident that significant improvements can be made shortly which will greatly enhance the employment permits regime, for example: In conjunction with Forfás, a review is underway of the Green Card Employment Permit Scheme which is used by Ireland to meet labour market requirements where skills shortages have been identified by reference to analyses undertaken by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. An interim review of the four core employment permit types - Green Cards, Intra-Company Transfers, Work Permits and Spousal/Dependents - is being conducted with a view to improving the throughput and quality of employment permit applications. Such an initiative would favour the ICT sector in particular as it would include a streamlining of the documentary process, a reduction in the time it takes for applicants to prepare a successful application, and a significant reduction in processing times. Closer interactions are being cultivated with the Department of Justice and Equality with a view to providing a more coherent service across the employment permit regime and visa regime including policy convergence, greater information sharing and unified communications from both Departments in respect of labour market access.

I intend to announce a range of improvements in this regard shortly. It is also the Government's ambition that Ireland should take advantage of the opportunities for employment in the ICT sector and that every opportunity is afforded to our graduates and unemployed to prepare them with the skills required to work in that sector. Employment Permits are but one way of increasing the level of ICT skills available in the labour market. Building Ireland's ICT skills capability will require improving the domestic output of skilled ICT graduates and my colleague the Minister for Education and Skills has already put in place plans to establish an overarching target of doubling the annual output from honours degree ICT undergraduate programmes to 2,000 graduates by 2018. These plans involve actions to: increase the domestic supply of honours degree graduates in the short term through expansion of conversion; and boost the longer

term supply and quality of graduates from the higher education system.

Finally, work is also proceeding with regard to the preparation of new employment permits legislation which will provide for more flexibility and targeted instruments in support of the economy's evolving skills needs. Heads of Bill were approved by Government last April and since then, my Department has been engaged with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) in order to progress the drafting of the Bill. My Department is currently considering a second draft and expects to revert to the OPC shortly with a view to finalising the draft as soon as possible.

IDA Expenditure

413. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide details in tabular form the number of jobs announced by the Industrial Development Agency; the number of jobs created in IDA supported companies and the value of grants refunded to the IDA for each of the past 10 years. [47274/12]

414. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if the grants refunded to the Industrial Development Agency by client companies includes grants that were not drawn down as well as grants returned due to failure to meet contractual targets. [47275/12]

415. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the total levels of grants awarded that were not drawn down by Industrial Development Agency client companies for each of the past 10 years. [47276/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 413 to 415, inclusive, together.

The Forfás Annual Employment Survey reports on job gains and losses in companies that are supported by the industrial development agencies. The number of new jobs created in IDA client companies in each of the years 2002 to 2011 is set out in the tabular statement. Figures for 2012 will not be available until the end of the year. Details of IDA Ireland's job and investment announcements from 2008 onwards are available on the Agency's website – www.idaireland.ie. Details of announcements in the period 2002 to 2007 are set out on the attached tabular statement. It must be remembered, however, that not all investment and job creation projects are announced.

Information relating to grants approvals for IDA client companies is confidential between the Agency and the client company. In all instances where financial assistance is approved by IDA for a company, the agency and the client enter into a legal and binding contract. The contract, which is confidential between IDA Ireland and the company, includes conditions and milestones with which the company is required to comply before any financial assistance is paid. IDA Ireland pays grants pro rata with achieved performance so, in order to draw down grants, a company must meet the agreed performance targets as set out in the contract.

I understand from IDA Ireland that there is normally a time lag of between 2 to 3 years between a grant approval and actual payment of the first instalment of that grant. In addition, grants are usually paid over a number of years when various criteria have been met by the client company. Accordingly, it is not possible to provide accurate data relating to grants awarded in a particular year but not drawn down in that year.

Grant payments are refunded to IDA Ireland when a company fails to meet the conditions

outlined in the grant agreement or in instances where companies have closed. The total amount of grants refunded annually is contained in the financial statements to the Agency's Annual Report and Accounts, copies of which are available in the Oireachtas Library. IDA's Annual Reports for each of the years 2007 to 2011 are available on the Agency's website www.idaire-lad.com.

Table showing Number of Jobs created in IDA Supported Companies in each of the years 2002 to 2011 inclusive

Year	Number of new jobs created
2002	11,407
2003	9,357
2004	10,846
2005	12,176
2006	12,531
2007	10,401
2008	9,203
2009	5,239
2010	9,075
2011	11,594

List of IDA announcements by Year from 2002 to 2007.

Date Announced	Company	Location	Product / Activity	No. Jobs Announced
27-Nov-07	FINCAD	Dublin	EMEA HQ	30
Nov-07	Novell	Dublin	EMEA Teleweb	40
Nov-07	Celestica	Galway	Automated Manufacturing Services	120
Nov-07	Legal & General	Dublin	Financial Services	20
Oct-07	Wyeth	Kildare	Phamra	20
Oct-07	Nortel	Galway	ICT	60
19-Sep-07	Blizzard	Cork	European Customer Centre	50
19-Sep-07	KCI	Westmeath	Global Manufacturing Operation	50
10-Sep-07	Solar Winds	Cork	EMEA HQ	75
10-Sep-07	Apex Funds	Cork	European HQ	40
11-Jul-07	Teleflex	Athlone	Customer Service	150
Jul-07	Merrill Lynch	Dublin	Financial Services	40
Jun-07	Sanmina	Cork	ICT	50
Apr-07	Parmerica	Donegal	Shared Services	80
Apr-07	Amazon	Cork	ICT	450
17-Apr-07	ACI World-wide	Limerick	Software	100

Questions - Written Answers

Date Announced	Company	Location	Product / Activity	No. Jobs Announced
17-Apr-07	Rovsing A/S	Limerick	Software	30
17-Apr-07	AR Europe Limited	Limerick	ICT	21
17-Apr-07	Gala Inc	Dublin	On-Line Games	32
Apr-07	DeCare Systems	Cork	Financial Services	100
12-Apr-07	Paragon Global Resources	Dublin	International Services	100
Apr-07	Gilead	Dublin	Pharma	80
02-Apr-07	Integra	Offaly	Medical Technology	65
Mar-07	GlaxoSmithKline	Cork	Pharma	150
Mar-07	IBM	Cork & Galway	ICT	130
Mar-07	Equifax Inc	Wexford	ICT	180
Feb-07	VMWare	Cork	ICT	369
22-Jan-07	Daiwa Securities	Dundalk	Hedge Fund Administration	300
04-Dec-06	Eli Lilly	Cork	Biopharmaceutical Manufacture	200
06-Nov-06	Merck Sharp & Dohme	Tipperary	Pharma	120
15-Nov-06	Google	Dublin	Internet Services	500+
21-Nov-06	Cisco	Galway	R&D Communications Technology	200
27-Oct-06	Servier	Belview	Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Facility	155
07-Sep-06	Northern Trust	Limerick	Fund Administration	300
25-Jul-06	Cordis	Cashel	Development & Manufacturing Centre	450
19-Jun-06	Trend Micro	Cork	ICT	100
12-Jun-06	Netgear	Cork	Intl HQ	100
25-Apr-06	Sandisk Intl	Dublin	EMEA HQ	125
12-Apr-06	Becton Dickinson	Louth	Medical Devices	125
07-Apr-06	Moffet Engineering	Dundalk	Engineering	87
30-Mar-06	Pillar Data Systems	Drogheda	Computer Data Storage Systems	200

Date Announced	Company	Location	Product / Activity	No. Jobs Announced
21-Mar-06	Abbott Laboratories	Donegal	Healthcare Products	155
20-Mar-06	Actel	Dublin	European IC Development Centre	20
15-Mar-06	Vistakon	Limerick	Med Tech	124
14-Mar-06	Georgia Tech Research Institute	Athlone	Research Institute	50
07-Mar-06	HP	Kildare	Financial Services	110
01-Mar-06	Amazon. Com Inc	Cork	Multi-lingual Customer Service Centre	450
22-Feb-06	Sage Technologies	Dublin	Software	40
09-Feb-06	Vesta Corporation	Dundalk	Financial Services	350
09-Feb-06	Pop Cap Games	Dublin	Digital Media	50
02-Feb-06	Vodafone	Dublin	ICT	25
25-Jan-06	Citco	Cork	Financial Services	250
12-Jan-06	USCI Ireland	Galway	Medical Technology	125
12-Jan-06	Amgen	Cork	Biotechnology	1100
14-Dec-05	Vmware	Cork	ICT	78
13-Dec-05	Google	Dublin	Internet Services	600
06-Dec-05	Alps Electric Co Ltd	Cork	Engineering	140
02-Dec-05	Parsons	Cork	Engineering	80
28-Oct-05	Palm	Dublin	Mobile computing & provider of smartphones	35
29-Sep-05	International Fund Services	Louth	Financial Services	230
22-Sep-05	Zeus Industrial Products	Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	Produce and distribute medical tubing products	150
21-Sep-05	Axa Assistance SA	Athlone, Co. Westmeath	Assistance service centre	300
22-Aug-05	BISYS Hedge Fund Services	Waterford	Financial Services	250
20-Jul-05	Genzyme Corporation	Waterford	Pharmaceuticals	12

Questions - Written Answers

Date Announced	Company	Location	Product / Activity	No. Jobs Announced
20-Jul-05	Citigroup	Dublin	Financial Services	8
20-Jul-05	Bristol Myers Squibb Company	Dublin & Galway	Pharmaceuticals	32
07-Jun-05	Qlogic Corporation	Dublin	Storage Area Network Infrastructure Component Providers	100
20-May-05	Waters Corporation	Wexford	Engineering	125
17-May-05	PFPC	Navan	Financial Services	290
17-May-05	PFPC	Wexford	Financial Services	200
16-May-05	Siemens Business Services	Cork	ICT	30
16-May-05	Cascade Design Inc	Cork	Engineering	45
16-May-05	Alcon Inc	Cork	Engineering	140
09-May-05	Ellison	Clonakilty, Co. Cork	Manufacture Dies & Die Cutting Equipment	34
05-May-05	International Fund Services (Ireland) Limited (IFS)	Kildare	Financial Services	240
12-Apr-05	DC Studios	Dublin	Video game development	50
11-Apr-05	Engenoi Information Technologies	Cork	Information Storage Systems	95
31-Mar-05	SITA Inc	Donegal	Air Transport Applications	123
31-Mar-05	Toucan	Sligo	Consumer Telecoms	300
25-Feb-05	Resprionics Inc	Galway	Medical technology	105
25-Feb-05	Labcoat Ltd	Galway	Drug applications technologies	68
25-Feb-05	Ulbrich Stainless Steels & Special Metals Inc	Galway	manufacture & distribute wire products for medical sector	40
15-Feb-05	Yahoo!	Dublin	Online product & service providers	400

Date Announced	Company	Location	Product / Activity	No. Jobs Announced
03-Feb-05	Colgate-Palmolive	Dublin	Global IT Centre	30
03-Feb-05	Hartford Financial Services	Dublin	Financial Services	130
03-Feb-05	AutoEurope	Dublin	Car rental Call Centre	60
03-Feb-05	Market-Boomer	Dublin	eProcurement Service Provider	35
13-Jan-05	Amazon.com	Dublin	ICT	25
29-Nov-04	Innocoll Inc	Roscommon	Healthcare R&D & Manufacturing	60

List of IDA announcements by Year from 2002 to 2007 ctd.

Date Announced	Company	Location	Product/Activity	No. Jobs Announced
29-Nov-04	Innocoll Inc	Athlone, Co. Westmeath	Healthcare R&D & Manufacturing	16
29-Nov-04	Conor Medsystems Inc	Athlone, Co. Westmeath	Drug Delivery Sector	40
29-Nov-04	Cooper Cameron Corporation	Longford	Manufacture of oil & gas exploration products	57
26-Nov-04	Dell	Dublin	ICT	420
18-Nov-04	Europ Assistance	Navan	Shared Services	42
28-Oct-04	McAfee Incorporated	Cork	Security Software	152
12-Oct-04	Business Objects	Dublin	Business Intelligence Software Solutions	350
08-Oct-04	AK Pharmaceuticals	Cork	Pharmaceutical	220
06-Aug-04	Kellogs	Dublin	Consumer Products	80
05-Aug-04	Altera Corporation	Cork	Logic devices	60
27-Jul-04	Centocor	Cork	Biopharmaceutical Manufacture	330
30-Jun-04	Bell Labs	Dublin	ICT	120
29-Jun-04	Merit Medical Systems Inc	Galway	Med Tech	230
28-Jun-04	ECC	Dublin	Web Learning Centre	30

Questions - Written Answers

Date Announced	Company	Location	Product/Activity	No. Jobs Announced
22-Jun-04	Guidant Corporation	Tipperary	Medical Tech	1000
21-Jun-04	Ecora Software	Cork	Software dev, research, sales and marketing	60
14-Jun-04	Elan Corporation Plc	Athlone	Pharma	120
20-Apr-04	Merck & Co. Inc	Dublin	Pharmaceutical	80
05-Apr-04	Ubiquis SA	Waterford	centre for report writing	69
05-Apr-04	Liebherr Container Cranes Limited	Kerry	Engineering	6
05-Apr-04	Dollinger (Ireland) Limited	Kerry	Engineering	70
23-Mar-04	Monster Cable	Co. Clare	Cable Manufacture	50
04-Mar-04	Contech Medical	Galway	Medical Device	80
24-Feb-04	TKO Software	Dublin	Software development & services	40
17-Feb-04	Reed Executive	Sligo	Recruitment	30
17-Feb-04	2R Kunststofftechnik	Sligo	Engineering	24
02-Feb-04	Merrill Lynch	Dublin	Financial Services	500
20-Jan-04	Comprehensive Sports Information (CSI)	Galway	On-line sports news and statistics	31
04-Dec-03	Transas Ltd	Cork	manufacture & supply software information technology solutions	30
14-Oct-03	Affiliated Computer Services Inc. (ACS)	Cork	Information technology outsourcing services	100
13-Oct-03	MAPICS Incorporated	Athlone	Software Development Centre	55
06-Oct-03	Olympus Diagnostica GmbH	Clare	Med Tech	22
16-Sep-03	eBay & PayPal	Dublin 15	Secure online payments	800

Date Announced	Company	Location	Product/Activity	No. Jobs Announced
15-Sep-03	Pepsi-Cola	Cork	Soft Drinks Manufacture	250
09-Sep-03	TR-Electronic GmbH	Cork	Software development	30
07-Jul-03	BuiPin GmbH	Waterford	Paint Manufacture	20
07-Jul-03	ABB Transformers	Waterford	Engineering	70
01-Jul-03	Infineon Technologies	Dublin	Engineering	30
08-May-03	Gerard Laboratories	Dublin	Pharma	200
29-Apr-03	Inamed Corporation	Arklow	Med Tech	200
23-Apr-03	Accenture	Dublin	Management Consulting	150
14-Apr-03	Overture Services Inc	Dublin	Internet Search Operations Centre	200
02-Apr-03	Guehring oHG Albstadt	Waterford	Coating of Metal Tools	50
01-Apr-03	SAP	Galway	Global Technical Support and Customer Interaction Centre	350
28-Mar-03	M/A COM Eurotec BV	Cork	Engineering	18
28-Mar-03	Minelab Electronics	Cork	Engineering	48
28-Mar-03	Schlumberger	Little Island, Cork	Shared Services Centre	150
28-Mar-03	ALTANA Pharma AG	Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork	pharmaceutical manufacturing	150
20-Mar-03	CIGNA Corp	Galway	Medical Claims Processing	220
12-Mar-03	Google	Dublin	Internet Search Operations Centre	200
04-Mar-03	Abbott Laboratories	Sligo	Med Tech	350
04-Mar-03	Abbott Laboratories	Longford	Med Tech	600
12-Feb-03	Trend Micro	Cork	Anti-Virus Software & Content Security Software & Services	100

Questions - Written Answers

Date Announced	Company	Location	Product/Activity	No. Jobs Announced
03-Feb-03	Harmac Medical Products	Roscommon	Med Tech	150
28-Jan-03	Recordati S.p.A	Cork	Pharmaceutical	60
16-Jan-03	Pfizer Inc	Dublin	Pharmaceutical	200
19-Nov-02	Advanced Medical Optics Inc	Mayo	Medical Products	30
19-Nov-02	Advanced Medical Optics Inc	Dublin	Medical Products	30
12-Nov-02	Abbott Laboratories	Galway	Pharmaceuticals	600
02-Oct-02	McKesson Corporation	Cork	Medical Products	15
02-Oct-02	Marriot Ownership Resorts	Cork	Holiday Ownership	250
25-Sep-02	Oakley Inc	Westmeath	Medical Products	100
23-Sep-02	Starwood Hotels & Resorts World	Cork	Hotel and Leisure Reservation Centre	190
20-Sep-02	NetIQ	Galway	ICT	180
18-Sep-02	Servier (Irl) Industries Limited	Arklow	Pharmaceuticals	100
18-Sep-02	Quantum	Louth	ICT	120
18-Sep-02	Symantec	Dublin	ICT	250
10-Sep-02	AOL	Waterford	ICT	125
23-Jul-02	Micros Systems	Galway	ICT	180
22-Jul-02	MBNA	Leitrim	Financial Services	500
17-Jul-02	Medtronic	Galway	Med Tech	400
23-May-02	Takeda Chemical Industries Limited	Dublin	Pharma	60
18-Apr-02	Churchill Insurance Group Plc	Galway	Insurance	600
18-Apr-02	Thomson NETg	Limerick	ICT	360
12-Apr-02	GN ReSound Limited	Cork	Medical Tech	20
12-Apr-02	RF Integration Inc	Cork	ICT	40
12-Apr-02	Dow Corning Corporation	Cork	ICT	60
02-Apr-02	Guehring oHG Albstadt	Waterford	Engineering	50

Date Announced	Company	Location	Product/Activity	No. Jobs Announced
26-Mar-02	GMAC Technology	Westmeath	Financial Services	100
26-Feb-02	Bausch & Lomb	Waterford	Med Tech	30
20-Feb-02	Deutsche Press-Agentur GmbH	Cork	Consumer Products	20
05-Feb-02	Fort Wayne Metal Research Products Corp	Mayo	Engineering	88

Departmental Staff Rehiring

416. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47297/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): During the period, at the request of the Chairman of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries, my Department re-engaged, on a part-time basis, one Principal Officer who retired in February 2012 and who had represented the Department on the Committee prior to his retirement. An all-inclusive fee of €1,500 was sanctioned by the Department of Public Expenditure to cover the cost of completing this work, based on an estimated requirement of up to 10 working days. Any travel and subsistence costs incurred in fulfilling this role will be reimbursed by my Department.

I appointed two retired public servants to act as Civilian Drivers at my Department [€631.75pwk]. I also re-appointed the former Director of Corporate Enforcement to the post of Acting Director of Corporate Enforcement with effect from 29 February 2012 for a period of up to six months [€146,191 per annum pro rata]. One additional re-appointment of a former Assistant Principal of my Department at the first point on the Assistant Principal pay scale €61,966 has been sanctioned for the period 25/10/12 – 31/7/13 in connection with Ireland's Presidency of the EU. The appointments were made on the basis of the relevant salary scales for the posts, with abatement as appropriate of public sector pensions in payment. No further retired public servants/civil servants were re-hired in my Department during the period.

IDA Site Visits

417. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of visits to south Tipperary facilitated by the Industrial Development Agency and his Department in the period 1 March 2011 to 30 September 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47306/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am informed by IDA Ireland that, in the period from the beginning of 2011 to date, there have been 2 site visits by potential investors to South Tipperary, one in 2011 and one in 2012.

One of the main challenges that IDA Ireland encounters in encouraging investment into locations outside of large urban centres is the desire of investors to locate in areas with large population bases, typically with populations in excess of 1 million people. There is intense and

continual international competition to win foreign direct investment, which is mainly dominated by Metro City Regions with populations in excess of 1 million. Ireland has one Metro Region, the Greater Dublin area.

In order to achieve balanced regional development IDA Ireland focuses on marketing Gateway locations within each Region as the areas of critical mass and highlights the opportunities provided by Hub locations which are within commuting distances of these Gateways.

South Tipperary forms part of IDA Ireland's South Economic Region along with the counties of Cork, Waterford, Kerry, Wexford, Carlow and Kilkenny. The locations of emphasis for IDA in this Region are the Gateways of Cork and Waterford and these are actively promoted to potential investors through IDA's network of overseas offices. In addition, the other counties referred to, including South Tipperary, are promoted as part of the Agency's marketing efforts and in response to specific client requirements. At present there are 9 IDA Ireland supported companies in South Tipperary employing approximately 3,400 people, while in the South Economic Region there are 207 client companies employing over 38,000 people. I have been informed by IDA that, since the beginning of 2011, there have been a total of 74 sponsored visits by potential investors to this Region. IDA Ireland has drawn my attention to the fact that, while it seeks to influence location, in the final analysis it is the investor who decides where to visit and where to locate.

Work Permit Applications

418. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding a work permit in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47381/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): A Green Card permit application was received in this instance on 27th August 2012. This application was refused on 21st September 2012.

New employment permit applications are currently only considered for highly skilled, highly paid positions or for positions where there is an officially recognised scarcity of supply in relation to a particular qualification or occupation type. New and renewal applications are also considered in respect of non-EEA nationals already legally resident in the State on a valid employment permit.

It appeared from the information submitted that the proposed employee's immigration status precluded them from entering full-time employment in the State. The person was resident in the State on a Student Stamp/Visa at the time of application. Current Department of Justice and Equality policies requires this Department to only approve applications where the employee is residing outside the State. An appeal against this decision was received on 9th October 2012. Such appeals are processed in order of date of receipt.

Questions Nos. 419 and 420 answered with Question No. 412.

Employment Appeals Tribunal

421. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on correspondence regarding a contract in respect of a person (details supplied) [47546/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Employ-

ment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) is independent in the exercise of its quasi-judicial function and I have no direct involvement in the day to day exercise of its functions. Therefore, it would not be appropriate for me to comment upon the circumstances of any individual decision of the EAT in my role as Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. The facts leading to the hearing of this case would be a matter for the Minister for Health as would be any impact arising from the decision.

As an independent quasi-judicial body, decisions of the EAT are appealable to the Courts. Currently, if an employee or employer wishes to appeal a decision from the EAT the court of appeal is dependent upon the type of legislation the original claim was taken under. Determinations by the Tribunal in cases under the Unfair Dismissals Acts may be appealed to the Circuit Court within six weeks of the date on which the Determinations are communicated to the parties.

Business Regulation

422. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to reduce the number of licences that a small retailer has to obtain so that they can operate legally; his plans to streamline the application process while reducing the number of licences needed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47647/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): As part of the Action Plan for Jobs, I requested Forfás to conduct an audit and review of the multiplicity of licences required by businesses to assess the potential for discontinuing some licences and for amalgamating licences with a view to reducing the cost burden of regulations.

I have recently received the Forfás report which I am currently reviewing. The issuing of licences, including those applicable to the retail sector, cuts across a range of Government Departments and Agencies and therefore this report will require consultation with all relevant bodies before final consideration on the implementation of the recommendations set out in the report.

International Agreements

423. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to ratify the International Labour Organisation Convention on Domestic Workers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47674/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The issue of ratification by Ireland of Convention No. 189 on decent work for domestic workers is being considered in the context of our standard approach to the ratification of international instruments. Ireland does not ratify international Conventions until any such necessary amendments to domestic legislation have been identified and effected.

A preliminary assessment of the implications of ratifying the International Labour Organisation's Convention 189 on Domestic Workers is currently being finalised by my Department. The Assessment includes an Article-by-Article examination of the extent to which Domestic legislation provisions already provide for the Rights and Entitlements enunciated in each Article, as well as the extent to which any legislative amendments will be required. This assessment will then be forwarded to the Office of the Attorney General for their examination.

It is important, however, to note that domestic workers are protected by virtue of the fact that the full suite of employment rights legislation, including that of redress for violations of their employment rights, apply to domestic workers in the same way as they apply to other categories of employees in Ireland. Also it is worth pointing out that NERA has carried out a programme of inspections involving Domestic Workers as well as continuing to respond to any complaints it receives from Domestic Workers.

A voluntary Code of Practice for Persons Employed in Other People's Homes was developed under the Industrial Relations Act 1990. The Code sets out certain employment rights and practices for persons employed in other people's homes and encourages good practice and compliance with the law in such employment situations. In any proceedings before a court, or a workplace relations dispute resolution body, a code of practice shall be admissible in evidence and any provision of the code which appears to the court, body or officer concerned to be relevant to any question arising in the proceedings shall be taken into account in determining that question.

IDA Site Visits

424. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Industrial Development Agency sponsored visits by individual potential investors for each of the past 6 years. [47693/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am informed by IDA Ireland that in the six year period 2006 to 2011, inclusive, there have been a total of 1,935 agency sponsored site visits by potential investors to this country. Details of the numbers of such visits in respect of each of those years are set out in the tabular statement.

Table showing the total number of IDA sponsored site visits by potential investors to Ireland in each of the years 2006 to 2011 inclusive

Year	Total Number of Site Visits
2011	341
2010	426
2009	389
2008	250
2007	263
2006	266
Total	1,935

Job Statistics

425. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs directly employed in the air craft leasing industry. [47694/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am informed by Forfás that its annual employment survey records employment in sectors according to NACE (European Industrial Activity Classification) codes. Jobs in the air craft leasing industry are included in the NACE Code for Financial Services. Forfás has informed me that, while the 2011 Employment Survey showed that there were 15,961 permanent jobs and 1,053 other jobs in the Financial Services Sector, it is not possible to identify the number of these jobs that relate to the

aircraft leasing industry.

Enquiries made of the enterprise agencies that fall under the aegis of my Department namely Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Shannon Development have revealed that they have 14 client companies in the aircraft leasing sector who employ approximately 420 full time employees.

Youth Enterprise Initiatives

426. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in view of the fact that there is no specific youth entrepreneurship fund in Ireland, if he will consider setting up a Youth Entrepreneurship Fund on a pilot basis, to help young entrepreneurs access credit to develop business ideas and create employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47723/12]

427. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will engage with private sector sources, the European Union, the European Investment Bank and the IMF to source funding for a Youth Entrepreneurship Fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47724/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose taking Questions Nos. 426 and 427 together.

The Government established the Microfinance Loan Fund on 27 September 2012 to improve access to credit for entrepreneurs and micro-enterprises and to facilitate the growth and expansion of viable businesses from all industry sectors which have been refused access to credit by banks. The Fund has a significant entrepreneurship focus. It will add value to other Government schemes of support for entrepreneurs and unemployed persons, such as the Back to Work Allowance, the range of training programmes and the Seed Capital Scheme.

The Fund will provide support in the form of loans of up to €25,000, available to start-up, newly established, or growing microenterprises employing less than 10 people, with viable business propositions, that do not meet the conventional risk criteria applied by banks. Microfinance Ireland (MFI), the company set up to operate the Fund, will work closely with the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) / Local Enterprise Offices which provide assistance with training and preparing business plans for entrepreneurs. They will carry out an initial evaluation of the quality of business proposals/loan applications from entrepreneurs before sending same on to MFI for decision. The addition of microfinance will now enable the CEBs to deliver a wider suite of services to all entrepreneurs, namely grants, mentoring, soft supports and access to loan finance.

MFI and the CEBs are very conscious of the particular difficulties the youth sector faces with regard to credit history, previous business experience etc. and where they can assist young entrepreneurs, they will. However, the potential viability of the business proposal is the dominant factor in any credit decision made by Microfinance Ireland.

In addition to MFI and the CEBs, other sources of funding are available for example, the Seed Capital Scheme, business angels, E.I.I.S etc. While access to start-up finance through the various channels outlined is important to support youth entrepreneurship, other policy actions are equally important such as fostering entrepreneurship in students while at school or in third level education. Over 20,000 students now participate annually in the various CEB-supported programmes implemented in the education sector. (see answer to PQ 47725).

Microfinance Ireland has sought European Investment Fund (EIF) accreditation under the European Progress Microfinance Facility to avail of the EIF loan book guarantee which is anticipated to cover approximately 25% of bad debts incurred. A decision is expected from the EIF in November 2012.

The Government continues to monitor the requirements of all business sectors regarding access to finance and in that context will continue to assess the needs of youth entrepreneurs in the light of the operation of the Microfinance Loan Fund and the availability of support from sources such as the EU, EIB and IMF. If there is a clearly identified need for a further targeted initiative to address market failure in this sector the matter will be addressed by relevant Departments. A guide entitled “Financial Support for Irish Business” has been published on my Department’s website at www.djei.ie under “latest publications”.

Youth Enterprise Initiatives

428. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to engage with local County Enterprise Boards, Enterprise Ireland and others to help support youth enterprise here; his views on whether further targeted supports are required to foster the talent and ideas of our young persons to allow them develop business ideas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47725/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Young Entrepreneurs can, as their first port of call, contact their local County or City Enterprise Board (CEB) to discuss what options may be available to them in relation to their proposed business venture. The CEBs provide both financial and/or non-financial assistance to microenterprises in the start-up and expansion stages. Encouraging and promoting a youth enterprise culture is an important area of activity for the CEBs. Through various programmes and initiatives, the CEBs seek to influence student attitudes in favour of enterprise. Examples of initiatives provided by the CEBs at both primary and secondary level include the annual Student Enterprise Awards, as well local or inter-County initiatives such as Exploring Enterprise, Celtic Enterprise and BÍ Gnóthach Enterprise. Over 20,000 students now participate annually in the various CEB-supported programmes implemented in the education sector. Contact details for the CEBs can be found on www.enterpriseboards.ie.

The ‘*Think outside the Box*’ competition, co-sponsored by Enterprise Ireland, Invest Northern Ireland, Cruickshank Intellectual Property Attorneys, Mammoth Advertising, Grant Thornton and Intel is open to all full time Third Level students in the island of Ireland. The competition offers Third Level students from all academic disciplines and courses, the opportunity to realise their entrepreneurial ambitions and is designed to encourage innovation, promote enterprise and foster a spirit of entrepreneurship among Third Level students. As well as €30,000 in cash prizes, the competition offers €30,000 in consultancy to help the finalists make a serious start at making their idea a commercial reality. This year, “*Think outside the Box*” attracted submissions from over 360 Third Level students from colleges across Ireland. Enterprise Ireland will continue to participate in the “*Think outside the Box*” competition in 2013.

Enterprise Ireland also supports young Third Level researchers through a number of initiatives including: the Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Fund; Innovation Vouchers; Innovation Partnerships; Applied Research Enhancement Centres; Technology Centres; Campus Incubation Units and FP7. Contact details for Enterprise Ireland can be found at the Agency’s website www.enterprise-ireland.com.

In addition the Government established the Microfinance Loan Fund on 27 September 2012

to improve access to credit for entrepreneurs and micro-enterprises and to facilitate the growth and expansion of viable businesses from all industry sectors which have been refused access to credit by banks. The Fund has a significant entrepreneurship focus and is open to entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs of all ages. Microfinance Ireland (MFI), the company set up to operate the Fund, will work closely with the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) / Local Enterprise Offices which provide assistance with training and preparing business plans for entrepreneurs. Microfinance Ireland, the CEBs and Enterprise Ireland are very conscious of the particular difficulties young entrepreneurs face with regard to credit history, previous business experience etc. and where they can assist young entrepreneurs, they will do so. However, the potential viability of the business proposal is the dominant factor in any credit decision made by Microfinance Ireland.

Enterprise Ireland Investments

429. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if Enterprise Ireland are planning to financially support the new milk processing unit, Belview County Waterford, in view of the significant job creation potential of this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47761/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Any decision by Enterprise Ireland to fund projects, including those in the dairy processing sector, is a day-to-day matter for the Agency and I have no function in this regard. In relation to public funds paid to enterprises, details of individual offers of support from Enterprise Ireland to each client company are confidential and will vary, depending on the type of support being sought.

I understand from Enterprise Ireland that they have been engaged in discussions with the major dairy processors over the past eighteen months, as a follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Food Harvest 2020 Strategy Report published in 2010, by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Enterprise Ireland publishes each year a detailed schedule of financial support payments made to its client companies for the previous year. This information is listed by client-company at county level. These reports are available directly from Enterprise Ireland.

County and City Enterprise Boards Grants

430. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if it is realistic to expect the county enterprise boards to process the disbursement of grants to entrepreneurs in a time period of about six weeks or less, in view of the fact that the CEBs have to seek and access applications, approve applications at board level, potential clients have then to lodge three quotations for expenditure, secure bank finance, the CEBs have then to inspect purchases of equipment, draw the funds from his Department, and then send it on to successful clients, all to be completed by 15 December; if he will explain the reason that his Department has left it so late in the year to disburse funding to the CEBs when they were first asked for clarity of this funding in March and again in June; his further views on whether this is an efficient way to support organisations at the heart of job creation here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47878/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under the Exchequer Estimates Process, an annual Exchequer allocation is provided for the operation of the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs). In 2012, the CEBs received an Exchequer Capital

Allocation of €15 million towards the provision of grants and soft supports, such as training, mentoring and advice services, to the micro-enterprise sector. This allocation is distributed among the CEBs once it is secured by my Department and thereafter the disbursement of these monies to clients is a matter for each Board. My Department does not retain any of the allocation for distribution later in the year.

The CEB Central Coordination Unit (within Enterprise Ireland) works closely with the CEBs throughout the year reviewing individual expenditures to ensure that the funding allocated to the CEBs is utilised to the maximum extent possible. As part of this process, the Central Coordination Unit conducts regular surveys among the CEBs to monitor expenditure, identify savings and determine any additional capital funding requirements to year end. As a result of these exercises, additional demand was identified by 30 of the 35 CEBs and my Department began a process to identify savings in other Agencies of the Department that would fund these requirements. This process in reality can only be done towards the final quarter of the year when the Agencies are in the best position to determine their full year spending requirements.

Additional funding of €3.78 million was identified and made available to the CEBs for the provision of direct assistance to the micro-enterprise sector and I am assured that this funding will be disbursed to eligible projects before the end of the year. At no stage due to lack of funds do CEBs refuse to assist a viable enterprise that is in real need of support. My Department has made it clear to the CEBs via the EI Central Coordination Unit that if such a situation were to arise, funding will be made available through savings elsewhere in the Departments vote.

The funding arrangements for the CEBs are based on sound financial practice as set out within the Government financial procedures and ensure that the State maximises its return on its investment in jobs from across the capital expenditure programme.

Northern Ireland Issues

431. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48548/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): North South economic co-operation is and will remain a priority for myself and the Government. To this effect, there is on-going dialogue between relevant Ministers, North and South, in all areas to promote economic development in the border region. My officials engage in on-going dialogue with their counterparts in the Northern Ireland Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and keep me informed of all key North/South related issues including the North/South activities of the enterprise development agencies. My officials liaise regularly with their counterparts in DETI and the staff of InterTradeIreland (ITI) in relation to a variety of ITI programme activity, corporate governance and financial matters.

In addition, my Department provides funding support for enterprise-themed Interreg projects jointly approved with DETI. In this regard my officials attend steering committee meetings and other planning meetings with their colleagues in DETI on a regular basis. At present there are four members of staff working in this North/South Unit. The staff of the Unit also have other responsibilities relating to other Departmental issues. The Unit has an Executive Officer

vacancy since September 2012 which is being addressed as part of the Department's overall staffing management. The proportion of time spent per grade on North South activities in the Unit is set out in the following table:

Staff Grade	Time spent on North South activities
Principal Officer	20%
Assistant Principal Officer	70%
Higher Executive Officer	65%
Clerical Officer	40%

In addition to this Unit, a small number of staff in other areas of my Department would have engagement on North/South issues, as relevant matters arise in those areas. The Government, along with the enterprise development agencies, will continue to work diligently with the Northern Ireland Executive and its agencies to increase the economic benefits accruing from cross-border co-operation.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

432. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49088/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): In my Department there are two retired public servants employed as Civilian Drivers. In addition there is one re-appointed former Assistant Principal post in my Department which has been sanctioned for the period 25/10/12 – 31/7/13 in connection with Ireland's Presidency of the EU. The appointments were made on the basis of the relevant salary scales for the posts, with abatement as appropriate of public sector pensions in payment. Staffing of the Agencies under the auspices of my Department, is a day to day matter for the agencies. I have asked the Agencies to respond directly to the Deputy.

Question No. 433 withdrawn.

Child Care Services Inquiry

434. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to her response to Parliamentary Question No. 87 of 16 October 2012 in which she indicates that the inter department group on school-age childcare has completed its work if she will arrange for the publication of its full findings, conclusions and recommendations and the date of same. [47678/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The role of the Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) on School-Age Child Care is to explore the best possible model for enhancing the provision of school-age child care to assist in meeting the child care needs of the customers of my Department – including those of lone parents. The model in question will address the child care requirements of children aged between 7 and 12 years (inclusive) and will also address the child care required during both the school term and the school holidays. Extensive work has been completed by the Group to quantify the level of school-age child care that is required

to support the relevant social welfare income support recipients, in particular lone parents, for each year up to and including 2015. An examination has also been carried out of existing child care schemes and of the capital investments already made by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in this sector. The work of the IDG is still on-going and the IDG are currently engaged in detailed discussions to define a suitable and effective school-age childcare model. Once completed, the model and proposals will be submitted to Government for approval.

Social Insurance Payments

435. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on the reason persons that are self-employed and suffer from illness are treated differently by her Department and the Department of Health when, for example they cannot work due to their illness and require social protection assistance or when their illness is only newly recognised. [47963/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Self-employed persons are liable for PRSI at the Class S rate of 4% which entitles them to access long-term benefits such as State pension (contributory) and widow's, widower's or surviving civil partner's pension (contributory). Ordinary employees who have access to the full range of social insurance benefits pay Class A PRSI at the rate of 4%. In addition, their employers make a PRSI contribution of 10.75% in respect of their employees, resulting in the payment of a combined 14.75% rate per employee under full-rate PRSI Class A. (For employees earning less than €356 per week, the rate of employer's PRSI is 4.25%).

Last year I established the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare to meet the commitment made in the Programme for Government. The Advisory Group will, inter alia, examine and report on issues involved in providing social insurance cover for self-employed persons in order to establish whether or not such cover is technically feasible and financially sustainable. In addition the third Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund, as at 31 December 2010, examined the long-term cost implications to the Social Insurance Fund (SIF) and the break-even contribution rates required to provide short term benefits to the self-employed.

Any proposals to extend such social insurance entitlements will have to be considered in a budgetary context, taking account of the finding of the Actuarial Review that the self-employed achieve very good value for money compared with the employed – when the comparison includes both employer and employee contributions in respect of the employed person.

Self-employed individuals who fall on hard times or are without work for some time due to ill health may establish entitlement to assistance-based payments. Those who have been previously self-employed can apply for the means-tested disability allowance, in the same manner as those who were not self-employed. In general, their means will take account of the level of earnings in the last twelve months in determining their expected income for the following year and, in the current climate, account is taken of the downward trend in the economy. As in the case of a non-self-employed claimant for assistance-based payments, the means of husband/wife, civil partner or co-habitant will be taken into account in deciding on entitlement to a payment. The Department of Health's treatment of the self-employed who suffer from illness is a matter for the Minister for Health.

Community Work Initiatives

436. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will consider extending the terms of the Tús programme to take account of the events and preparations

that communities across the country are undertaking for The Gathering; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48038/12]

557. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will consider the extension of the Tús programme in order that community groups and others that are organising events for The Gathering could have an administrator or organiser that could assist the organisation of events in local communities, receive upskilling as a result; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48036/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 436 and 557 together.

Tús, the community work placement initiative introduced during 2011, is providing up to 5,000 short-term work opportunities for those who are unemployed. This initiative is being delivered through the network of local development companies and Údarás na Gaeltachta, collectively known as Implementing Bodies. The 5,000 placements are allocated between the individual Implementing Bodies who have been delegated the management of Tús at local level. It is open to any community or voluntary organisation or a collection of such organisation to apply to any Implementing Body if they have identified work placement opportunities, including tasks associated with the organisation of events relating to the Gathering. A list of the Implementing Bodies and where they can be contacted is set out in the table.

Implementing Body	Address 1	Address 2	Address 3	Address 4
Avondhu/Blackwater Integrated Local Development Body	The Show-grounds	Fermoy	Co. Cork	
Ballyfermot/Chapelizod Partnership	4 Drumfinn Park	Ballyfermot	Dublin 10	
Ballyhoura Community Partnership	Ballyhoura Centre	Kilfinane	Co. Limerick	
Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership Limited	North Mall	Ballymun Town Centre	Dublin 11	
Blanchardstown Area Partnership	Dillon House Unit 106	Coolmine Industrial Estate	Dublin 15	
Bray Partnership	4 Prince of Wales Terrace	Quinsboro Road	Bray	Co. Wicklow
Breffni Integrated Development Ltd.	Unit 6A, Corlurgan Business park	Ballinagh Rd	Corlurgan,	Co Cavan
Canal Partnership	2nd floor, Oblate View	Tyrconnell Road	Inchicore	Dublin 8
Carlow County Development Partnership Limited	Main Street	Bagenalstown	Co. Carlow	
Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teo	The Woods Centre	Clane	Co. Kildare	
Clare Local Development Company	Westgate Business Park	Kilrush Road	Ennis	Co. Clare
Comhair Chathair Chorcaí	Heron House	Blackpool Park	Blackpool	Cork

Questions - Written Answers

Implementing Body	Address 1	Address 2	Address 3	Address 4
Comhar na nOileáin Teo	Inis Oírr	Oileáin Árann	Co. na Gail- limhe	
County Kilkenny Leader Partnership Company Ltd.	11 Patrick's Court	Kilkenny City	Co. Kilkenny	
CPLN Area Partner- ship Ltd	Unit D, Nangor Business Park	Nangor Road	Clondalkin	Dublin 12
Dodder Valley Part- nership Ltd	Killinarden En- terprise Centre	Killinarden	Tallaght	Dublin 24
Donegal Local De- velopment Company	1 Millennium Court	Pearse Road	Letterkenny	Co. Donegal
Dublin Employment Pact	Strand House, 1st Floor	22 Great Strand Street	Dublin 1	
Fingal Leader Part- nership	Abco Kovex House	Swords Busi- ness Park	Swords	Co. Dublin
Forum Connemara	Ellis Hall	Letterfrack	Connemara	Co. Galway
Galway City Partner- ship	3 The Plaza	Headford Road	Galway	
Galway Rural Devel- opment Company	Mellowes Cam- pus	Athenry	Co. Galway	
Inishowen Develop- ment Partnership	Pound Street	Carndonagh	Inishowen	Co. Donegal
IRD Duhallow Ltd.	James O'Keefe Memorial Insti- tute	Newmarket	Co. Cork	
Laois Partnership Company Ltd	2 Park Villas, Harpurs Lane	Portlaoise	Co. Laois	
Leitrim Integrated Development Com- pany Ltd	Church Street	Drumshanbo	Co. Leitrim	
Longford Communi- ty Resources Limited	Longford Com- munity Enter- prise Centre	Templemichael	Ballinalee Road	Longford
Louth LEADER Partnership Ltd	Partnership Court	Park Street	Dundalk	Co. Louth
Mayo North East Leader Ltd	Lower Main Street	Foxford	Co. Mayo	
Meath Community Rural & Social De- velopment Partner- ship Ltd	Ground Floor Unit 7	Kells Business Park	Cavan Road, Kells	Co. Meath
Monaghan Integrated Development Com- pany	Monaghan Road	Castleblayney	Co. Monaghan	
North & East Kerry Leader Partnership Teo	Clash		Tralee	Co Kerry

Implementing Body	Address 1	Address 2	Address 3	Address 4
North Tipperary Integrated Local Development Body	Town Hall	Banba Square		Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
Northside Partnership Ltd	The Coolock Development Centre	Bunratty Drive	Coolock	Dublin 17
Offaly Integrated Local Development Company Ltd	Millennium House	Main Street	Tullamore	Co. Offaly
PAUL Partnership Limerick	Unit 25	Tait Business Centre	Dominic Street	Limerick
Rathmines Pembroke Community Partnership	Rathmines Information Centre	11 Wynnefield Road	Rathmines	Dublin 6
Roscommon Integrated Development Body	Castle Street	Roscommon town	Co. Roscommon	
SECAD (South & East Cork Area Development)	Middleton Community Enterprise Centre	Owennacurra Business Park, Knockgriffin	Middleton	Co. Cork
Sligo Leader Partnership Company	Sligo Development Centre	Cleveragh Road	Sligo	
South Kerry Development Partnership	West Main Street		Caherciveen	Co. Kerry
South Tipperary Development Company	Unit 2C Carigeen Business Park	Clogheen Road	Cahir	Co. Tipperary
South West Mayo Development	Carey Walsh Building	Georges Street	Newport	Co. Mayo
Southside Partnership	The Old Post Office,	7 Rock Hill, Main St	Blackrock	Co. Dublin
Tolka Area Partnership	Rosehill House	Finglas Road	Dublin 11	
Údarás na Gaeltachta	Na Forbacha	Co. na Gailimhe		
Waterford Area Partnership	Unit 4, Westgate Business Centre	Tramore Road	Waterford	
Waterford Leader Partnership Ltd.	John Barry House, Lismore Business Park	Mayfield, Lismore	Co. Waterford	
West Cork Development Partnership Ltd.	Unit D, West Cork Technology Park	Clonakilty	West Cork	
West Limerick Resources Limited	St Marys Road	Newcastlewest	Co. Limerick	

Implementing Body	Address 1	Address 2	Address 3	Address 4
Westmeath Community Development	Business Development Centre	Clonmore Business Park	Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	
Wexford Local Development	Cornmarket	Mallin St.	Wexford Town	Wexford
Wicklow Partnership	3rd floor, Avoca House	Bridgewater Centre	Arklow	Co. Wicklow

Private Rented Accommodation Provision

437. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the advertising of private rental accommodation on public sites stating no rent allowance accepted and the problems this is causing for those potential tenants who are unemployed in this economic climate; if it is legal for the advertiser whether it be the landlord, letting agent or advertising personnel to state on the advert ‘no rent allowance allowed’ and if a landlord has the right to refuse an applicant based on the tenant’s status as a social welfare recipient; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48445/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are approximately 90,000 persons in receipt of rent supplement for which the Government has provided a sum of €436 million for 2012. The aim of rent supplement is to provide short term income assistance, and not to act as an alternative to the other social housing schemes operated by the Exchequer.

Under the legislative provisions governing rent supplement, the Department’s relationship is with the tenant. Rent supplement is specifically for the benefit of tenants to assist them with their accommodation needs. There is no direct relationship between the landlord and the Department in the administration of the scheme. The tenant’s engagement with the Department usually takes place after the tenant has reached an agreement with the landlord.

I am aware that some landlords are advertising their property on public sites and stating that they are unwilling to accept rent supplement recipients as tenants. The Equal Status Acts 2000-2011, prohibit discrimination in the provision of services that are generally available to the public whether provided by the state or the private sector. There are nine grounds prohibiting discrimination namely - gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, race, disability and membership of the Traveller community. Refusal to accept rent supplement tenants does not fall within the area of discrimination as provided for under the equality legislation.

The fact that approximately 90,000 people are currently in receipt of rent supplement of which 42,000 have been awarded during 2012 proves that a significant number of landlords are accommodating applicants of the scheme and that rent supplement recipients are able to access accommodation.

Pensions Reform

438. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will initiate pension reform; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48688/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are a number of significant challenges currently facing pensions systems across Europe and in Ireland. As the populations

of most EU countries are aging, issues around pension sustainability and adequacy mean that effective retirement age and the need for longer working in particular have come to the fore. In Ireland, there are currently six people of working age for every pensioner and this ratio is expected to decrease to approximately two to one by 2050. People aged 65 years and over will account for a greater proportion of the population while the proportion of working age is expected to decline. People are living longer with healthier lives and growing numbers of people want to work, or may need to work beyond State pension age. This has obvious and significant implications in relation to the future costs of State pension provision. Therefore, the task of financing increasing pensions will fall to a diminishing share of the population.

With these challenges and opportunities in mind, earlier this year, the Government asked the OECD to examine Ireland's overall pension policy in light of the economic downturn and to ensure that it meets the needs of future generations. The review, which began in April of this year, encompasses the totality of pension provision in Ireland i.e. state, private, occupational and public sector. The review takes account of the Programme for Government commitments in the pensions area, including tax reliefs and the commitment to cap taxpayers' subsidies for pension schemes, (including politicians' pension schemes), that deliver income in retirement of more than €60,000. The review will focus in particular on the commitment on universal coverage, and is also informed by developments at EU level in relation to pensions.

The OECD will report on the sustainability of the pension system in the light of demographic and investment challenges; the adequacy and coverage levels, in order to ensure adequate income in retirement with a particular focus on the lower and middle income group; the modernity of pension systems to ensure flexibility in the labour market and supporting mechanisms for longer working, and equity within the pension system.

In addition to this overall review, the Government has, since coming into office, introduced a number of key pension reforms. Legislation was introduced in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act, 2011 to abolish the State pension (transition) with effect from January 2014 thereby standardising pension age at 66. The State pension (contributory) age will be increased to 67 in 2021 and to 68 with effect from 2028. Further changes to State pension include changes to rate bands; to align the rate of pension paid with the contribution made ensures that those who contribute more during a working life benefit more in retirement than those with lesser contributions.

Significant changes to occupational pensions, specifically defined benefit pension provision have also been introduced. Legislation introduced in 2011 provided for a sovereign annuity as an option for pension schemes. In August, the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) announced details of the sale of over €1 billion of Irish Amortising Bonds which were purchased by pension schemes and welcomed pension funds into the economy. The regulatory structure for defined benefit pension schemes has been re-introduced. Legislation enacted during the year strengthened the Funding Standard by introducing a requirement for schemes to develop a risk reserve from 2016 and to meet the reserve requirement in 2023 with a view to ensuring greater security for pension scheme members and giving pension schemes increased protection from market volatility in the future.

The "Report on Pension Charges in Ireland 2012" was recently published by my Department with support from the Central Bank and Pensions Board. This report, which is a fact finding report, has concluded that there are serious challenges in relation to the reasonableness and transparency of the pension changes. Comments from interested parties and stakeholders are being invited over a 3 month period (i.e. by the end of January 2013). These responses will be considered and a further policy and regulatory response, if necessary, will be brought to Government.

Carer's Allowance Applications

439. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on their application for carer's allowance; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47204/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 11th July 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome. I acknowledge that the time taken to process carer's allowance claims at present is not satisfactory but I am satisfied that the Department is taking appropriate action to resolve the situation.

Question No. 440 withdrawn.

Social Welfare Code Issues

441. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the options regarding social welfare benefits available to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47261/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was found to be "not incapable of any or all employment" as prescribed for the purpose of entitlement to illness benefit from 19th October 2011. The person concerned appealed this decision. The appeal was subsequently disallowed and the person was notified of this decision by letter from the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 10th September 2012. The person is currently in receipt of a supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) payment of €166.90 per week. (SWA) is a weekly payment for people that have insufficient means or no income. SWA is being paid to this person while the Department is processing information relating to a new claim for illness benefit that was received on 10th October 2012. However, this claim is incomplete. To progress this claim, the Department have written to the person seeking a completed application form (MC1) and further information on the nature of the incapacity that is preventing this person from returning to work. When this information is provided a decision will be made as soon as possible on this claim.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

442. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Social Protection If she will provide details of the average processing time for rent supplement applications; the reason there appears to be long delays in the processing of rent supplement applicants; the measures being taken to deal with the backlog; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47266/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The purpose of the rent supplement scheme is to provide short-term income support to assist with reasonable accommodation costs of eligible people living in private rented accommodation who are unable to provide for their accommodation costs from their own resources and who do not have accommodation available to them from another source. The overall aim is to provide short-term assistance and not to act as an alternative to the other social housing schemes operated by the Exchequer. There are currently approximately 90,000 persons in receipt of rent supplement, for which the Government has provided €436m in 2012.

The timescale for determining individual applications for rent supplement is dependant, among other things, on the availability of the required information, such as details of the applicant's income, bank statements, information from landlords, etc. In addition, some aspects of the applications are inevitably time consuming and delays can occur where further investigations or third party evidence is required. Delays can also arise if the applicant is slow to respond to requests for additional information. If the Deputy has a concern in relation to processing delays in a particular area or in respect of an individual, they should provide this detail to the Department for follow up.

A key objective of the transfer of the Community Welfare Service from the Health Service Executive to my Department on 1st October 2011 is to provide a streamlined, consistent and enhanced service to the customer. The process of integration is on-going and significant progress has already been made with a unified service, Intreo, now in the process of being delivered in four offices. The delivery of services in relation to processing rent supplement applications is also subject to on-going review.

Statistics are not available on the average length of time taken to assess rent supplement applications. The provision of a prompt service is a major objective for the Department's staff dealing with rent supplement applications. This is tempered by the necessity to ensure that every case is fully investigated and that all cases are dealt with in a consistent and fair manner. I am satisfied that the Department's staff dealing with these applications make every effort to ensure rent supplement claims are processed in an efficient manner.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

443. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she has considered the payment of rent supplement directly to the landlord as opposed to the tenant bearing in mind the increasing reluctance of landlords to accommodate rent supplement applicants due to problems within the current system and the added pressure this is placing on the demand for public housing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47267/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): 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. The overall aim is to provide short term assistance, and not to act as an alternative to the other social housing schemes operated by the Exchequer. The Government has provided €436 million for the scheme in 2012. There are currently approximately 90,000 rent supplement recipients proving that landlords are accommodating applicants of the scheme.

Under the legislative provisions governing rent supplement, the Department's relationship is with the tenant. Rent supplement is specifically for the benefit of tenants to assist them with their accommodation needs. There is no direct relationship between the landlord and the Department in the administration of the scheme.

However, rent supplement payments can, at the request of the tenant and with the agreement of the Department, be paid directly to the landlord. If the Department were to introduce a system whereby all rent supplement payments were to be made directly to landlords the efficiency of the scheme would be significantly affected. For example, the Department would potentially have to create a formal relationship with some 90,000 additional clients, the landlords. This would involve greater complexity and significant resources to deal with a new set of third parties. It would not be an effective use of resources to have departmental staff negotiating rental

agreements for those with a short term need.

The Government has effectively two initiatives to deal with long term reliance on rent supplement. The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) is in operation since 2004 and the new Housing Policy Initiative as announced by my colleagues the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Minister for Housing & Planning on 16th June 2011.

In March 2012, the Government approved in principle to transfer responsibility for the provision of rental assistance to persons with a long term housing need from my Department, currently provided through rent supplement, to housing authorities using a new Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). Among the main features of HAP is that landlords will be paid directly by the local authority.

A multi-agency steering group has been established to develop proposals to give effect to this transfer. The group is chaired by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and consists of representatives from the Departments of Social Protection; Public Expenditure and Reform; Office of the Revenue Commissioners; the County and City Managers Association, and the Housing Agency. It is planned that pilot testing of HAP arrangements will commence during the second half of 2013 with general roll out and commencement of transfers from January 2014. The new arrangements will achieve a key Government commitment of removing barriers to employment and at the same time returning rent supplement to its original purpose of a short-term income support.

Carer's Allowance Applications

444. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be approved carer's allowance; the date the application was received in her Department; if the medical element of the claim has been approved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47270/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 22nd November 2011. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Applications

445. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an application for carer's allowance will be finalised in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47284/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 9th January 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

446. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Social Protection the names of each staff

member within her Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47300/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Since March 2011, one member of staff in my Department, the Chief Medical Advisor, has been rehired on a temporary contract on a payscale of €93,197 - €113,503. His salary is reduced to take account of the rate of his pension payment.

The decision to re-employ the Chief Medical Advisor was taken due to his specific skills and his involvement in the policy reform of the illness related schemes, the difficulty and long lead-in time for replacing his skills, and the critical importance of ensuring continuity and a high level of service to customers of the Department.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

447. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an invalidity pension appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47304/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 11th September 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. 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.

Departmental Expenditure

448. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No.397 of 19 July 2012 if he will provide details relating to professional fees paid by his Department . [47310/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The accompanying tables set out the fees paid in respect of a range of services in 2011 and for 2012 up to the end of September.

2011 External Professional Services – PR, etc.

Organisation	Description	Amount €
Brindley Advertising	Print Media Advertising - Office Notices etc.	68,741.73
Catalysto Ltd	Graphic Design	9,650.96
Farm TV	Advertising at ploughing championships	3,690.50
Imagefile Ireland Ltd	Purchase of Images for booklets and Web	151.25
Info TV	Advertising - Screens in Local Offices	22,460.58
Mongey Communications	Hire of Technician for Information Officers Seminar	780.45
Splash Designs Ltd	Banner Stands	1,068.43

2012 External Professional Services – PR, etc

Organisation	Description	Amount - €
Brindley Advertising	Print Media Advertising - Office Notices etc.	43,275.46
Bowspirit Marketing	Banner Stands	1,014.75
Catalysto Ltd.	Design of Staff Magazine	10,984.42
Graffiti Design	Design of Staff Magazine	1,308.72
Getty Images International	Purchase of Images for Booklets	3,284.10
Imagefile Ireland ltd	Purchase of Images for Booklets	61.50
Info TV	Advertising - Screens in Local Offices	11,070.00
Language Communications	Design and Production of Promotional material for Intreo/NEES	25,656.60
Mongey Communications	Hire of Technican for Information Officers Seminar	793.35
Splash Designs	Banner Stands for Pathways to Work and other material	1,623.60

2011 Expenditure Consultancies and Reports - Environmental

Organisation	Description	Amount €
Wright Environmental Services	Indoor air quality investigation in Gandon Hse Nov/Dec '10	4,368.10
Ergonomic Risk Assessment	Ergonomic assessment for C Mc Andrew Ballina	250
Wright Environmental Services	Investigation of odour/ smells in SWLO Belmullet	1,698.96

2012 Expenditure Consultancies and Reports - Environmental

Organisation	Description	Amount €
VDU Assessments	VDU Assessments Baggott St.	307.50
VDU Assessments	VDU Assessments Ballyfermot	246.00
VDU Assessments	VDU Assessments Dun Laoghaire	276.75
VDU Assessments	VDU Assessments Parnell St. D'Olier St.	1,414.50
Wright Environmental Services	Repeat investigation contamination July '12 Ballymun SWLO	1,198.02
Wright Environmental Services	Exam indoor air quality June/ Jul '12, Floor 1 AMD	3,382.50
Wright Environmental Services	Investigate contamination after Leak Jul '12 Ballymun SWLO	2,445.24

2012 Expenditure Consultancies and Reports - HR

Organisation	Description	Amount - €
Baker, Tilly, Ryan & Glennon	Provision of Human Resource Services	11,147

Organisation	Description	Amount - €
Round Tower Mediation & Training	Provision of Human Resource Services	8,038
Carr Communications	Media Training Programme	6,300

2011 Expenditure Consultancies and Reports - I.T External Service

Contractor	Purpose	Amount
Bearing Point	SDM Computer System Support & Maintenance	4,999,727
Bearing Point	SDM Computer System – Development of Non Contributory Pension Suite of computer programs	1,000,439
Bearing Point	Development of computer system to support Redundancy & Insolvency Functions	1,165,158
Accenture	GRO (General Register Office) Maintenance & Development	430,899
Accenture	SDM Computer System - Means Object	195,305
Hewlett Packard Ireland	Office Systems Modernisation	199,475
Hewlett Packard Ireland	Certification of Unemployment by Mobile Phone	685,488
Inpute Technologies	Digital Documents	18,906
Bearing Point	SDM Computer System - Activation Customer Profiling & Case Management (APCM)	132,788
Bearing Point	Migration Of CWS Staff HR Records	12,705
Version 1	Welfare.ie Maintenance & Support	55,162
Fujitsu Ireland Ltd	Payment & Agency Reconciliation (PARP) Modifications	77,137
Fujitsu Ireland Ltd	Payment & Agency Reconciliation (PARP) Production Support	51,540
Core International	Corepay Development & Upgrade	38,402
Core International	Online Overtime	1,016
Fujitsu Ireland Ltd	Payment & Agency Reconciliation (PARP) Implementation	24,200
Fujitsu Ireland Ltd	Oracle Financials & Business Objects	13,950
Red Dog	Graphic Design on various SDM Projects	944

2012 Expenditure Consultancies and Reports - I.T External Service

Organisation	Description	Amount €
P.A Consulting Group	Payments Strategy	111,142
Naked Objects Group Ltd	SDM Computer System - Technical Development Advice	135,495
Naked Objects Group Ltd	SDM Computer System - Business Objects Modelling Advice & Expertise	101,253
Accenture	Business Process Improvement	186,563
ESRI	Switch Model - Support For Analysis of Budget Proposals	150,000

Questions - Written Answers

Organisation	Description	Amount €
Deloitte & Touche	Confidential Forensic Investigation Services	7,109
Patrick Oliver Ryan	Gender Recognition Advisor Group Report	7,000
Deloitte & Touche	Information Systems Audit Consultancy	14,792
Dept of Enterprise, Trade & Employment	Administrative Burden Review	14,000
Price Waterhouse Cooper	National Pensions Framework Implementation	36,300
Milliman	Funding Standard Report	6,050

Social Inclusion Division: While expenditure is included for the entire year, Social Inclusion Division was the responsibility of the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs until 30 April 2011.

Social Inclusion Division 2011

Organisation	Description	Amount - €
E Teams	Translation	1,150.42
Eleanor Ashe	Proof Reading	1,800.00
Dragana Jurisic	Photography	512.40
DCULS Ltd.	Translation	853.17
Peigin Doyle	Proof Reading	2,178.00
ESRI	Poverty Research	64,000.53
Maureen Bassett	Evaluation and Reporting of EU Year 2010	1,032.00
Kathy Walsh	Evaluation and Reporting of EU Year 2010	726.00
Jane Pillinger	Consultation and Development of a Code of Practice guide	2,000.00
Mary Mulcahy	Editing	1,422.50
Crowleys DFK	Audit of Financial Statement for EU Year 2010	4,815.80
Artane Audio	Audio Visual Services for the Peer Review Conference	726.00
Survey Monkey	Public Consultation/Survey & Event registration	240.00
Finnegans Coach Bray	Coach Hire EU Peer Review	500.00
Net Affinity	Hosting CPA Website	290.40
ESRI	Printing	490.00
Hyperlink/active link	Advertisement on activelink	180.00
EAPN	SIF Preparation	6,500.00

Social Inclusion Division 2011

Organisation	Description	Amount
AVCOM	SIF Tech Equipment	1,851.30
Community Workers Co-op	Review NPT Support	500.00
Namesco Ireland Ltd	Hosting social inclusion website/Domain name renewal	65.89

Organisation	Description	Amount
Community Workers Co-op	SIF Facilitators	909.00
IRCHSS	Research Development Scheme	50,000.00
Aiden Lloyd	SIF Rapporteur/Report	1,500.00
Soutron	Hosting library catalogue	5,944.15
CEPS INSTEAD	Peer Reviewing	400.00

Social Inclusion Division 2012

Organisation	Description	Amount - €
Mark Tomlinson	Peer Reviewing	500.00
Eleanor Ashe	Proof Reading	600.00
ESRI	Poverty Research	33,494.29
Survey Monkey	Public Consultation/Survey & Event registration	240.00

Carer's Allowance Applications

449. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an application for carer's allowance will be determined in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47342/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This application for carer's allowance has been awarded. A letter with all details of the payment issued to the person in question on the 18th October 2012, with all arrears due issuing on that date also.

Invalidity Pension Applications

450. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress that has been made to date in the determination of an application for invalidity pension in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47344/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Invalidity pension is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the contribution conditions.

A previous claim for invalidity pension in respect of the person concerned was refused on 18 October 2011 on the grounds that the claimant was considered not to satisfy the medical criteria.

A new claim for invalidity pension for the person concerned was received on 1 August 2012. The medical evidence provided by the claimant in support of her claim was examined by a medical assessor who was of the opinion that the person concerned is not eligible for invalidity pension as she does not satisfy the medical criteria. The application for invalidity pension was, accordingly, disallowed by a deciding officer. The applicant was notified of this decision on 20 September 2012 and advised of her right to request a review of the decision and also of her right to lodge an appeal with the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

To date no further correspondence has been received from the person concerned.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

451. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if arrears of jobseeker's allowance will be granted in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47346/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned made an application for jobseeker's allowance on 17 October 2012. As a decision has not yet been made on her claim it is not possible to state if she has an entitlement to an arrears payment.

Fuel Allowance Applications

452. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if it will be possible for the fuel allowance to be paid in lump sums to person's who have oil heating so that they can fill their tanks as some oil companies will not deliver oil unless the order is for over €100; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47356/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The national fuel allowance scheme assists householders on long-term social welfare with meeting the cost of their heating needs during the winter season. The allowance represents a contribution towards a person's normal heating expenses. It is not intended to meet those costs in full. Fuel allowance is €20 per week payable for 26 weeks. The 2012/2013 fuel season commenced on 8 October 2012 and almost 400,000 people will benefit at an aggregate cost of €215 million.

There would be a number of difficulties in paying the fuel allowance as a lump sum for some recipients while others receive it as part of their weekly payment. If the payment were given in advance as a lump sum, there could be significant over-payments if a recipient's circumstances were to change during the payment season. If it were paid in arrears, it obviously would create further budgeting difficulties for individuals and their families.

Many oil companies provide facilities for making payment by monthly instalment over a period of time which allows people to plan and budget for fuel expenses. I am satisfied that this arrangement is sufficient to meet the needs of our customers.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

453. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal against the decision to refuse an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47385/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 1st August 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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 Numbers

454. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of social welfare benefits that have been stopped following persons being interviewed at Dublin Airport and other Irish entry points, upon returning to the country, and the number of these cases result in the benefit being restored. [47395/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Provision was made in the Social Welfare & Pensions Act 2012 to allow Social Welfare Inspectors to exercise certain functions at ports and airports for the purpose of ensuring compliance with the Act. The provision came into effect for 7th June 2012.

Following on from this, protocols have been put in place with the relevant airport authorities. Security/Garda clearance has been obtained so that relevant Social Welfare Inspectors have the appropriate clearance to attend port and airports.

A total of 28 social welfare payments have been stopped as a result investigations undertaken at airports. There has only been one case where payment was restored. However, in this case an overpayment was assessed against the person concerned as it was established that they were not habitually resident in the State for a period of time.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

455. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the way the conclusion was reached that a person (details supplied) in County Kildare was working for their father when there is no evidence of same; if the will reinstate their job seekers allowance with immediate effect bearing in mind the undue hardship caused as a result of the payment being ceased; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47398/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following a review of this case it was decided that the person concerned no longer has an entitlement to jobseeker's allowance. The person concerned was informed of his right to appeal this decision to the social welfare appeal's office.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

456. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress to date in respect of an appeal for an invalidity pension in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47337/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned has not been received by that office. 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.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

457. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress to date in respect of an appeal in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare with

a view to granting an oral hearing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47341/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 13th October 2011. This application was referred to one of the Department's medical assessors who found that the caree in question was not medically eligible for carer's allowance. A letter issued on the 26th June 2012 refusing the allowance. The person in question subsequently submitted further medical evidence for review. This medical evidence is awaiting medical assessment by a medical assessor. On completion of all the necessary investigations as part of this review, a decision will be made and the person in question will be contacted directly with the outcome.

Blind Person's Pension Eligibility

458. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Social Protection the qualifying criteria a person (details supplied) in County Kerry failed to meet in order to be registered as blind when applying for the blind welfare allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47430/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This question is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Health.

Carer's Allowance Applications

459. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Sligo will receive a decision on their application for carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47433/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 17th July 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Local Employment Service

460. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Social Protection following the rebranding of the National Employment and Entitlements Service into Intreo without a single mention of the Local Employment Service, if her attention has been drawn to the tender document for the commercial provision of employment services in Ireland from her Department it said that The Department provides employment services directly to clients through its own offices and indirectly through contracted arrangements with non-profit organisations who deliver Local Employment Services and the potential to augment the capacity of the Department's and LES capacity to provide one-to-one guidance services through contracting with the private sector is being examined, hence this request for tenders, in view of these statements if she will confirm her continued support and maintenance of the excellent quality Local Employment Services. [47460/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): INTREO is the new employment activation and supports service model which integrates the employment services and community programmes formerly of FÁS; the Community Welfare Services (CWS) formerly of the HSE and the income support services provided by the Department itself. The delivery of em-

ployment services at local level is an integral part of the new INTREO service. The Department currently contracts with 23 Local Development Companies and 1 community organisation for the provision of local employment services in 24 locations. These organisations play an important role in the delivery of employment services and given the urgent need to address unemployment, the intention is to enhance employment services at local level and not reduce such services. In this regard, the Department is currently engaged in a procurement process from which it intends to appoint expert advisor(s) to assist with the design and delivery of employment service provision, on a contracted basis with external providers, as envisaged under the Pathways to Work strategy. It is expected that the initial design will be completed in the first quarter of 2013 and thereafter the question of procuring additional employment services in line with this design will be considered.

Carer's Allowance Applications

461. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on a carer's allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47461/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 2nd November 2011. This application was referred to one of the Department's medical assessors who found that the caree in question was not medically eligible for carer's allowance. The person concerned subsequently submitted further medical evidence in support of her application on 24th July 2012. This medical evidence is awaiting assessment by a medical assessor. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Fuel Allowance Applications

462. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on correspondence regarding the Tús scheme (details supplied). [47468/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The fuel allowance is intended to help households that depend on long-term social welfare or Health Service Executive payments and are unable to provide for their own heating needs. The fuel allowance is a means-tested payment and is payable where a customer lives either alone or with certain categories of people and the customer is in receipt of an eligible social welfare payment. Participants on Tús may retain the fuel allowance as a secondary benefit if they qualified for the allowance prior to participating on the scheme. They do not qualify for fuel allowance during their participation on Tús.

Child Benefit Payments

463. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans for the future of child benefit; her plans to tax it or means test same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47487/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Child benefit is a universal payment that assists parents with the cost of raising children and it contributes towards alleviating child poverty. The estimated expenditure on child benefit for 2012 is around €2 billion in respect of some 1.15 million children.

The Government is conscious that child benefit, as a universal payment, can be an important source of income for all families, especially during a time of recession and high unemployment. The social protection system also provides assistance to low income families with children through the payment of qualified child increases on primary social welfare payments and through the family income supplement payment. Both of these provide a level of assistance which is directly or indirectly linked with a household's income situation.

I am conscious that achieving a better design of the overall system of child income supports, including child benefit, raises complex issues about the effectiveness and efficiency of the full range of income supports currently provided to families and their children. In this context and in line with a commitment in the Programme for Government, I established an Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare last year, which has been tasked with recommending cost-effective solutions as to how employment disincentives can be improved and better poverty outcomes achieved, particularly child poverty outcomes. The Advisory Group prioritised the area of family and child income supports and has completed its work on this area. Their report is currently receiving my consideration and will assist the Government in setting out a pathway towards a more appropriate system of child income supports.

It is envisaged that any proposed changes to the child benefit scheme and in particular a change from a universal to a means-tested payment would be considered in the context of the annual budget and announced on Budget day. Therefore I do not intend to signal anything about the government's intentions in this area at this time.

Social Welfare Benefits Numbers

464. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the job seekers benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47488/12]

465. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the child benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47489/12]

466. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the jobseeker's allowance in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47490/12]

468. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the disability allowance in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment [47492/12]

470. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the illness benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment [47494/12]

471. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the invalidity pension in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47495/12]

472. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the blind pension in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47496/12]

473. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the injury benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47497/12]

474. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the disablement benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment [47498/12]

475. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the domiciliary care allowance in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47499/12]

477. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the carer’s allowance in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47501/12]

478. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the carer’s benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47502/12]

479. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the respite care grant in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47503/12]

480. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the State pension contributory in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47504/12]

481. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of

persons in receipt of the State pension non contributory in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47505/12]

482. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the maternity benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47506/12]

483. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the one parent family payment in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47507/12]

484. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the health and safety benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47508/12]

486. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the family income supplement in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47510/12]

487. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the back to school clothing and footwear allowance benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47511/12]

488. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the widow's widower's or surviving partners contributory pension benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47512/12]

489. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the widow's widower's or civil partners contributory pension in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47513/12]

491. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the widow's, widower's or surviving civil partners non contributory pension in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47515/12]

492. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of

persons in receipt of the guardian payment in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47516/12]

493. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the family income supplement in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47518/12]

494. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the back to work allowance in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47519/12]

495. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the back to work enterprise allowance in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47520/12]

496. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the farm assist in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47521/12]

498. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the back to education allowance in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47523/12]

506. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the rent supplement in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47532/12]

507. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the supplementary welfare allowance in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47533/12]

508. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the mortgage interest supplements in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47534/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos.

Questions - Written Answers

464 to 466, inclusive, 468, 470 to 475, inclusive, 477 to 484, inclusive, 486 to 489, inclusive, 491 to 496, inclusive, 498 and 506 to 508, inclusive, together.

Tables are provided for the Deputy's information, detailing the available statistics, including the distribution by county in 2010 and 2011, expenditure data in respect of those years, the estimates for 2012 and the most up to date recipient total available for each scheme. In relation to future plans for those payments, any changes will be announced next month on Budget Day.

Jobseekers Benefit

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	1,747	1,343
Cavan	1,961	1,461
Clare	2,909	2,451
Cork	13,386	10,303
Donegal	5,099	4,059
Dublin	28,668	22,707
Galway	6,074	4,510
Kerry	5,869	4,919
Kildare	5,591	4,041
Kilkenny	2,117	1,588
Laois	2,354	1,789
Leitrim	981	756
Limerick	6,119	4,427
Longford	1,310	890
Louth	4,884	3,613
Mayo	3,531	2,666
Meath	3,478	2,768
Monaghan	1,630	1,309
Offaly	2,833	2,103
Roscommon	1,082	835
Sligo	1,526	1,172
Tipperary	5,060	3,882
Waterford	3,571	3,070
Westmeath	2,841	2,150
Wexford	5,303	4,405
Wicklow	3,531	2,827
Others	0	0
Totals	123,457	96,044

Jobseekers Benefit

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	80,280

Jobseekers Benefit

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 €000	2011 €000	2012 REV II €000
Scheme Expenditure	1,285,438	926,900	773,480

The number of recipients is segregated by the Offices in each county. The catchment area of these offices, particularly near the border of counties, may include addresses in neighbouring counties. Furthermore it is not possible to segregate the recipients of Jobseekers Benefit who have transferred entitlements to their native country under relevant EU agreements.

Child Benefit

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	8,330	8,335
Cavan	9,684	9,791
Clare	15,100	15,069
Cork	66,691	67,349
Donegal	20,310	20,387
Dublin	152,755	155,444
Galway	30,320	30,624
Kerry	17,906	17,922
Kildare	30,522	30,928
Kilkenny	11,614	11,743
Laois	10,138	10,344
Leitrim	4,047	4,030
Limerick	24,885	24,842
Longford	5,319	5,326
Louth	17,839	17,961
Mayo	15,664	15,668
Meath	26,523	27,091
Monaghan	7,684	7,797
Offaly	10,275	10,309
Roscommon	7,504	7,542
Sligo	7,816	7,831
Tipperary	21,368	21,281
Waterford	15,759	15,799
Westmeath	12,002	12,013
Wexford	20,507	20,636
Wicklow	19,531	19,638
Others	1,339	1,633
Totals	591,432	597,333

Child Benefit

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	608,979

Child Benefit

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV - €000
Scheme Expenditure	2,213,429	2,076,338	2,078,648

The number of recipients is segregated by the Offices in each county. The catchment area of these offices, particularly near the border of counties, may include addresses in neighbouring counties. Furthermore it is not possible to segregate the recipients of Jobseekers Benefit who have transferred the entitlements to their native country under relevant EU agreements.

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	4,396	4,779
Cavan	4,657	5,153
Clare	6,399	6,705
Cork	25,213	26,928
Donegal	14,491	15,407
Dublin	61,777	67,422
Galway	13,485	14,201
Kerry	9,891	10,367
Kildare	10,082	10,983
Kilkenny	4,661	5,092
Laois	5,172	5,748
Leitrim	2,313	2,349
Limerick	12,968	13,392
Longford	3,316	3,681
Louth	10,947	12,161
Mayo	8,092	8,675
Meath	5,578	6,770
Monaghan	4,132	4,546
Offaly	5,439	6,034
Roscommon	2,153	2,398
Sligo	3,301	3,521
Tipperary	10,117	11,078
Waterford	8,748	9,501
Westmeath	5,837	6,488
Wexford	11,386	12,578
Wicklow	7,297	7,972
Others	0	0
Totals	261,850	283,929

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	295,526

Year	-	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV - II €000
Scheme Expenditure	2,809,381	2,974,987	2,796,782

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	1,465	1,498
Cavan	1,307	1,364
Clare	2,475	2,469
Cork	12,389	12,625
Donegal	4,601	4,602
Dublin	25,243	25,721
Galway	5,967	6,085
Kerry	4,029	4,018
Kildare	3,191	3,263
Kilkenny	1,887	1,927
Laois	1,579	1,635
Leitrim	736	733
Limerick	5,225	5,279
Longford	1,119	1,139
Louth	2,697	2,747
Mayo	3,567	3,548
Meath	2,324	2,449
Monaghan	1,236	1,245
Offaly	1,687	1,700
Roscommon	1,418	1,450
Sligo	1,757	1,778
Tipperary	4,553	4,681
Waterford	2,586	2,637
Westmeath	1,979	2,054
Wexford	3,486	3,537
Wicklow	2,608	2,682
Others	0	0
Totals	101,111	102,866

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	102,840

Year	-	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2010 - €000	2012 - REV-II €000
Scheme Expenditure	1,109,505	1,089,178	1,077,963

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	1,781	1,467
Cavan	1,282	1,172
Clare	1,697	1,517
Cork	10,228	9,384
Donegal	2,797	2,348
Dublin	20,201	18,690
Galway	3,152	2,901
Kerry	2,064	1,923
Kildare	3,948	3,568

Questions - Written Answers

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Kilkenny	1,308	1,238
Laois	1,227	1,099
Leitrim	708	637
Limerick	4,320	3,834
Longford	736	717
Louth	3,440	2,963
Mayo	2,171	2,011
Meath	3,492	3,190
Monaghan	1,223	1,054
Offaly	1,634	1,378
Roscommon	1,094	964
Sligo	1,191	1,054
Tipperary	2,664	2,351
Waterford	2,276	1,960
Westmeath	1,585	1,399
Wexford	2,484	2,277
Wicklow	2,234	2,011
Others	316	290
Totals	81,253	73,397

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	67,219

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	942,571	875,549	846,510

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	868	890
Cavan	597	593
Clare	1,023	1,023
Cork	6,797	6,632
Donegal	1,463	1,416
Dublin	14,035	13,532
Galway	1,727	1,723
Kerry	1,378	1,360
Kildare	1,852	1,861
Kilkenny	854	830
Laois	702	712
Leitrim	411	398
Limerick	2,904	2,861
Longford	587	569
Louth	1,831	1,779
Mayo	1,224	1,206
Meath	1,416	1,409

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Monaghan	531	522
Offaly	952	939
Roscommon	638	661
Sligo	720	705
Tipperary	1,887	1,930
Waterford	1,436	1,417
Westmeath	1,104	1,106
Wexford	1,791	1,772
Wicklow	1,302	1,277
Others	736	669
Totals	50,766	49,792

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	49,589

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	639,994	639,994	627,680

Blind Person's Pension

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	22	25
Cavan	14	16
Clare	26	24
Cork	122	129
Donegal	83	81
Dublin	405	401
Galway	80	82
Kerry	52	54
Kildare	30	34
Kilkenny	43	41
Laois	30	29
Leitrim	18	17
Limerick	64	66
Longford	10	11
Louth	48	50
Mayo	65	63
Meath	44	44
Monaghan	14	15
Offaly	35	36
Roscommon	11	11
Sligo	51	49
Tipperary	64	61
Waterford	32	32
Westmeath	32	33

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Wexford	53	58
Wicklow	37	34
Others	0	0
Totals	1,485	1,496

Blind Person's Pension

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	1,470

Blind Person's Pension

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	16,032	15,624	15,540

Injury Benefit

(Includes Interim Illness Benefit Recipients)

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	25	21
Cavan	24	20
Clare	23	26
Cork	148	113
Donegal	24	24
Dublin	328	300
Galway	55	39
Kerry	43	31
Kildare	55	58
Kilkenny	18	15
Laois	27	25
Leitrim	5	9
Limerick	59	54
Longford	15	9
Louth	33	42
Mayo	36	45
Meath	41	46
Monaghan	21	12
Offaly	20	18
Roscommon	23	20
Sligo	17	10
Tipperary	52	49
Waterford	28	17
Westmeath	20	22

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Wexford	36	48
Wicklow	29	27
Others	4	3
Totals	1,209	1,103

Injury Benefit

(Includes Interim Illness Benefit Recipients)

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	1,000

Injury Benefit

(Includes Interim Illness Benefit Recipients)

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	17,883	16,507	15,640

Disablement Benefit

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	225	234
Cavan	194	195
Clare	298	311
Cork	1,948	1,983
Donegal	407	412
Dublin	3,145	3,176
Galway	649	651
Kerry	355	368
Kildare	477	501
Kilkenny	265	276
Laois	188	195
Leitrim	106	110
Limerick	871	872
Longford	155	160
Louth	509	514
Mayo	367	372
Meath	539	553
Monaghan	172	173
Offaly	245	247
Roscommon	220	235
Sligo	194	199
Tipperary	606	629

Questions - Written Answers

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Waterford	416	443
Westmeath	237	240
Wexford	405	419
Wicklow	338	341
Others	190	184
Totals	13,721	13,993

Disablement Benefit

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	14,170

Disablement Benefit

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 REV-II €000
Scheme Expenditure	78,822	77,460	74,880

Domiciliary Care Allowance

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	N/A	394
Cavan	N/A	323
Clare	N/A	638
Cork	N/A	3,488
Donegal	N/A	778
Dublin	N/A	5,431
Galway	N/A	1,359
Kerry	N/A	962
Kildare	N/A	1,178
Kilkenny	N/A	492
Laois	N/A	393
Leitrim	N/A	181
Limerick	N/A	1,268
Longford	N/A	175
Louth	N/A	616
Mayo	N/A	627
Meath	N/A	942
Monaghan	N/A	239
Offaly	N/A	463
Roscommon	N/A	311
Sligo	N/A	324
Tipperary	N/A	906
Waterford	N/A	586
Westmeath	N/A	424

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Wexford	N/A	845
Wicklow	N/A	751
Others	N/A	7
Totals	23,428	24,101

Domiciliary Care Allowance

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	N/A

Domiciliary Care Allowance

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	95,710	99,924	104,190

Carer's Allowance

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	833	863
Cavan	816	826
Clare	1,333	1,351
Cork	5,840	5,944
Donegal	3,036	3,044
Dublin	9,374	9,689
Galway	3,071	3,104
Kerry	2,221	2,224
Kildare	1,585	1,682
Kilkenny	1,020	1,037
Laois	784	813
Leitrim	475	489
Limerick	2,633	2,729
Longford	695	722
Louth	1,298	1,308
Mayo	2,326	2,304
Meath	1,369	1,425
Monaghan	748	735
Offaly	1,066	1,100
Roscommon	877	888
Sligo	915	915
Tipperary	2,530	2,546
Waterford	1,314	1,341
Westmeath	1,086	1,110
Wexford	2,082	2,165

Questions - Written Answers

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Wicklow	1,250	1,312
Others	0	0
Totals	50,577	51,666

Carer's Allowance

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	51,550

Carer's Allowance

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	501,789	507,193	520,470

Carer's Benefit

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	16	15
Cavan	34	26
Clare	36	41
Cork	200	197
Donegal	68	71
Dublin	334	314
Galway	106	102
Kerry	85	92
Kildare	75	62
Kilkenny	27	35
Laois	36	30
Leitrim	14	16
Limerick	73	69
Longford	17	8
Louth	32	29
Mayo	75	78
Meath	76	78
Monaghan	15	25
Offaly	39	35
Roscommon	38	40
Sligo	33	41
Tipperary	54	48
Waterford	37	47
Westmeath	29	43
Wexford	53	58
Wicklow	39	36
Others	1	1

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Totals	1,642	1,637

Carer's Benefit

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	1,689

Carer's Benefit

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	26,288	24,474	23,320

Respite Care Grant

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	81	66
Cavan	71	69
Clare	235	198
Cork	668	586
Donegal	232	197
Dublin	1252	1146
Galway	301	292
Kerry	229	211
Kildare	178	142
Kilkenny	82	83
Laois	104	96
Leitrim	39	33
Limerick	289	261
Longford	47	46
Louth	118	101
Mayo	193	171
Meath	146	139
Monaghan	63	51
Offaly	101	82
Roscommon	117	105
Sligo	70	78
Tipperary	281	241
Waterford	126	112
Westmeath	98	93
Wexford	202	148
Wicklow	103	99
Others	2	1
Totals	5,428	4,847

Respite Care Grant

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	N/A

Respite Care Grant

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	128,097	130,392	132,190

The number of recipients of Respite Care Grant above are those who are not in receipt of any other Carer's payment , (Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit and Domiciliary Care Allowance). There are approximately a further 65,000 Respite Care Grant recipients who qualify for payment automatically under the terms of the relevant scheme.

State Pension Contributory

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	2,969	3,153
Cavan	3,205	3,439
Clare	5,433	5,939
Cork	27,885	29,714
Donegal	7,124	7,680
Dublin	74,481	78,065
Galway	10,351	11,183
Kerry	7,159	7,783
Kildare	7,968	8,692
Kilkenny	4,495	4,817
Laois	3,029	3,257
Leitrim	1,736	1,878
Limerick	10,528	11,256
Longford	1,914	2,073
Louth	7,102	7,535
Mayo	6,401	6,890
Meath	7,262	7,896
Monaghan	2,828	2,999
Offaly	3,643	3,860
Roscommon	3,060	3,268
Sligo	3,553	3,838
Tipperary	8,844	9,415
Waterford	6,681	7,066
Westmeath	4,354	4,642
Wexford	7,887	8,426
Wicklow	7,386	7,910
Others	43,141	44,321
Totals	280,419	296,995

State Pension Contributory

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	310,166

State Pension Contributory

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	3,451,503	3,622,746	

State Pension Non-Contributory

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	1,189	1,201
Cavan	2,693	2,661
Clare	3,780	3,713
Cork	10,623	10,509
Donegal	6,705	6,764
Dublin	12,148	12,252
Galway	7,768	7,692
Kerry	5,338	5,291
Kildare	1,866	1,902
Kilkenny	2,251	2,216
Laois	1,686	1,674
Leitrim	1,380	1,368
Limerick	4,356	4,277
Longford	1,404	1,397
Louth	2,111	2,104
Mayo	6,028	6,016
Meath	2,426	2,469
Monaghan	2,122	2,086
Offaly	1,621	1,626
Roscommon	2,550	2,514
Sligo	2,098	2,037
Tipperary	4,819	4,746
Waterford	2,478	2,511
Westmeath	1,889	1,866
Wexford	3,862	3,871
Wicklow	1,946	1,955
Others	42	31
Totals	97,179	96,749

State Pension Non-Contributory

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	96,339

State Pension Non-Contributor

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	977,293	971,769	967,100

Maternity Benefit

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	305	280
Cavan	341	342
Clare	492	553
Cork	2,798	2,761
Donegal	630	635
Dublin	6,632	7,045
Galway	1,245	1,346
Kerry	625	608
Kildare	1,261	1,212
Kilkenny	504	491
Laois	409	405
Leitrim	136	153
Limerick	902	951
Longford	173	163
Louth	626	613
Mayo	592	596
Meath	1,152	1,126
Monaghan	286	307
Offaly	330	364
Roscommon	282	295
Sligo	292	328
Tipperary	778	817
Waterford	572	556
Westmeath	455	390
Wexford	682	685
Wicklow	814	745
Others	142	180
Totals	23,456	23,947

Maternity Benefit

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	23,058

Maternity Benefit

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	323,938	309,141	311,910

One-Parent Family Payment

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	1,401	1,837
Cavan	1,143	992
Clare	1,835	1,396
Cork	9,413	5,747
Donegal	3,792	3,056
Dublin	30,491	35,835
Galway	3,604	2,971
Kerry	2,634	2,840
Kildare	3,773	4,598
Kilkenny	1,417	935
Laois	1,209	1,087
Leitrim	410	503
Limerick	3,848	3,764
Longford	942	913
Louth	3,151	4,064
Mayo	2,004	1,025
Meath	2,469	1,403
Monaghan	1,033	854
Offaly	1,420	994
Roscommon	819	535
Sligo	1,117	1,349
Tipperary	3,185	2,862
Waterford	2,944	2,522
Westmeath	1,640	1,762
Wexford	3,624	3,112
Wicklow	2,997	3,351
Others	11	0
Totals	92,326	90,307

One-Parent Family Payment

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	88,619

One-Parent Family Payment

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000

Questions - Written Answers

-	Year	-	-
Scheme Expenditure	1,110,328	1,088,897	1,062,990

Health and Safety Benefit

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	0	2
Cavan	0	1
Clare	1	0
Cork	9	8
Donegal	1	0
Dublin	17	18
Galway	6	2
Kerry	2	3
Kildare	2	4
Kilkenny	0	0
Laois	1	0
Leitrim	0	0
Limerick	0	3
Longford	1	3
Louth	2	3
Mayo	2	4
Meath	3	0
Monaghan	2	2
Offaly	1	2
Roscommon	1	0
Sligo	0	0
Tipperary	2	2
Waterford	0	0
Westmeath	3	0
Wexford	3	2
Wicklow	0	1
Others	1	1
Totals	60	61

Health and Safety Benefit

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	45

Health and Safety Benefit

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	588	643	

Family Income Supplement

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	509	502
Cavan	584	615
Clare	711	736
Cork	2,959	3,016
Donegal	1,383	1,372
Dublin	6,470	6,586
Galway	1,343	1,360
Kerry	883	873
Kildare	1,070	1,159
Kilkenny	430	455
Laois	527	529
Leitrim	187	190
Limerick	1,290	1,284
Longford	396	393
Louth	1,063	1,086
Mayo	914	910
Meath	928	1,027
Monaghan	513	556
Offaly	580	591
Roscommon	418	414
Sligo	423	438
Tipperary	1,227	1,247
Waterford	938	936
Westmeath	617	651
Wexford	1,172	1,214
Wicklow	628	665
Others	60	71
Totals	28,223	28,876

Family Income Supplement

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	27,053

Family Income Supplement

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	185,998	204,543	199,460

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

Questions - Written Answers

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	N/A	3,437
Cavan	N/A	3,452
Clare	N/A	4,552
Cork	N/A	19,643
Donegal	N/A	9,885
Dublin	N/A	48,710
Galway	N/A	9,564
Kerry	N/A	6,007
Kildare	N/A	8,709
Kilkenny	N/A	3,525
Laois	N/A	3,505
Leitrim	N/A	1,374
Limerick	N/A	8,356
Longford	N/A	2,298
Louth	N/A	6,627
Mayo	N/A	6,049
Meath	N/A	7,109
Monaghan	N/A	2,724
Offaly	N/A	3,873
Roscommon	N/A	2,684
Sligo	N/A	2,428
Tipperary	N/A	7,231
Waterford	N/A	5,756
Westmeath	N/A	4,008
Wexford	N/A	8,276
Wicklow	N/A	5,823
Others	N/A	0
Totals	162,500	195,605

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	N/A

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	77,401	90,903	63,700

Statistics relating to Recipients of Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance were not collated prior to 2011.

Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory Pension

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	1,335	1,348
Cavan	1,528	1,583
Clare	2,591	2,631
Cork	12,868	12,976
Donegal	3,322	3,359
Dublin	29,911	30,089
Galway	4,972	5,031
Kerry	3,490	3,544
Kildare	3,960	4,027
Kilkenny	2,053	2,082
Laois	1,557	1,564
Leitrim	968	988
Limerick	4,984	5,039
Longford	992	991
Louth	2,909	2,919
Mayo	3,348	3,371
Meath	3,339	3,393
Monaghan	1,334	1,380
Offaly	1,778	1,810
Roscommon	1,489	1,546
Sligo	1,670	1,687
Tipperary	4,374	4,381
Waterford	3,049	3,063
Westmeath	2,209	2,224
Wexford	3,507	3,541
Wicklow	3,046	3,145
Others	7,996	8,050
Totals	114,579	115,762

Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory Pension

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	116,808

Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory Pension

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	1,335,584	1,337,865	1,348,680

Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Non-Contributory Pension

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	28	22

Questions - Written Answers

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Cavan	39	38
Clare	52	51
Cork	176	186
Donegal	178	170
Dublin	343	353
Galway	141	147
Kerry	127	123
Kildare	44	43
Kilkenny	32	28
Laois	34	35
Leitrim	16	19
Limerick	81	83
Longford	25	25
Louth	44	45
Mayo	138	134
Meath	47	46
Monaghan	43	39
Offaly	23	23
Roscommon	40	40
Sligo	45	36
Tipperary	81	83
Waterford	40	40
Westmeath	38	34
Wexford	78	72
Wicklow	44	43
Others	0	1
Totals	1,977	1,959

Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Non-Contributory Pension

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	1,870

Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Non-Contributory Pension

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	19,252	18,173	17,710

Guardian's Payment (Contributory)

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	6	6

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Cavan	12	13
Clare	17	21
Cork	61	61
Donegal	18	19
Dublin	431	441
Galway	23	28
Kerry	31	31
Kildare	28	28
Kilkenny	16	15
Laois	7	7
Leitrim	6	7
Limerick	31	36
Longford	4	5
Louth	11	10
Mayo	14	14
Meath	27	33
Monaghan	6	7
Offaly	16	14
Roscommon	8	9
Sligo	10	18
Tipperary	26	22
Waterford	26	25
Westmeath	24	26
Wexford	34	33
Wicklow	21	20
Others	5	6
Totals	919	955

Guardian's Payment (Contributory)

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	855

Guardian's Payment (Contributory)

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	11,462	11,416	N/A

Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	4	5
Cavan	11	5

Questions - Written Answers

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Clare	26	6
Cork	14	35
Donegal	1	9
Dublin	180	170
Galway	3	17
Kerry	26	16
Kildare	14	16
Kilkenny	7	8
Laois	8	7
Leitrim	9	4
Limerick	20	26
Longford	10	1
Louth	10	12
Mayo	3	9
Meath	5	10
Monaghan	0	1
Offaly	10	5
Roscommon	5	5
Sligo	5	6
Tipperary	11	20
Waterford	19	9
Westmeath	15	11
Wexford	7	19
Wicklow	6	9
Others	0	0
Totals	429	441

Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)

Year	-
Total Recipients at 31 October 2012	429

Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - Estimated - €000
Scheme Expenditure	4,697	5,134	N/A

Back to Work Allowance

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	12	3
Cavan	5	4
Clare	7	1

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Cork	105	21
Donegal	46	9
Dublin	284	55
Galway	41	5
Kerry	27	6
Kildare	28	7
Kilkenny	16	6
Laois	6	1
Leitrim	5	2
Limerick	26	5
Longford	11	1
Louth	33	6
Mayo	31	9
Meath	13	5
Monaghan	21	5
Offaly	16	7
Roscommon	7	0
Sligo	10	5
Tipperary	17	4
Waterford	16	0
Westmeath	9	3
Wexford	30	7
Wicklow	29	5
Others	0	0
Totals	851	182

Back to Work Allowance

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	32

Back to Work Allowance

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - Estimated - €000
Scheme Expenditure	Included in expenditure reported for Back to Work Enterprise Allowance	Included in expenditure reported for Back to Work Enterprise Allowance	Included in expenditure reported for Back to Work Enterprise Allowance

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	169	219

Questions - Written Answers

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Cavan	123	173
Clare	180	290
Cork	792	1,023
Donegal	389	395
Dublin	1,978	2,690
Galway	527	711
Kerry	384	450
Kildare	246	357
Kilkenny	165	243
Laois	114	165
Leitrim	69	109
Limerick	309	447
Longford	118	128
Louth	282	407
Mayo	233	297
Meath	224	381
Monaghan	95	104
Offaly	133	173
Roscommon	92	132
Sligo	124	168
Tipperary	232	344
Waterford	316	412
Westmeath	167	229
Wexford	219	300
Wicklow	278	404
Others	0	0
Totals	7,958	10,751

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	10,965

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - Estimated - €000
Scheme Expenditure	87,960	114,583	137,940

Farm Assist

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	102	95
Cavan	401	407

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Clare	637	643
Cork	917	957
Donegal	1,389	1,491
Dublin	11	35
Galway	1,133	1,137
Kerry	742	819
Kildare	56	53
Kilkenny	173	154
Laois	149	177
Leitrim	331	377
Limerick	265	247
Longford	176	258
Louth	81	84
Mayo	1,684	1,869
Meath	90	82
Monaghan	516	545
Offaly	127	133
Roscommon	407	433
Sligo	478	315
Tipperary	350	402
Waterford	84	96
Westmeath	134	193
Wexford	202	255
Wicklow	79	76
Others	0	0
Totals	10,714	11,333

Farm Assist

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	11,092

Farm Assist

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	110,931	113,724	115,070

Back to Education Allowance

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	512	503
Cavan	272	311

Questions - Written Answers

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Clare	460	451
Cork	1,938	2,166
Donegal	1,167	1,366
Dublin	5,044	6,205
Galway	1,563	1,749
Kerry	747	923
Kildare	701	920
Kilkenny	474	447
Laois	242	337
Leitrim	146	179
Limerick	1,138	1,242
Longford	236	265
Louth	661	973
Mayo	666	842
Meath	559	317
Monaghan	370	380
Offaly	269	349
Roscommon	271	213
Sligo	477	529
Tipperary	750	503
Waterford	796	385
Westmeath	404	948
Wexford	636	594
Wicklow	643	815
Others	5	754
Totals	21,147	24,666

Back to Education Allowance

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	16,729

Back to Education Allowance

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	179,851	201,519	183,021

Rent Supplement

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	1,484	1,440
Cavan	1,029	843

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Clare	1,937	1,961
Cork	10,988	10,732
Donegal	3,194	2,977
Dublin	33,818	34,423
Galway	4,829	4,615
Kerry	2,339	2,278
Kildare	4,409	4,447
Kilkenny	1,577	1,619
Laois	1,151	1,178
Leitrim	530	440
Limerick	3,896	3,833
Longford	715	623
Louth	2,563	2,734
Mayo	3,012	2,928
Meath	2,552	2,723
Monaghan	598	488
Offaly	1,273	1,349
Roscommon	1,276	1,275
Sligo	787	698
Tipperary	2,680	2,609
Waterford	2,332	2,098
Westmeath	1,623	1,671
Wexford	4,055	4,102
Wicklow	2,613	2,719
Others	0	0
Totals	97,260	96,803

Rent Supplement

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	89,219

Rent Supplement

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	516,538	502,748	436,001

Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	540	526
Cavan	535	369

Questions - Written Answers

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Clare	495	448
Cork	3,661	3,535
Donegal	1,119	1,045
Dublin	10,602	10,009
Galway	2,446	2,153
Kerry	776	723
Kildare	1,685	1,459
Kilkenny	544	531
Laois	620	557
Leitrim	122	136
Limerick	1,595	1,757
Longford	432	270
Louth	1,066	966
Mayo	1,148	1,129
Meath	2,614	2,024
Monaghan	335	289
Offaly	371	448
Roscommon	983	759
Sligo	581	596
Tipperary	1,073	1,018
Waterford	1,134	1,000
Westmeath	610	604
Wexford	1,542	1,410
Wicklow	784	836
Others	0	0
Totals	37,413	34,597

Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	33,637

Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	206,570	174,393	159,758

Mortgage Interest Supplement

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	411	430
Cavan	470	519

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Clare	355	321
Cork	1,737	1,710
Donegal	367	432
Dublin	4,174	4,518
Galway	661	662
Kerry	244	238
Kildare	1,346	1,406
Kilkenny	433	430
Laois	241	273
Leitrim	53	66
Limerick	643	673
Longford	115	111
Louth	418	475
Mayo	684	684
Meath	1,333	1,491
Monaghan	176	197
Offaly	241	304
Roscommon	303	341
Sligo	49	56
Tipperary	604	643
Waterford	486	513
Westmeath	224	232
Wexford	1,251	1,304
Wicklow	629	674
Others	0	0
Totals	17,648	18,703

Mortgage Interest Supplement

Year	-
Total Recipients at 30 September 2012	16,159

Mortgage Interest Supplement

-	Year	-	-
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	65,615	67,849	50,880

Jobseeker's Allowance Payments

467. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the jobseeker's allowance aged 18 to 19, 20 to 21, 22 to 24; the number aged 18 to 19, 20 to 21, 22 to 24; broken down by county; the total amount spent on jobseeker's allowance on 18 to 24 year olds; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47491/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information requested by the

Deputy in relation to expenditure and county of residence is not collated by my Department. I am however, informed that at the end of September 2012, there were 295,526 people in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance. 59,854 of these were aged between 18 and 24 years. I set out below a table detailing the breakdown of this number by age for the Deputy's information.

Jobseekers Allowance

Age	Number of Recipients	Percentage of Total Recipients
18	3,230	1.1%
19	6,887	2.3%
20	8,356	2.8%
21	9,162	3.1%
22	10,443	3.5%
23	10,936	3.7%
24	10,840	3.7%
Totals	59,854	20.3%

Question No. 468 answered with Question No. 464.

Disability Allowance Payments

469. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the disability allowance aged 16 to 18; the number aged 16 to 18 broken down by county; the total amount spent on disability allowance on 16 to 18 year olds; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47493/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Some of the information requested by the Deputy is not collated by my Department. I am informed that at the end of September 2012 there were 102,840 persons in receipt of Disability Allowance. 2,776 of these were aged between 16 and 18 years.

Questions Nos. 470 to 475, inclusive, answered with Question No. 464.

Social Welfare Benefits Numbers

476. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the partial capacity benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47500/12]

485. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the adoptive benefit in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47509/12]

490. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of per-

sons in receipt of the standard bereavement grant in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47514/12]

497. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the rural social scheme in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47522/12]

501. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the fuel allowance in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47527/12]

502. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the living alone increase in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47528/12]

503. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the household benefits package in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47529/12]

505. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the social welfare and living on an island option in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47531/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 476, 485, 490, 497, 501 to 503, inclusive, and 505 together.

Partial Capacity Benefit was introduced in February 2012 and accordingly, there were no recipients or associated expenditure in 2010 or 2011. As responsibility for the Rural Social Scheme transferred to the Department in September 2010, the information sought on Rural Social Scheme recipient numbers in 2010 is not available. As statistics on fuel allowance recipients are not segregated from the statistics of the schemes under which it is paid, the information sought on fuel allowance recipient numbers is not available. The cost of Living Alone Allowances and Island Allowances are not segregated from the scheme expenditure under which it they are paid and accordingly, the information sought on expenditure on those payments is not available. The information sought on Household Benefit Package recipient numbers is available only for 2012. The information on county of residence requested by the Deputy is not collated by the Department.

The other statistical and financial information sought is set out in the tabular statement.

The future of these payments will be considered in the course of the preparations for Budget 2013. The outcome of those deliberations will be announced in the Budget and in the meantime,

no final decisions have been made.

Partial Capacity Benefit

-	31 December 2010	31 December 2011	30 September 2012
Recipients	-	Scheme commenced 13 February 2012	677
-	2010 €000	2011 €000	2012 (REV-II) €000
Scheme Expenditure	-	Scheme commenced 13 February 2012	13,104

Adoptive Benefit

-	31 December 2010	31 December 2011	30 September 2012
Recipients	53	45	18
-	2010 €000	2011 €000	2012 (REV-II) €000
Scheme Expenditure	891	1,075	1,230

Bereavement Grant

-	2010	2011	2012 (to end Sept. for recipients)
Recipients	21,780	22,919	17,668
-	2010 €000	2011 €000	2012 (REV-II) €000
Scheme Expenditure	18,292	19,436	18,700

Rural Social Scheme

-	31 December 2010	31 December 2011	30 September 2012
Recipients	N/A*	2,534	2,549
-	2010 €000	2011 €000	2012 (REV-II) €000
Scheme Expenditure	13,872	46,835	45,660

*Rural Social Scheme transferred to the Department of Social Protection in September 2010.

Fuel Allowance

-	31 December 2010	31 December 2011	30 September 2012
Recipients	-	-	Information regard- ing the allowance's recipients is not seg- regated from the sta- tistics of the schemes under which it is paid.
-	2010 €000	2011 €000	2012 (REV-II) €000
Scheme Expenditure	228,766	265,839	214,360

Living Alone Allowance

-	31 December 2010	31 December 2011	30 September 2012
Recipients	170,579	174,015	175,477
-	2010 €000	2011€000	2012 (REV-II) €000

Allowance Cost: The cost of the Allowance is not segregated from the scheme expenditure under which it is paid.

Household Benefits Package

Recipients*	N/A	N/A	413,030
Allowance Recipients	-	-	-2
Electricity	300,567	295,679	93,697
Cash Electricity	46,831	61,019	65,374
Gas	41,822	43,609	44,048
Telephone	378,059	389,483	392,508
T.V. Licence	394,030	404,619	407,026
Total Allowances	1,161,309	1,194,409	1,202,653
-	2010 - €000	2011 - €000	2012 (REV-II) - €000
Scheme Expenditure	367,800	369,575	335,105

*Number of recipients is available since June 2012

Island Allowance

-	31 December 2010	31 December 2011	30 September 2012
Recipients	549	555	550
-	2010 €000	2011 €000	2012 (REV-II) €000

Questions Nos. 477 to 484, inclusive, answered with Question No. 464.

Question No. 485 answered with Question No. 476.

Questions Nos. 486 to 489, inclusive, answered with Question No. 464.

Question No. 490 answered with Question No. 476.

Questions Nos. 491 to 498, inclusive, answered with Question No. 464.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

499. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding entitlement to jobseeker's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47568/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was disallowed jobseeker's allowance as her means were deemed to be in excess of the statutory limit based on spousal earnings. The person concerned can appeal the decision of the deciding officer to the social welfare appeal's office.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme Numbers

500. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the vocational training opportunities scheme in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47526/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This is a matter for my colleague in the Department of Education and Skills.

Questions Nos. 501 to 503, inclusive, answered with Question No. 476.

Fuel Allowance Applications

504. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the smokeless fuel allowance in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47530/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Smokeless Fuel Allowance was abolished with effect from September 2011. The numbers of recipients, their county of residence and the cost of the allowance were not segregated from the statistics of the schemes under which it was paid prior to its abolition and accordingly, the information sought by the Deputy in respect of 2010 and 2011 is not available.

Question No. 505 answered with Question No. 476.

Questions Nos. 506 to 508, inclusive, answered with Question No. 464.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Payments

509. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the diet and heating supplements in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47535/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information requested by the Deputy is not collated by my Department. The number of recipients of miscellaneous Supplementary Welfare Supplements, including Diet and Heating Supplements, is collated annually for inclusion in the Department’s Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services report. A table detailing the available statistics is supplied for the Deputy’s information. With regard to my future plans for these supplements, a review of the Diet Supplement scheme is planned in the coming months.

Miscellaneous Supplementary Welfare Supplements

(Including Diet and Heating Supplements)

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Carlow	188	170

County	31st December 2010	31st December 2011
Cavan	162	144
Clare	336	306
Cork	2,112	1,839
Donegal	145	139
Dublin	3,353	5,320
Galway	361	365
Kerry	399	310
Kildare	387	365
Kilkenny	189	167
Laois	255	232
Leitrim	28	28
Limerick	1,741	1,638
Longford	119	108
Louth	195	188
Mayo	284	267
Meath	176	166
Monaghan	111	101
Offaly	256	235
Roscommon	231	207
Sligo	42	42
Tipperary	903	787
Waterford	368	326
Westmeath	150	140
Wexford	372	357
Wicklow	343	297
Others	0	0
Totals	15,206	14,244

Total recipients at 30 September 2012 - N/A.

Humanitarian Aid

510. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons in receipt of the humanitarian assistance scheme in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the number in receipt broken down by county; the total costs of the payment in 2010, 2011 and estimated total costs in 2012; her plans for the future of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47536/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government is the lead Department for severe weather emergencies and the Office of Public Works has responsibility for capital flood relief activities. However, the Department of Social Protection has an important role to play in assisting households in the immediate aftermath of emergency events such as the flooding of November 2009, October 2011 and June 2012. A humanitarian aid scheme was approved by Government in response to these floods. The humanitarian aid scheme, which is means tested, is available to people whose homes were damaged in the flooding and who are not in a position to meet costs for essential needs, household items and in some instances structural repair as a result of the flooding dam-

age. Payments issued to householders affected by these floods as follows.

Following the 2009 flooding, 2,100 payments were made at a value of approximately €1 million during 2010. The majority of these payments were made in counties Galway and Roscommon. The counties mainly affected by the autumn 2011 flooding were Dublin and Monaghan. Payments to the value of €879,073 have been paid to date in respect of 952 claims in Dublin and €28,767 in respect of 46 claims in Monaghan. The total paid during 2011 in respect of these counties was approximately €359,000. Following the June 2012 flooding, over 100 payments have been made to affected householders in the Cork area to the value of €108,500. Total payments to the value of €752,300 have been made in 2012 under the humanitarian aid scheme. Based on the scheme expenditure to date, it is estimated that expenditure for the full year will be in the region of €900,000. Any changes to this scheme will be considered in a budgetary context.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

511. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an assessment will be carried out on an invalidity pension appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47604/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 28th August 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. 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 Applications

512. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection his views on social welfare benefits (details supplied) in Dublin 3; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47562/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The jobseeker's benefit and jobseeker's allowance schemes provide income support for people who have lost work and are unable to find alternative employment. It is a fundamental qualifying condition for these benefits that a person must be available for full-time work. My Department engages with jobseekers in order to support them and their families in progressing into employment. One of the key concepts underpinning pathways to work and, indeed, a new service providing a single point of contact for all employment and income supports, is the relationship between the jobseeker and the Department. In accepting payment of benefit and support, the jobseeker shall agree to avail of the appropriate support measures offered during the course of the activation process, whether this is employment, education, training or placement in employment schemes.

With regard to the dynamics of the Live Register it may be noted that the great majority of people on the Live Register have a strong financial incentive to work and significant numbers leave the register each year. Indeed, for many unemployed people, unemployment is a short-term experience and the jobseeker's schemes have an important labour market function in sup-

porting people through periods of involuntary unemployment. In this context the establishment of a compulsory work system for jobseekers would be a matter for my colleague the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in the first instance. However, I would note that there could be significant potential for such a system to interfere with the functioning of the labour market, for example through substitution of existing work.

Register of Electors Administration

513. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her officials use the electoral register; and if so, the occasions when such use is considered warranted within her Department. [47643/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The electoral register is a matter of public record and, as such, may be consulted where appropriate by officials of the Department as one source of information which may be useful in confirming eligibility for payments.

National Internship Scheme Places

514. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) in County Mayo is precluded from getting on jobbridge; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47654/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The National Internship Scheme, JobBridge, was launched on 1st July 2011. It provides internship opportunities of either 6 or 9 months for unemployed individuals at all skills levels. The aim of JobBridge is to assist individuals in breaking the cycle where they are unable to get a job without experience. It provides them with an opportunity to gain valuable experience, relevant knowledge and skills within a working environment. The Scheme is open to organisations in the private, public and community or voluntary sectors. The JobBridge Scheme has made significant progress to-date since it came into operation on the 1st July 2011. 11,671 internships have commenced to date with 5,262 participants currently on an internship as at 1st November 2012 and 1,879 opportunities presently advertised on www.jobbridge.ie.

In response to the specific matter raised by the Deputy, I wish to advise that an individual cannot apply for an internship with an organisation that they have an existing employment relationship with e.g. working part-time. However, the terms and conditions of the Scheme currently provide that an individual may partake in an internship with an organisation that they had a previous employment relationship with subject to all other eligibility criteria being met. I am delighted to further advise the Deputy that there is no 'one day' condition or rule preventing participation on JobBridge. The Department will endeavour to contact the person concerned in this instance to clarify the matter. In the meantime if you have any further queries in this regard, please contact the JobBridge unit at jobbridge@welfare.ie and the staff there will assist further if required.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

515. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an appeal in the case of an application for jobseeker's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47657/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 5th July 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 31st July 2012 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. 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.

Child Care Services Provision

516. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 87 of 16 October 2012, in which she indicates that the inter departmental group on school-age childcare has completed its work; if she will arrange for the publication of its full findings, conclusions and recommendations and the date of same. [47677/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The role of the Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) on School-Age Child Care is to explore the best possible model for enhancing the provision of school-age child care to assist in meeting the child care needs of the customers of my Department – including those of lone parents. The model in question will address the child care requirements of children aged between 7 and 12 years (inclusive) and will also address the child care required during both the school term and the school holidays. Extensive work has been completed by the Group to quantify the level of school-age child care that is required to support the relevant social welfare income support recipients, in particular lone parents, for each year up to and including 2015. An examination has also been carried out of existing child care schemes and of the capital investments already made by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in this sector. The work of the IDG is still on-going as based on these findings the IDG are currently engaged in detailed discussions to define a suitable and effective school-age childcare model. Once completed, the model and proposals will be submitted to Government for approval.

Question No. 517 withdrawn.

Mortgage Arrears Proposals

518. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Social Protection the sector of professionals who will be permitted to advise mortgage holders as part of the new advisory service; if financial brokers will be permitted to advise clients in this area of mortgage arrears; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47731/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I recently announced a three-phased approach to establishing a comprehensive Mortgage Arrears Information and Advice Service to provide the necessary supports to assist people in mortgage distress. The approach differentiates between mortgage information and mortgage advice. The first two involve the enhancement of the website www.keepingyourhome.ie and the establishment of a Mortgage Arrears Information Helpline within the Citizens Information Board both of which focus on the provision of comprehensive mortgage arrears information in particular to people in arrears or pre-arrears. The third element of the service is the provision of independent financial advice

to mortgage holders who are being presented with long term mortgage resolution proposals by their lenders. This advice will be provided by a panel of accountants drawn from members of the main accountancy institutes in Ireland who have agreed to participate and support this independent service.

When a lender is proposing longer-term mortgage resolutions, the lender will advise the borrower to obtain independent financial advice on the proposed arrangement and, if the borrower wishes to avail of this option, that the lender will pay €250 to an accountant of the borrower's choosing for the provision of this advice. An operating protocol for the provision of this advice has been agreed between the main accountancy bodies and the lenders. The general scope of the advice will be limited to the borrower's principal private residence. The advisory framework has commenced with practising accountants because they already operate within a regulatory regime which includes qualitative oversight by their regulating bodies and in these circumstances it was possible to establish the advisory framework for people with mortgage distress within a relatively short timeframe.

There is nothing to inhibit other financial intermediaries from continuing to give advice on mortgages as requested by borrowers. While the advisory framework will be monitored on an on-going basis, it is not intended to conduct a full review of the service before June 2013. The review will be undertaken to ensure that it is meeting its objectives and will encompass all aspects of the service including if participation is extended to other interested parties, the criteria that would be required in terms of relevant qualifications, experience, independence, professional indemnity insurance, etc. The accountancy bodies have notified their members about the new service. To date, some 2,700 accountants have confirmed to their accounting body that they wish to be part of the panel and their details are now listed on a county by county basis on the website www.keepingyourhome.ie.

Exceptional Needs Payment Applications

519. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 355 of 23 of October 2012, the grounds on which a request for an exceptional needs payment was refused in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if she will review this decision with particular reference to the bad health of the applicant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47740/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The exceptional needs payment application of the person concerned was disallowed as the medical evidence submitted did not recommend the need for clothing. The person concerned has been advised that she can request a review of this decision.

Carer's Allowance Applications

520. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite a carer's allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied). [47726/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 24th April 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

521. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an invalidity appeal application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath. [47727/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all the evidence has allowed the appeal of the person concerned, by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the decision. 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.

Questions Nos. 522 and 523 withdrawn.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

524. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on invalidity pension appeal will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47792/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on the 28th March 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 5th September 2012 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer shortly who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. 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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

525. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47793/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 11th January 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

526. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin. [47795/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 22nd

August 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 30th October 2012 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. 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 Overpayments

527. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the way it was determined that a person (details supplied) in County Kildare was overpaid by her Department; if she will review this case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47796/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following a review in August 2012 of the person's disability allowance claim it was found that the person failed to fully disclose his weekly means from self-employment from 8 April 2009 to 2 May 2012. His payment was stopped and he was assessed with having an overpayment of disability allowance of €63,206.30. The person was notified in writing of this decision and of his right of appeal. Further letters were sent to him regarding the recovery of the overpayment.

The weekly rate of disability allowance payment depends on the amount of weekly means assessed. The legislative provisions regarding disability allowance state that means will be assessed from all income which the claimant or claimant's spouse may reasonably expect to receive during the year following the date of their claim with certain exceptions. Income derived from earnings from self-employment is not included in these exceptions, and is accordingly assessable in full as means for disability allowance.

Carer's Allowance Applications

528. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason for the delay in expediting a decision on a carer's allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47773/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 9th January 2012. This application was referred to one of the Department's medical assessors who found that the caree in question was not medically eligible for carer's allowance. A letter issued on the 27th July 2012 refusing the allowance. A letter issued to the person in question outlining details of how to have this decision reviewed or appealed if they are not satisfied with the decision.

Invalidity Pension Applications

529. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an invalidity pension review application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin. [47774/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Invalidity pension is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who

satisfy the contribution conditions. This department received a claim for invalidity pension for the person concerned on 22 June 2012. The medical evidence provided by the claimant in support of his claim was examined by a medical assessor who was of the opinion that the person concerned is not eligible for invalidity pension as he does not satisfy the medical criteria. The application for invalidity pension was disallowed by a deciding officer. The person in question was notified of this decision and the reason for it on 26 July 2012. Further medical evidence was subsequently submitted by the claimant. This additional evidence, along with the original information, was evaluated by a different medical assessor who expressed the opinion that the person concerned does not satisfy the medical criteria. The deciding officer confirmed the original decision and notified the claimant of the outcome on 05 November 2012, advising him of his right to appeal the decision to the independent social welfare appeals office.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

530. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a rent allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin. [47775/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for rent supplement issued to the person concerned on 01 November 2012. The application form should be completed and returned to this Department for processing.

Carer's Allowance Applications

531. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on carer's allowance will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47800/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 28th May 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Tax Reliefs Application

532. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views made in the media on 23 October 2012, to the effect that the Government are considering introducing a pensions cap for the purposes of tax relief; if she will explain how this would work and if this approach is being considered instead of reducing tax reliefs as was provided for in the National Pensions Framework. [47777/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Finance.

Carer's Allowance Applications

533. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on carer's allowance will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a state-

ment on the matter. [47801/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This application for carer's allowance was awarded on 6th of October 2012 and the department has been in contact with the person in question setting out the details.

Carer's Allowance Applications

534. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47803/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 3rd August 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

535. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if and when an appeal for invalidity pension will be determined in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47779/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 1st October 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

536. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47809/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This application for carer's allowance was awarded on 3rd November 2012. A letter with all details of entitlement issued to the person in question on that date.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

537. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on the domiciliary care allowance appeal will be determined in respect of a person (details sup-

plied) in County Westmeath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47823/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was notified on 10th September 2012 that her appeal had been successful and her claim was awarded. The first payment issued to her on 16th October 2012.

Rent Supplement Scheme Appeals

538. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a rent supplement appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47828/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 15th March 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 11th May 2012 and the case has been referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

539. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an application for carer's allowance was received in her Department in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; when the medical element was approved; when the file was sent to the inspector for the means assessment to be carried out; when a decision will be made in view of the fact that this application has been ongoing for over twelve months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47714/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 27th September 2011. As the person being cared for is aged under 16 and in receipt of a Domiciliary Care Allowance no medical assessment in regard to carer's allowance is necessary. As this case is a particularly complex one in regard to the means assessment, it was necessary to refer the file to a social welfare investigative officer for a means assessment and confirmation that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied. The file was referred to the social welfare investigative officer on 24 August 2012.

Once the deciding officer receives the report of the social welfare investigative officer, the application will be processed and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Rent Supplement Scheme Appeals

540. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a decision has been made on an appeal for rent allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47716/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 3rd July 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 30th July 2012 and the case has been referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

541. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will to expedite an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47788/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 3rd February 2012. The medical assessment has been completed. The application is currently with a social welfare investigative officer for confirmation that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied. Once the investigative officer has completed and submitted the report a deciding officer will make a full decision. The application will be processed as quickly as possible and when a decision is made the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Applications

542. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will confirm that a person (details supplied) in County Laois is receiving the correct amount of carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47870/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 7th July 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

543. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if additional medical evidence outlining progressive cancer (details supplied) has been taken into consideration in a carer's allowance appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47892/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal, by the person concerned, was registered in that office on 12th September 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required,

hold an oral hearing.

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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

544. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer's allowance which is currently awaiting review in respect of a person (details supplied); if she will expedite a response to enable the person to make alternative arrangements if they are not granted the allowance. [47894/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 19th September 2011. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who found that the caree in question was not medically eligible for carer's allowance. A letter issued on the 3rd July 2012 refusing the allowance. The person in question subsequently submitted further medical evidence for review on 7th August 2012. This medical evidence is awaiting medical assessment by a medical assessor. On completion of all the necessary investigations as part of this review, a decision will be made and the person in question will be contacted directly with the outcome.

Family Income Supplement Application Numbers

545. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection the current number of applications for family income supplement renewal and initial approval respectively; the corresponding waiting time in each category; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47900/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers.

The average waiting time for new family income supplement (FIS) claims at the end of September was 18 weeks and for renewal applications was 19 weeks. At the end of September, there were **7,393** new FIS applications and **8,173** renewal applications awaiting decision. The volume of FIS claims on hands and the delays in processing are a consequence of continued strong claim intake.

An in-depth business process improvement (BPI) project has recently been completed for the FIS scheme. This project focused on optimising output and customer service and the reduction of backlogs. Part of the project was a detailed examination of workloads and a full assessment of existing capacity within the area and what capacity is needed in order to process the volumes of claims, both new and renewal, being received.

A plan has now been devised and implementation will commence from 5 November 2012. This will allow the normal weekly new claim and renewal intake to be processed without delay and the backlog to be ring-fenced and eliminated over the coming months.

Farm Assist Scheme Application Numbers

546. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of farm assist on a county basis; the number of claims awaiting to be processed and the current waiting time; the number which have been reviewed since January last; the estimated out turn for the cost of payments in 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47904/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information requested by the Deputy is not collated by my Department as claim processing statistics are not separately measured in respect of this scheme. I am, however, informed that there were 11,092 recipients of farm assist at 30th September 2012. A table detailing the available statistics is provided for the Deputy's information.

Just over €115m. has been provided for Farm Assist in the 2012 Estimates. The cost of this scheme in 2011 was €113.7m.

Farm Assis	-	-	-	-
County	-	31st December 2010	-	31st December 2011
Carlow	-	102	-	95
Cavan	-	401	-	407
Clare	-	637	-	643
Cork	-	917	-	957
Donegal	-	1,389	-	1,491
Dublin	-	11	-	35
Galway	-	1,133	-	1,137
Kerry	-	742	-	819
Kildare	-	56	-	53
Kilkenny	-	173	-	154
Laois	-	149	-	177
Leitrim	-	331	-	377
Limerick	-	265	-	247
Longford	-	176	-	258
Louth	-	81	-	84
Mayo	-	1,684	-	1,869
Meath	-	90	-	82
Monaghan	-	516	-	545
Offaly	-	127	-	133
Roscommon	-	407	-	433
Sligo	-	478	-	315
Tipperary	-	350	-	402
Waterford	-	84	-	96
Westmeath	-	134	-	193
Wexford	-	202	-	255
Wicklow	-	79	-	76
Others	-	0	-	0
Totals	-	10,714	-	11,333

Farm Assis	-	-	-	-
-	-	Total Recipients at 30 - September 2012	-	11,092
-	2010 - €000	-	2011 - €000	2012 - REV-II - €000
Scheme Expenditure	110,931	-	113,724	115,070

Disability Allowance Appeals

547. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a disability allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47908/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 24th July 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

548. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an invalidity pension review will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47915/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal, by the person concerned, was registered in that office on 28th August 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Pension Fund Fees

549. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection following the report by her Department into the high administration cost of pension schemes, the steps she is taking

to address this situation; if she is satisfied that the pension industry is regulated to international norms and is properly policed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47918/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Report on Pension Charges 2012 was undertaken by my Department with support from the Central Bank and Pensions Board. The primary objective of the report was to gather information on the level of pension charges levied, to assess whether these charges are reasonable and transparent, to report on the findings and to make recommendations.

The report highlights a wide range of issues in relation to pension charges and identifies a number of serious problems. It is fully recognised that the provision of pension schemes cannot be cost free. However, there are major challenges to be addressed in the two main areas of reasonableness and transparency of charges.

In recent years a number of initiatives have been progressed at Irish and EU level which focused on the area of disclosure and transparency of pension charges. These initiatives included the publication of the revised Consumer Protection Code by the Central Bank in 2012 and the recent consultation paper by the Pensions Board on pension simplification. At EU level, my department will be monitoring development across a range of proposals which are currently under consideration and will be progressed during 2013. The outcome of these developments will inform a review of relevant regulatory framework in Ireland.

The report is a fact finding report, comments from interested parties and stakeholders are being invited over a 3 month period (i.e. by the end of January 2013). These responses will be considered and a further policy and regulatory response, if necessary, will be brought to Government.

On the broader pension policy front, the report clearly identifies the importance of economies of scale in driving down charges. At present, the OECD is conducting a review of longer term pension policy and will comment on key policy issues such as the possible introduction of an auto-enrolment pension scheme for all employees, which could have a major impact on reducing charges.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

550. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a request to review a decision to withdraw entitlement to carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47921/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Carer's allowance was stopped on 10th October 2012 in respect of the person in question as, following a review, it was decided that the medical criteria were no longer satisfied.

In order for a child under 16 years to be deemed eligible for carer's allowance, domiciliary care allowance must be in payment for that child. In those circumstances, the child is deemed to be automatically medically eligible for carer's allowance.

Once the child reaches 16 years and is no longer entitled to domiciliary care allowance, a review of the continuing entitlement to carer's allowance is carried out.

If the person in question is not satisfied with the decision to stop her carer's allowance, she may request a review or may submit an appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Of-

fice.

Disability Allowance Payments

551. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a review will take place regarding arrears paid to a person (details supplied) for disability allowance. [47940/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was awarded disability allowance with effect from 14 March 2012 and she received her first weekly payment on 15 August 2012. As the person had been in receipt of illness benefit for some of the period concerned, the amount she received on this payment was deducted from the disability allowance arrears due and she was paid arrears of €895.40 on 23 August 2012.

A review of the arrears paid to the person concerned has been completed. No further arrears are due to her and she will be notified in writing of this decision.

Carer's Allowance Applications

552. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a carer's allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; if she will provide a timeframe as to when it is likely a decision will issue and the reason the application is taking so long to process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47957/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 9th January 2012. The application has been examined by a deciding officer who has sent a request to the person in question for further information needed to process the application. Once all the necessary information has been returned to the department, a deciding officer will process the application and a full decision will issue directly to the person in question.

Community Employment Schemes Funding

553. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Social Protection what specifically is meant in the report Community Employment Financial Review of Schemes when it recommends on page nine that the budget for training be held by community services in each region; will individual community employment schemes now not be awarded the training part of their budget; the reason for this recommendation; if it results in any savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47965/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The CE Financial Review recommended that the budget for training be held by Community Services in each region. The individual scheme allocation has been agreed with schemes by the Department of Social Protection. The budget for training on CE now stands at €5.5m; this is an increase of €1.2m on the original budget for 2012. This equates to a training grant of approximately €250 per place annually. This arrangement allows for a flexible response and enables local offices to re-allocate the training budget between schemes if required, once the Divisional Budget is not exceeded. Thus achieving improved utilisation of the training budget.

Each CE Scheme has received an indicative budget as agreed between the sponsor and the

DSP Officer. Schemes can utilise the CE Advance Payment to offset training fees which are required to be paid in advance. This will be reimbursed to the scheme on receipt and approval of invoices. The training allocation for each CE participant is approved by the DSP Officer based on the CE Individual Learner Plan submitted by the CE Supervisor.

In allocating the budget to Schemes, the Department of Social Protection has taken into account if training can be accessed at no cost from FÁS or the VECs. In addition access to the Springboard Programme which provides access to 3rd level courses without incurring fees is now available to CE participants, once a participant satisfies the entry criteria.

For many CE participants, CE is the main avenue to gaining qualifications and making up for lost learning opportunities in the past. This is recognised in the current arrangements.

Social Welfare Offices

554. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will explain the delay in providing a social welfare office in Lucan, County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47984/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Office of Public Works (OPW) has responsibility for the acquisition and maintenance of office accommodation for the Department of Social Protection. The provision of a new local office to serve the Lucan area is being considered by the Office of Public Works acting on behalf of the Department.

In the meantime, Jobseeker claims for people living in the Lucan area are administered by the Social Welfare Local Office in Clondalkin. Signing-on for the majority of jobseekers occurs once in any 4-week period. However, to avoid the necessity for people in Lucan to travel to Clondalkin, they may sign-on at a signing centre in Lucan Village which is open 5 days per month.

These arrangements are being kept under review and if necessary will be amended to ensure that a reasonable level of service is provided to the people of Lucan.

Child Maintenance Payments

555. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will agree to attachment of earnings applications so that lone parents can ensure receipt of child maintenance payments from the other parents where this other parent's main source of income comes from her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47995/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The issue of maintenance payments is first and foremost a private matter for the persons concerned, and if they cannot resolve the problem, for the courts through family law provisions. The Liability to Maintain Family provisions contained in the *Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005* are completely separate to family law legislation. Any applications to the courts under family law for a maintenance order or attachment of earnings against the other parent are made through the courts service and are not the responsibility of the Department.

The Department is responsible for implementing the Liability to Maintain Family Provisions provided for in Part 12 of the *Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005*, as amended. The methods of assessment of the liable relative's ability to pay are specified in detail in Regulations (S.I. 571 of 2006 and S.I. 142 of 2007).

In every case where a one-parent family payment is awarded, the Department seeks to trace the other parent (liable relative) in order to ascertain whether he or she is in a financial position to contribute towards the cost of the one-parent family payment. When assessed in line with the current regulations, persons in receipt of a social welfare payment from my Department are determined to have a nil contribution due.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

556. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an appeal for a domiciliary care allowance will be expedited in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny [48004/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 19th July 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 26th September 2012 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Question No. 557 answered with Question No. 436.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

558. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will consider an appeal for half carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48080/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This application was originally refused on medical grounds on 7th December 2011. The decision was then appealed and, following consideration of all the available evidence, an appeals officer has made a determination in this case to disallow the appeal. Accordingly, the decision to refuse carer's allowance stands. A letter issued from the Social Welfare Appeals Office to the person in question on 17th September 2012 with all the relevant details.

Back to Education Allowance Eligibility

559. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection the circumstances and number of occasions where her Department has waived the criteria for progression under the back to education allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48109/12]

560. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review the operation of the back to education allowance scheme and specifically the narrow interpretation of the requirement that the course being pursued must represent progression on qualifications already held; if she accepts that for example in two cases (details supplied) this excessively narrow definition is a de facto consignment of the applicants to the live register as in reality one

is trying to reposition themselves in the employment market where their current qualification in the construction industry offers no employment prospects and the other is attempting to enhance their core qualification with computer skills to increase employment prospects; if she will consider assigning a role to the employment services within her Department to determining on a case by case basis if applicants and the courses they are pursuing offer a reasonable prospect of employment and a pathway back to work; if she will instruct her Department officials dealing with these applications to move away from the excessively narrow and restrictive interpretation of progression; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48110/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 559 and 560 together.

The back to education allowance (BTEA) is a second chance education opportunities scheme designed to remove the barriers to participation in second and third level education by enabling those in receipt of certain social welfare payments to continue to receive a payment while pursuing an approved full-time education course that leads to a higher qualification than that already held. A person wishing to pursue the back to education allowance will have to satisfy a number of conditions such as being a certain age, in receipt of a prescribed social welfare payment for a specified time period, pursuing a full time course of study leading to a recognised qualification in a recognised college and progressing in the level of education held by the client with reference to the national framework of qualifications among others. The scheme covers a wide range of full-time courses of education in approved colleges spanning basic foundation courses to third level courses across all disciplines.

BTEA guidelines are, in the main, mirror those in place for similar student supports administered by the Department of Education and Skills and require student progression from one qualification level to a higher one. It is my intention to retain the requirements in respect of progression in education as a feature of the BTEA in line with the necessity that State support for education purposes is grounded on a student progressing from one qualification level to a higher one. This is necessary to ensure displacement does not occur and best use is made of the resources available.

It is important to note that the BTEA scheme is not intended to be an alternative form of funding for those wishing to enter or re-enter the education system. It is not possible, within the scope of the scheme, to authorise an application for payment where the basic qualifying conditions have not been satisfied and progression is not evident. Under the scheme guidelines deciding officers must adhere to the progression rule in making BTEA claim decisions.

The progression requirements outlined above do not apply in cases of a person wishing to pursue a part time education course which they may do while still obtaining their jobseekers payment. They must apply at their local social welfare office and verify that participation on the course does not reduce their availability for work. In the case of jobseekers benefit, participation on a course does not grant any extension to the normal period for which jobseekers benefit is paid.

My Department is currently reviewing a wide range of activation supports that are available, including BTEA, and it is my intention to canvass the views of stakeholders as part of the implementation process resulting from the review.

Child Benefit Payments

561. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total expenditure on

the child benefit scheme in each of the past ten years, from 2002 to date in 2012. [48120/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The total expenditure on the child benefit scheme for each year from 2002 to 30 September, 2012 is set out in the table below.

The figure provided for 2012 is provisional and subject to audit by the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Child Benefit Scheme

Year	Expenditure (€000)
2002	1,462,793
2003	1,666,530
2004	1,765,117
2005	1,899,936
2006	2,056,295
2007	2,232,974
2008	2,453,957
2009	2,495,304
2010	2,213,429
2011	2,076,338
up to 30/9/2012	1,524,715

Child Benefit Payments

562. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Social Protection when the child benefit scheme was first introduced and; the purpose and objectives of the scheme. [48123/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Child benefit is a universal payment paid in respect of all qualified children. The payment came into existence in 1986 and replaced the children's allowance payment, which was first introduced in 1944. The estimated expenditure on child benefit for 2012 is around €2 billion in respect of some 1.15 million children.

A number of objectives have been attributed to the child benefit scheme and its precursor over the years. These objectives were reviewed as part of a policy and value for money review completed by the Department of Social Protection in November 2010. The review identified the primary objectives of child benefit as providing assistance to parents and others in meeting the cost associated with raising children and in contributing towards alleviating child poverty. The review also noted that the evolution of policy since the schemes introduction has also seen a number of secondary objectives emerge over time with varying significance, including the reduction of financial disincentives for parents to take up work; financial assistance with specific costs such as the cost of paid childcare; and the provision of an independent income source for women in the home. The review considered that the universal nature of child benefit allows it to fulfil a number of different roles and accommodate multiple objectives.

Carer's Allowance Applications

563. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding

carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48143/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Unfortunately, insufficient information has been provided to enable the Department to identify the person who is the subject of this enquiry, despite a thorough search. If you provide me with the PPS number for the person in question I will be happy to update you on the position with the application.

Carer's Benefit Appeals

564. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on an appeal for carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48149/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This application, in respect of two care recipients, was disallowed on 10th October 2012. One caree was disallowed on medical grounds. The other caree was disallowed as domiciliary care allowance has not been awarded for that person. It is a statutory condition for the receipt of carer's allowance that care recipients under the age of 16 years must be in receipt of domiciliary care allowance.

It is open to the person to submit additional information for consideration and apply for a review of the decision. Alternatively, the person may appeal the decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office. The letter which issued to the person in question notifying them of the decision on their application includes details of these options and how to avail of them.

Carer's Allowance Applications

565. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an application for carer's allowance will be expedited in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48150/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 5th April 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Eligibility

566. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Waterford on bail and with no means, awaiting a court trial is entitled to any benefit from her department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48171/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that a Supplementary Welfare Allowance appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 1st October 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 9th October and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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 Payments Waiting Times

567. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of Irish nationals that have been refused a social welfare payment on habitual residence condition grounds in 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48174/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The numbers of applications by Irish nationals who have been disallowed welfare payments based on the failure to satisfy the habitual residence condition in 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012 are set out in the tabular statement.

2009	2010	2011*	2012 To date	Total
738	650	455	264	2,107

*Note: Some cases were not recorded in 2011, due to industrial action.

Carer's Allowance Applications

568. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when arrears for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48188/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This carer's allowance application was awarded on 19th September 2012. A letter outlining all details of payment issued to the person in question on that date also. Any arrears due will issue shortly.

Question No. 569 withdrawn.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

570. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal for invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 17. [48192/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 16th October 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

571. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an assessment will be carried out on a carer's allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48206/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 14th February 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

572. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick. [48209/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received on the 20th March 2012. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who found that the child was not medically eligible for DCA. A letter issued on the 2nd May 2012 refusing the allowance. The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against this decision.

As part of the appeal process, the case was forwarded to another of the Department's Medical Assessors for further consideration, including a review of any new information supplied. The Medical Assessor upheld the opinion that the child was not medically eligible for DCA. The case will now be forwarded for consideration by the Appeals Office.

Gender Recognition Issues

573. **Deputy Anne Ferris** asked the Minister for Social Protection when she expects the heads of bill to be published on the gender recognition legislation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48218/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Gender Recognition Advisory Group (GRAG) was established in 2010 to advise the Government on the legislation required to give legal recognition to the acquired gender of transgender persons. The Report of the Group, which recommends a scheme for the legal recognition of transgender persons, was approved by the Government on 12 July 2011, and was subsequently published on 14 July, 2011.

Since the publication of the Report, the Department has been working on developing draft Heads of a Gender Recognition Bill. In this context, it has engaged in discussions with the relevant medical health professionals and with representatives from interested NGOs. Given the legal complexities involved in relation to some of the GRAG recommendations relating to the marital and civil partnership status of individuals, in March, my Department sought advice from the Office of the Attorney General, which in turn sought the legal opinion of external counsel on these issues.

Preliminary discussions have taken place between my Department, the Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Justice and Equality in relation to the legal opinion of external counsel. The Office of the Attorney General is in the process of considering the various

approaches suggested by counsel. Once my Department receives the formal legal advice from the Office of the Attorney General, this will inform the drafting of the Heads of Bill. Given the sensitive and complex nature of the issues involved, it is my intention to ask the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection to discuss the provisional draft Heads of Bill once they are completed.

It is therefore not possible to be definitive at this stage about when I will be in a position to introduce legislation to give legal recognition to the acquired gender of transgender persons. When my Department has received the formal opinion of the Attorney General's Office and when the Oireachtas Committee has discussed the provisional draft Heads of Bill I will be in a better position to give a timeframe for the introduction of the legislation.

Jobseeker's Allowance Payments

574. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection if there is a problem having jobseekers' payments paid directly into bank accounts, and if so, the nature of problem and the way it can be overcome. [48223/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): My Department is committed to providing a high quality service to our customers. In most cases, we offer a range of payment options to customers including payment at a local post office via electronic information transfer (EIT), payment through a bank, building society account or certain credit unions via electronic funds transfer (EFT) or payment by cheque.

There are some exceptions whereby for administrative or control purposes we may limit the choice of payment method. In the case of Jobseeker's Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance, payment at the Post Office contributes to the Department's current approach to fraud control. Since 2008 it is normal practice to pay jobseekers in their local post-office. Exceptions are made in certain circumstances such as while a person is undertaking a course of study under the Back To Education Allowance or partaking of an internship under the Work Placement Programme or National Internship Programme and has difficulty accessing the post-office during normal working hours.

There are no plans to change payment arrangements for jobseeker customers.

National Internship Scheme Places

575. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the fact that many applicants for positions through jobbridge are having their applications unacknowledged by host organisations; if there is any mechanisms in place to ensure that all applicants receive an acknowledgement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48244/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The National Internship Scheme, JobBridge, was launched on 1st July 2011. It provides internship opportunities of either 6 or 9 months for unemployed individuals at all skills levels. The aim of JobBridge is to assist individuals in breaking the cycle where they are unable to get a job without experience. It provides them with an opportunity to gain valuable experience, relevant knowledge and skills within a working environment. The Scheme is open to organisations in the private, public and community or voluntary sectors.

The JobBridge Scheme has made significant progress to-date since it came into operation on the 1st July 2011. 11,671 internships have commenced to date with 5,262 participants currently on an internship as at 1st November 2012 and 1,879 internship opportunities presently advertised on www.jobbridge.ie.

I would like to advise the Deputy that the Department has developed a toolkit on the JobBridge website, www.jobbridge.ie that provides advice and guidance on key elements of a good internship. Within this context, it is widely recognised that it is good policy and practice for host organisations to acknowledge receipt of applications from jobseekers.

However, I would advise the Deputy that the process of applying for internships is entirely a matter for the host organisation and prospective interns. As you are aware, participation on the Scheme is on a voluntary basis and the Department is not involved in the recruitment process other than hosting the advertisements and verifying the eligibility of jobseekers to participate.

The Department does not condone incidences wherein jobseekers apply for posts and do not receive an acknowledgment from their prospective host organisation. In light of matters raised by the Deputy, the Department will re-emphasise the importance of host organisations responding to applications by jobseekers. This will be implemented via the JobBridge website.

Labour Court Recommendations

576. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection when her Department and agencies funded by her Department will implement the Labour Court recommendation in relation to Labour Court recommendation number LCR19293 dated the 22 July 2008 regarding the provision of a pension scheme for community employment supervisors and assistant supervisors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48283/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The position is as set out in my reply to Questions Nos. 89, 99 and 102 on 1st December 2011. Supervisors and assistant supervisors are employed by sponsor organisations in contract with FÁS (now the Department of Social Protection) for the operation of community employment (CE) and the delivery of the local services. All sponsor organisations operated independently of FÁS and of the Department in the discharge of their various functions in respect to the management of staff, participants, finance, and governance arrangements. These arrangements did not change with the integration of FÁS services into the Department of Social Protection. The position regarding the making of pension provisions for CE supervisors and assistant supervisors remains unchanged and I do not accept that any liability falls to the Exchequer in respect of this matter.

Question No. 577 withdrawn.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

578. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite a decision on an invalidity pension appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48321/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 10th September 2012. In accordance with the statutory requirements the Appeals Office contacted the person concerned asking her to set out the complete grounds of her appeal. These have now

been received and the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal have been sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Mortgage Interest Supplement Appeals

579. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a decision has been made on a mortgage interest supplement appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48334/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 5th September 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 17th September 2012 and the case has been referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Question No. 580 withdrawn.

Carer's Allowance Applications

581. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick. [48377/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the Department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 23rd May 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Question No. 582 withdrawn.

National Internship Scheme Numbers

583. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will refer to the qualifying criteria for employers who wish to partake in job bridge national internship scheme; if tax-compliant self-employed persons who have no employees/cannot afford to take on an employee qualify for the internship scheme and if not, the number of self-employed persons in this category who have applied to be included in the scheme and if she will consider extending qualifying criteria to include self-employed persons in this category in the job bridge internship

scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48395/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The National Internship Scheme, JobBridge, was launched on 1st July 2011. It provides internship opportunities of either 6 or 9 months for unemployed individuals at all skills levels. The aim of JobBridge is to assist individuals in breaking the cycle where they are unable to get a job without experience. It provides them with an opportunity to gain valuable experience, relevant knowledge and skills within a working environment. The Scheme is open to organisations in the private, public and community or voluntary sectors.

The JobBridge Scheme has made significant progress to-date since it came into operation on 1st July 2011. 11,671 internships have commenced to date with 5,262 participants currently on an internship as at 1st November 2012 and 1,879 opportunities presently advertised on www.jobbridge.ie.

A clear set of rules have been developed and are in operation to protect the intern and safeguard JobBridge from potential abuse. Thus, in order for an organisation to participate on JobBridge, one of the key conditions is that an organisation or self-employed person must have a minimum of 1 full time employee who is employed for 30 hours or more per week (i.e. on payroll and subject to tax and PRSI). A host organisation participating in JobBridge must be in a position to provide a substantial commitment to their intern so as to ensure the provision of a quality internship. It is important that strong mentoring and support is available for the intern and that they can improve their skills and knowledge while working with other colleagues in a team environment.

Potential host organisations can avail of the JobBridge guidelines and full eligibility criteria which are available on the JobBridge website www.jobbridge.ie.

I wish to further highlight that an independent evaluation of the Scheme is currently being undertaken by Indecon International Economic Consultants. This evaluation will assess the design, delivery and impact of the JobBridge Scheme; it will provide details of the nature of the work experience of the participants; a measurement of the relevance of that experience to the labour market and progression into employment. It is anticipated that the final report will be published in late December. This Report will also present recommendations on how the Scheme might be improved. It is at this stage that further consideration will be given to amending the terms and conditions of the Scheme including the specific matters raised by the Deputy.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Appeals

584. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position in relation to the appeal for diet supplement in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [48420/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 15th August 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 9th October 2012 and the case has been referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

585. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a carer's allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [48533/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 10th October 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Northern Ireland Issues

586. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement her Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48551/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are strong and long standing relationships with a wide range of contacts taking place between officials of my Department and their counterparts in Northern Ireland. This ranges from senior management engagement, ongoing day-to-day operational contact and also the annual Summer School jointly run by the two authorities. In general, the main contacts are in relation to the assessment and payment of social welfare benefits. Payment of cross-border benefits is regulated by EU Regulations on the co-ordination of social security systems and so there is a necessity for ongoing contacts with Northern and UK authorities to assess and pay benefits across a wide range of schemes.

Fraud control is an important issue for authorities in both jurisdictions and in this regard there are formal and ad-hoc arrangements in place for the sharing of information in this area. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland is in place to ensure Co-operation and Mutual Assistance in the Administration of Social Security Programmes in matters of mutual interest in the areas of fraud in their respective social security systems.

In addition, there is a Cross-Border Operational Forum, comprising senior fraud managers from the Department of Social Protection, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Northern Ireland Social Security Agency of the Department for Social Development. The Forum's remit is to liaise at operational level and ensure that measures are in place to ensure effective co-operation, prevention and detection of fraud .

Case by case data-matching takes places between the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Social Development (DSD) in Northern Ireland on cases where social welfare fraud or abuse is occurring. In 2011, 4,288 checks were carried out by the DSD on behalf of the DSP. Similarly, 2,716 checks were carried out by the DSP on behalf of the DSD for the same year.

The Department's Special Investigation works with other agencies such as Revenue, National Employment Rights Authority, Customs and the Gardaí and ensures that control activity is being targeted at high risk categories of claimants/employers. There is an active and ongoing relationship between the Department's SIU officers and their counterparts in the Fraud Investigation Service in Northern Ireland.

An annual Summer School is run jointly by the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Social Development, Northern Ireland. This year marked the 13th anniversary of this very successful joint event. The School is residential and takes place over the period of one week. It is hosted in turn by each Department, and held in Dublin and Belfast on alternate years. Twenty four staff from each Department are invited to attend. Lectures and study group sessions held throughout the week provide an opportunity for staff to come together in a university environment to explore issues of social policy facing their Departments and their societies in general. In the Department of Social Protection, staff of the following grades are invited to apply for a place on the School; Staff Officer, Executive Officer, Higher Executive Officer and Administrative Officer. All administration in relation to the Summer School is managed by a small team of staff in both Departments who liaise regularly.

The Department does not have any unit dealing exclusively with co-operation with Northern Ireland. Officers contact Northern authorities as required as part of their normal responsibilities. Given the manner in which contacts with Northern Ireland take place and the wide number of people involved it would not be possible to quantify the actual staff numbers and time involved.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

587. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will outline the position, whereby a person who is in receipt of widow's contributory pension, can participate on a community employment scheme; if such participation will affect their entitlement to the widow's contributory pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48563/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A person of 25 years of age or over who is currently in receipt of Widow's/Widower's Contributory or Non-Contributory Pension for a minimum of 12 months is eligible to participate on the Community Employment (CE) programme, as per the published eligibility criteria.

From 16th January 2012, new participants on CE schemes will not be able to simultaneously claim their original social welfare payment and a Community Employment allowance, as per section 12 of the Social Welfare Act 2011. This measure affects those in receipt of the following payments commencing CE after that date:

One Parent Family Payment

Deserted Wife's Benefit

Widow(er)s Pension (Contributory or Non-Contributory)

Illness Benefit

Disability Allowance

Invalidity Pension

Blind Pension

These new CE participants will receive payments directly via the CE scheme at a rate equivalent to their original social welfare payment (including any increase for a qualified adult and/or child dependants) plus an additional €20 CE participation bonus.

New participants are defined as those persons who, with effect from 16th January 2012, have not been employed on a CE scheme in the 12 months prior to commencing the current CE placement.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

588. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding rent allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48593/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has reduced his rent to the limit applicable to his circumstances which is €670.00 per month. A rent supplement has now been awarded and the client is in receipt of his entitlement in full based on his current household circumstances. An exceptional needs payment has also been issued regarding the deposit required.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

589. **Deputy John Perry** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on an invalidity appeal in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48599/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 19th September 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Disability Allowance Appeals

590. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48620/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 4th February 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 11th July 2012 and the case has been referred to an Appeals Officer who will hold an oral hearing in the next four weeks.

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.

Pension Fund Fees

591. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if it is possible for her to legislate to ensure that pension charges are kept low for those in pension schemes (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48624/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Report on Pension Charges which I published last week was undertaken by my Department with support from the Central Bank and Pensions Board. The primary objective of the report was to gather information on the level of pension charges levied, to assess whether these charges are reasonable and transparent, to report on the findings and to make recommendations.

The report highlights a wide range of issues in relation to pension charges and identifies a number of serious problems. It is fully recognised that the provision of pension schemes cannot be cost free. However, there are major challenges to be addressed in the two main areas of reasonableness and transparency of charges.

The report is a fact finding report and comments from interested parties and stakeholders are being invited over a 3 month period (i.e. by the end of January 2013). These responses will be considered and a further policy and regulatory response, if considered necessary, will be brought to Government.

In recent years a number of initiatives have been progressed at Irish and EU level which focused on the area of disclosure and transparency of pension charges. These initiatives included the publication of the revised Consumer Protection Code by the Central Bank in 2012 and the recent consultation paper by the Pensions Board on pension simplification. At EU level, my Department will be monitoring development across a range of proposals which are currently under consideration and will be progressed during 2013. The outcome of these developments will inform the regulatory framework in Ireland.

On the broader pension policy front, the report clearly identifies the importance of economies of scale in driving down charges. At present the OECD is conducting a review of longer term pension policy and will comment on key policy issues such as the possible introduction of an auto-enrolment pension scheme for all employees which could have a major impact on reducing charges.

Carer's Allowance Applications

592. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding

an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48635/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the Department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 5th June 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Applications

593. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Meath. [48643/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the Department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on 29th March 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Applications

594. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a carer's allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be processed; the reason for the delay in processing the application; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48646/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the Department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on 8th March 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

595. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal for invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48664/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 29th August 2012. As the appeal was received via the Local Office the necessary submission and case papers were also received and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Disability Allowance Appeals

596. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal for disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9; and if she could expedite a decision on same. [48680/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 20th March 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 27th July 2012 and the case has been referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

597. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9; and if she will expedite on same. [48683/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the Department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on 18th January 2012. This application was referred to one of the Department's medical assessors who found that the caree in question was not medically eligible for carer's allowance. A letter issued on 17th July 2012 refusing the allowance. The person in question subsequently submitted further medical evidence for review on the 5th August 2012. This medical evidence is awaiting medical assessment by a medical assessor. On completion of all the necessary investigations as part of this review, a decision will be made and the person in question will be contacted directly with the outcome.

Pension Provisions

598. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will guarantee that no cuts will be made to State Pension Contributory and noncontributory to prevent pensioners from the risk of poverty considering that the average pensioner is just above the poverty line with the current provision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48687/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Deputy will be aware that the State pension is a very valuable benefit and that the sustainability of the State pension system is even more essential in our current difficult fiscal climate.

In this context, is important to note the significant long term challenges facing the Irish pension system. There are currently six people of working age for every pensioner and this ratio is expected to decrease to approximately two to one by 2050. People aged 65 years and over will account for a greater proportion of the population while the proportion of working age is expected to decline. People are living longer with healthier lives, and while this is a welcome development, it does have obvious and significant implications in relation to the future costs of State pension provision. Therefore, the task of financing increasing pensions will fall to a diminishing share of the population.

In relation to the current adequacy of pensioner incomes, it should be noted that this group have the lowest consistent poverty rate and are least likely to be at risk of poverty due to the adequacy of the State pension, compared to the rest of the population. Between 2004 and 2010, consistent poverty for those aged over 65 decreased from 3.3% to 0.9%. The at risk of poverty rate for people in that age group fell from 27.1% to 9.6% over the same period.

In relation to budgetary measures, the revised estimates for my Department provide for expenditure in 2012 of nearly €6.26 billion on pensions or 30.4% of total expenditure. The Comprehensive Expenditure Report 2012 – 2014 published by Government last December provides for additional new expenditure reduction measures of €540 million to be achieved in Budget 2013. Reducing overall expenditure in 2013 and beyond in line with these targets will be very challenging.

The Government will consider the appropriate level of expenditure on pensions in 2013 in the context of the forthcoming Budget. The outcome will be announced on Budget Day.

Carer's Allowance Applications

599. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9; and if she will expedite the matter. [48695/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the Department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on 6th July 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

600. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11. [48697/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the Department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on 28th July 2012. The person concerned was refused carer's allowance on the grounds that the care recipient is not so disabled as to require full time care and attention as prescribed in regulations. She was notified of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review or appeal. Additional medical evidence was received and forwarded to the Department's medical assessor for consideration. However, this information did not alter the opinion of the medical assessor and the decision remained unchanged. The person concerned appealed this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office and submitted additional medical evidence in support of the appeal. This information has been forwarded to the medical assessor for further consideration. If the outcome remains unchanged a submission will be prepared and her file and papers will be forwarded to the Social Welfare Appeals Office for determination.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

601. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9.

[48698/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This application was originally refused on medical grounds in December 2011. The decision was then appealed and the file was sent to the Social Welfare Appeals Office on January 16th 2012. Following consideration of all the available evidence, an appeals officer has made a determination in this case to disallow the appeal. Accordingly, the decision to refuse carer's allowance stands.

A letter issued from the Social Welfare Appeals Office to the person in question on 18th October 2012 with all the relevant details.

Back to Education Allowance Eligibility

602. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review her decision to refuse back to education allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) on the basis that their proposed choice of accredited study is of a lower qualification than they already hold; her views on whether applicants should in a global labour market environment of work and career flexibility, have the option of pursuing studies that lead to an alternative career path.; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48701/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was refused Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) on the basis of not progressing in the level of education held by him. The person concerned was notified of this decision on 29th August 2012. Following a review of his circumstances on 1st September, the decision to disallow the claim has been upheld.

BTEA is a second chance education opportunities scheme designed to remove the barriers to participation in second and third level education by enabling those in receipt of certain social welfare payments to continue to receive a payment while pursuing an approved full-time education course that leads to a higher qualification than that already held. A person wishing to pursue the BTEA scheme will have to satisfy a number of conditions such as being a certain age, in receipt of a prescribed social welfare payment for a specified time period, pursuing a full time course of study leading to a recognised qualification in a recognised college and progressing in the level of education held by the client with reference to the national framework of qualifications among others.

Progression in education is a condition which is not unique to BTEA, indeed State support for education purposes is grounded on a student progressing from one qualification level to a higher one. This is necessary to ensure displacement does not occur, in that courses could be offered to students who are not progressing at the cost of students progressing from a lower education level. BTEA guidelines are, in the main, in line with the mechanisms in place for similar student supports administered by the Department of Education and Skills and require student progression from one qualification level to a higher one. Furthermore, the BTEA scheme is not intended to be an alternative form of funding for people entering or re-entering the third level education system.

Departmental Staff Numbers

603. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49077/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The only areas of my Department where staff attend on a roster basis are the Operations and Control sections of the Department's IT Division. The roster arrangements are necessary to facilitate overnight processing of claims, generation of payments to the Department's customers and ongoing maintenance of the Department's various IT systems.

There are no plans to change the existing arrangements in respect of the areas in question.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

604. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49089/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): One member of staff in my Department, the Chief Medical Advisor, has been rehired on a temporary contract following retirement. Payment of his pension is abated pending the termination of his temporary contract.

In addition, the acting Deputy Chief Medical Advisor has been retained, on a temporary basis, beyond his normal retirement age. Payment of his pension is suspended pending the termination of his temporary retention.

The decision to re-employ the Chief Medical Advisor and to retain the acting Deputy Chief Medical Advisor was taken due to their specific skills and experience, the difficulty and long lead-in time for replacing such skills, and the critical importance of ensuring continuity and a high level of service to customers of the Department.

Following an open competition, the Pensions Board, which is under the aegis of my Department, employed, on temporary contracts, two people who were previously employed by An Garda Síochána and who are in receipt of Garda pensions. Abatement of pension does not apply in respect of retired members of An Garda Síochána who subsequently take up public sector employment.

Departmental Expenditure

605. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the annual saving to the Exchequer of shared services between Gaeltacht programme organisations which receive core funding from his Department, Údarás na Gaeltachta or Foras na Gaeilge. [47264/12]

606. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the annual saving to the Exchequer of shared offices between Gaeltacht programme organisations which receive core funding from the Department, Údarás na Gaeltachta or Foras na Gaeilge. [47265/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): I propose to take Questions Nos. 605 and 606 together.

The aim of my Department, given the fiscal constraints in operation at the moment, is to ensure value for money in the delivery of the various services provided by my Department, by Údarás na Gaeltachta and by Foras na Gaeilge. In the context of significantly reduced staff numbers and reduced budgets, there is a need for greater efficiency in the delivery of these

services.

My officials are at present examining the respective roles of my Department and Údarás na Gaeltachta in the Gaeltacht. This is being undertaken as a result of the Gaeltacht Act 2012 which gives effect to a Government decision that Údarás na Gaeltachta will be responsible for the implementation of the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* in the Gaeltacht. It is my intention that this will drive greater efficiency in service delivery in the Gaeltacht.

In addition, Foras na Gaeilge is undertaking a review of its 19 core funded bodies. It is envisaged that this review will result in a reconfiguration of the Irish language sector. Since Foras na Gaeilge is an agency of the North South Language Body, which is co-funded by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland, decisions with regard to this review are taken by the North South Ministerial Council.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

607. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case [47288/12]

618. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49081/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 607 and 618 together.

As I have previously advised the House, a retired schoolteacher works as a Special Adviser in my Department, at a salary, following abatement, of €38,216 per annum.

I am also advised that Údarás na Gaeltachta currently employs a retired solicitor on a ten month contract which is due to expire on 31st December 2012. The overall cost of this contract will be €39,438. It should be noted that the former CEO of Údarás na Gaeltachta was also engaged as interim CEO of that body for a four month period which ended on 30th April 2012 at a cost of €20,916. I am advised that the abatement principle has also been applied in these cases.

School Curriculum

608. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will consider engaging with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Department of Education and Skills as part of preparation for the Decade of Commemoration to assess if the history curricula at primary and secondary level reflects in a balanced way the events of the years 1912 to 1922; if he expects similar engagements by his UK and Northern Ireland counterpart in relation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47736/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The Deputy will be aware that curriculum issues are matters within the statutory remit of my colleague, the Minister for Education and Skills

It is anticipated that the commemorative arrangements for the Decade of Centenaries will stimulate wide interest in the history of the period. The development of the official commemo-

rative programme is supported by an Advisory Group of distinguished historians, chaired by Dr Maurice Manning. I understand that this group is engaged with the Department of Education and Skills in relation to curriculum development for Transition Year students, enhanced access to archives and records, and special initiatives to promote historical research. The opportunity for joint or complementary initiatives within the commemorative framework is constantly under review with Ministerial colleagues in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Famine Artefacts

609. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his public policy in relation to the identification, collection and storage of artifacts relating to the great famine; if the National Museum of Ireland has within its possession materials of this nature; if it can quantify the number of such artifacts that it holds; if it is in possession of a catalogue or inventory of significant famine related items held in county museums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47883/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I am advised by the National Museum of Ireland that it collects material of national and regional importance where a connection with the Great Famine is verifiable. I understand that the Museum is in possession of a number of objects relating to the Famine that are categorised broadly into 12 collections. The Deputy will appreciate, however, that these are day-to-day operational matters for the Museum and, accordingly, if he so wishes, I will be happy to facilitate a briefing for him from the Acting Director.

I am advised that the Museum does not have a list or catalogue of Famine-related material in county museums.

Commemorative Events

610. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his plans for the future development of the National Famine Memorial Day; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47884/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The Deputy will be aware that, as Chair of the National Famine Commemoration Committee, I am responsible for ensuring on behalf of the Government that appropriate arrangements are in place to commemorate the Great Irish Famine. Details of the work of the National Famine Commemoration Committees since 2008 in implementing a varied and diverse annual programme of events to coincide with the National Famine Commemoration are available on the relevant pages of my Department's website at <http://www.ahg.gov.ie/en/NationalFamineCommemoration2012/> .

The National Famine Commemoration rotates between the four provinces of Ireland and this year the National Famine Commemoration will take place in Munster. In this regard, I have introduced a new selection process to determine the location of the National Famine Commemoration in 2013. This process will also be used to determine the locations for future commemorations. In line with this process, I have invited the County and City Councils in Munster to submit expressions of interest and proposals setting out possible locations where the ceremony might be held following consultation with local communities, interest groups and other stakeholders. The purpose of this new selection process is to generate public awareness and interest in the annual National Famine Commemoration, to increase the number of potential sites available to choose from each year and to ensure that the selection process is as transparent

and open as possible. A sub-committee of the National Famine Commemoration Committee will assess these proposals and will recommend the most suitable site. I expect to announce the date and location of the commemoration following the sub-Committee's assessment.

The Deputy should also note that in line with previous years, an international event has been planned to commemorate the Great Irish Famine. In this regard, the 2013 International Commemoration of the Great Irish Famine will take place on Sunday, 25th August, in Sydney, Australia.

Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge

611. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist aige aon athruithe a dhéanamh ar théarmaí Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge don bhliain 2013, téarmaí airgid san áireamh agus má tá, cén uair a fhógróidh sé aon athruithe atá i gceist aige a dhéanamh, ó tharla go bhfuil an cheist seo práinneach anois mar go bhfuil cinntí déanta nó á ndéanamh ag na Coláistí don bhliain 2013; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [48195/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Tá an cheist maidir leis an soláthar airgid a bheidh ar fáil do mo Roinnse in 2013 á phlé leis an Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe faoi láthair mar chuid den ghnáth-phróiseas meastacháin. Is i gcomhthéacs an phróisis sin a dhéanfar cinntí sonracha maidir le téarmaí airgid Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge in 2013.

Is féidir leis an Teachta a bheith cinnte, ar ndóigh, go dtuigim go maith an tábhacht a bhaineann leis an scéim áirithe seo don Ghaeltacht agus don Ghaeilge agus go gcuirfear an méid sin san áireamh mar chuid den phróiseas seo.

Mar is eol don Teachta, is scátheagraíocht é CONCOS do na coláistí Gaeilge agus bíonn comhoibriú luachmhar idir mo Roinnse agus CONCOS a chuireann go mór le feidhmiú agus le forbairt na gcoláistí Gaeilge. Cuirfear pé moltaí a thagann ó CONCOS maidir le forbairt na gcoláistí Gaeilge san áireamh go cuí freisin.

Coimisiún Logainmneacha

612. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén uair a bhfuil sé i gceist aige Coimisiún Logainmneacha nua a cheapadh; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [48196/12]

613. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén líon daoine atá ag obair i mBrainse na Logainmneacha sa Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta, an é an líon céanna é a bhí ag obair ann sa bhliain 2009; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [48197/12]

614. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén uair a cheapfar stiúrthóir nua ar Bhrainse na Logainmneacha ina Roinn; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [48198/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Tá i gceist agam Ceisteanna Uimh 612 go 614 a thógáil le chéile.

Mar is eol don Teachta, d'fhoilsigh an Rialtas a Phlean um Athchóiriú na Seirbhíse Poiblí ar

an 17 Samhain 2011. Nótáiltear sa Phlean sin go gcreideann an Rialtas go dtiocfaidh buntáiste ceart as tírdhreach riaracháin nach mbeidh chomh plódaithe agus, dá réir, go mbeidh freagracht dhaonlathach níos mó mar thoradh air sin, chomh maith le níos lú dúblála agus línte níos soiléire freagrachta do shaoránaigh. Sa chomhthéacs seo, tá dianscrúdú déanta ag mo Roinnse ar struchtúr agus ar fheidhmiú na n-institiúidí atá áirithe sa Phlean um Athchóiriú na Seirbhíse Poiblí, lena n-áirítear athbhreithniú grinn ar an gCoimisiún Logainmneacha.

Ba é toradh an athbhreithnithe sin ná, tar éis dul in éag théarma oifige an Choimisiúin Logainmneacha reatha, go bhfuil i gceist coiste saineolaithe de idir seachtar agus deichniúr ball - a bheidh ag feidhmiú ar bhonn *pro bono* agus a bheidh á gceapadh ag an Aire - a chur ina áit. Tíocfaidh an coiste saineolaithe le chéile ar bhonn ráithiúil agus déanfar an chuid is mó d'obair an choiste ar líne. Meastar go dtógfaidh na hathchóirithe seo ar an dea-obair atá déanta go dtí seo ag an gCoimisiún agus go mbeidh breis éifeachtúlachtaí mar thoradh orthu. Tá oifigigh mo Roinne ag obair i láthair na huairé ar chritéir a fhorbairt don choiste nua agus táthar ag súil go mbeifear ag lorg léirithe spéise sna seachtainí atá amach romhainn.

Tá seisear ball foirne i mbun oibre i mBrainse Logainmneacha mo Roinne i láthair na huairé, ar a n-áirítear an Príomhoifigeach Logainmneacha. Seisear ball foirne a bhí ag obair sa Bhrainse ag deireadh 2009 freisin.

Glacaim leis go bhfuil an Teachta ag tagairt i gCeist Uimh XX don Phríomhoifigeach Logainmneacha. Ní thagann aon cheist aníos i láthair na huairé maidir le Príomhoifigeach Logainmneacha nua a cheapadh sa Bhrainse.

Northern Ireland Issues

615. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48539/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): North South co-operation is a strategic priority of my Department, in particular in the context of the Good Friday Agreement. My Department has two North South Implementation Bodies under its remit - Waterways Ireland and An Foras Teanga. The latter Body comprises Foras na Gaeilge (with the responsibility of promoting the Irish language in every aspect of everyday life throughout the island of Ireland) and the Ulster Scots Agency/Tha Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch (with the responsibility of promoting the Ulster-Scots language and culture, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island of Ireland). Waterways Ireland is responsible for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of the inland navigable waterway system throughout the island, principally for recreational purposes.

These North South Bodies are co-funded and co-sponsored with the Department of Arts, Culture and Leisure, Northern Ireland. In addition to the language and inland waterways sectors, the Deputy will be aware that there is ongoing North South engagement in a number of other areas of my Department, some of which also come within the remit of the Department of Arts, Culture and Leisure. These include arts, culture, museums galleries and commemorations, as well as co-operation in relation to built and natural heritage and other environmental matters.

I and officials of my Department are directly involved in frequent North South engagement at both formal and informal levels, up to and including the highest levels. The most recent engagement was at the plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council on Friday last, 2 November in Armagh. The ongoing engagement involves a variety of officers in my Department across the range of activities involved, in addition to those dealing specifically with the North South Bodies mentioned.

My Department's staff complement for An Foras Teanga comprises 5 officers (viz. Director 25%, PO 25%, AP 80%, HEO 100% and CO 100%). A North South Co-operation Unit has been in place in my Department since its establishment. The 2 staff members working full-time in the Unit also have responsibility for Waterways Ireland. The Unit is overseen by a Principal Officer (25%), who also has a number of other responsibilities.

Special Protection Areas Appeals

616. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the exact number of appeals received by his Department from land owners in the six designated special protection areas in County Donegal which were designated in 2011; the number of appeals that were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48594/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): For the purposes of this Question, I am referring to the Special Protection Areas for corncrake, proposed for designation, in County Donegal in 2011.

Some 260 informal, or Stage 1, objections were received from landowners and others concerning these sites. Of these, 18 were found to be invalid. Some 13 of the remaining 242 valid objections were successful or partly successful. A total of 229 were unsuccessful and some 137 of these have opted to lodge formal, or Stage 2, objections to the Designated Area Appeals Advisory Board. The Board has not completed its consideration of any of these objections.

Public Sector Staff Issues

617. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49068/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): A number of staff from the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department comprising conservation rangers, guides and general operatives work on a rostered basis to facilitate public access to national parks and nature reserves at weekends.

In addition, a number of the National Cultural Institutions funded from my Department's Vote Group have agreed rostering systems in place so that facilities are available to the public both at weekends and on certain late evenings. Rostered staff include attendants, shop assistants, library assistants, learning and outreach officers, and cleaners.

Lock keepers from Waterways Ireland also work a rostered week, which varies according to the regions in which the lock keeper is based.

I am advised that the roster arrangements in place both in my Department and in the bodies funded from my Department's Vote Group are working well and there are no plans to change them at present.

Question No. 618 answered with Question No. 607.

Energy Conservation

619. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his attention has been drawn to the fact that according to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland at least 20%, €100 million, savings in energy use could be made in the public sector through proven management and technology solutions; his views on whether such savings should be made urgently in major cost areas such as waste water treatment, public lighting, public buildings and transport efficiencies by requiring the public sector to participate in targeted energy efficiency programmes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47707/12]

626. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to require all public sector bodies to implement targeted energy efficiency programmes immediately; and his views on whether an annual saving of €100 million in the public sector energy bill could be made within two years. [47566/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources(Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 619 and 626 together.

The current National Energy Efficiency Action Plan was published in May 2009, and outlined the framework for delivering Ireland's energy efficiency targets, including a 33% reduction in public sector energy consumption by 2020. The second Action Plan, which I will be publishing shortly, provides a progress report on delivery of the national energy savings targets. The Action Plan will show that Ireland is on track to deliver the 20% energy saving target.

The public sector is estimated to spend around €600 million per annum on energy. Achieving our 33% savings target for the public sector would save in the region of €150 million each year. The top 135 public bodies, which account for over 95% of public sector energy consumption, are required to submit detailed energy and activity data to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). From this data, detailed progress scorecards will be produced and published for each organisation. From 2013 on, an online energy data system will facilitate all public bodies, including schools and healthcare facilities, to report detailed energy data and allow SEAI to prepare detailed performance scorecards for all public bodies.

In September I wrote to the head of each public body, reminding them of their obligation to report annually their energy usage to SEAI. Enclosed with each letter was the SEAI report: 'Energy Use in the Public Sector', which outlines savings achieved across the public sector to end-2010 amounted to 650 GWh.

The SEAI Public Sector Programme is a comprehensive support framework to assist public bodies in meeting the 33% energy saving target by integrating energy management practices across organisations. While the Programme comprises four main elements including Monitoring and Reporting, Best Practice and Procurement, the flagship element is the Partnership Agreement, which provides tailored support delivered to those organisations who demonstrate commitment to strategic energy management. So far fourteen leading public bodies, with a combined annual energy spend of more than €200 million, have committed to Partnership Agreements that are anticipated to deliver cumulative energy savings of €330 million by 2020. My objective is to encourage other public bodies to join this initiative and demonstrate their commitment and leadership in realising significant energy savings.

As the above indicates, considerable progress with accompanying savings is being made

in energy efficiency in the public sector. This effort will be intensified in the coming years. Achievement of €100m savings in just 2 years would require considerable appropriate investment by public bodies at a level which may not be realistic in the current financial climate. Nevertheless, the Deputies can be assured of my strong commitment to realising the goals we have set for energy efficiency in the public sector.

More recently, Better Energy Workplaces evaluates new approaches for implementing sustainable energy upgrades to existing facilities in the public, commercial, industrial and community sectors. By accelerating the scale and depth of retrofit across these sectors the programme aims to create energy efficiency exemplar projects. The scheme disbursed €11 million in grants in 2011, co-financed 85 projects and supported 250 jobs. This year the Better Energy Workplaces Fund has offered support to 145 projects – 44 of which are in the public sector. This scheme has developed public sector and market competence and capacity for pay-as-you-save type models.

Finally, the recently adopted Energy Efficiency Directive will translate elements of the European Efficiency Plan into binding measures on Member States, including an annual rate of renovation for central Government buildings of 3%; an inventory of central Government buildings with a total useful floor area over certain thresholds; and an obligation on public bodies to procure products, services and buildings with high energy efficient performance. The 3% renovation target for central Government buildings represents a challenge for the Office of Public Works (OPW), however, the energy savings will greatly outweigh the costs of renovation. My Department will work closely with the OPW over the coming months to prepare a plan for the realisation of this target.

Inland Fisheries Issues

620. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will examine the feasibility of a salmon hatchery on the River Feale in County Kerry; the potential to rejuvenate salmon fish stocks and the potential economic benefits such a project would have; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48164/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): I have been advised by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) that, along with other major salmon rivers in Ireland, the River Feale contains a genetically unique population of salmon. Best scientific advice, both nationally and internationally, indicates that the introduction of a salmon hatchery operation into a wild salmon fishery can reduce the ability of the genetically distinct native strain to survive and results in the loss of their adaptability to their catchment.

The advice also indicates that the issue of decline of salmon stocks in a particular catchment, leaving aside the international issue of survival at sea, is best dealt with through improvements in water quality and salmon habitat.

Stocking, for conservation purposes, in cases where artificial intervention is required to maintain the genetically distinct salmon strain under threat, could be considered.

This is not the case, however, in the River Feale whose salmon stock is above the Conservation Limit particular to its own unique stock and which has an annual surplus of salmon available for exploitation. Nevertheless, I do recognise recent concerns over the longer term decline in salmon numbers on the River Feale, and understand from IFI that efforts are being made to monitor these stocks, quantify any stock variations and to establish and address potential rea-

sons for a decline.

In this regard a survey of the juvenile salmon population, planned for the Feale in 2013, will allow the juvenile salmon stock status to be assessed against baseline surveys carried over the past 20 years. Once the Feale salmon stock assessment has been analysed any remedial action necessary can then be considered.

Energy Conservation

621. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will review a decision on a Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland grant application under the better energy communities pilot 2012 scheme in respect of an organisation (details supplied) in County Kerry that was recently declined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48180/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Better Energy Communities Pilot 2012 was launched in July 2012 with a goal of stimulating, supporting and testing innovative approaches to delivering energy performance improvements at a community level. It was specifically seeking to test innovative and pioneering partnerships for delivery by building on existing community groups/networks within the Community rather than targeting individual homeowners or businesses.

The Pilot stimulated a high level of interest from community groups and other organisations around the country. It was a very competitive call and received applications for funding well in excess of the €3 million that was made available.

The application from Glenbeigh Community Centre requested 100% funding, and although the maximum funding levels were not defined in the call, the maximum grant awarded under the pilot was 80%.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) reviewed the project against the published evaluation criteria using a standardised evaluation form. A minimum overall pass mark of 50% was required in order to be eligible for funding. Unfortunately, the application from Glenbeigh Community Centre did not achieve the minimum pass mark and so has been declined for funding under the Pilot. SEAI would be very happy to provide further feedback to the applicant on the areas in which the project scored poorly and to identify opportunities for it to be improved.

Should funding be allocated for a full scale Communities Programme in 2013, it is hoped that Glenbeigh Community Centre would give it their consideration.

Inland Fisheries Issues

622. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will update Dáil Éireann on the condition of fishery sites (details supplied) and the impact of a separate oyster fishery on the condition of these sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48650/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I am advised that the oyster fishery and other fisheries and aquaculture activities in Lough Swilly, are currently the subject of an appropriate assessment (AA) under Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive. This assessment, which, in common with a range of assessments nationally,

is being undertaken by the Marine Institute (MI), and will identify the impacts of the fishery on the conservation objectives for habitats and species for which the site is designated in the Directive.

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) and MI assisted the Lough Swilly Oyster Society to develop a 5-year oyster fishery plan/proposal early in 2012, to facilitate the “appropriate assessment” of the oyster fishery. This included measures to control naturalised pacific oyster and separate measures to restore native oyster beds in areas in which they were previously common.

I am advised that the Marine Institute are to complete the AA before end of 2012 and they will then forward the assessment to the relevant authorities, including IFI. It is expected that the assessment will be published before year end.

Radio Spectrum Management

623. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his Department together with its sectoral regulator Comreg, has commenced the bid/auction stage of the Multiband Spectrum award process and if he anticipates that any Revenue will accrue to the Exchequer in the current financial year. [47277/12]

627. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the advantages and uses that the frequencies and spectrum vacated by the analogue TV services will now be used for; the benefits to the State in technical advances and in money terms that he expects to accrue over the next ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47615/12]

628. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he has been briefed by ComReg on whether the 4G auction and bidding for spectrum has begun; when the process will be completed; his views on whether, in effect, two networks are competing for four spectrum blocks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47634/12]

629. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when 4G services will be made available here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47635/12]

631. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if there been any consideration of investing the proceeds of the auction of the 28 blocks of spectrum frequencies by ComReg into capital projects in his Department such as broadband infrastructure, green energy or retrofitting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47660/12]

633. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the minimum expected yield from the auction of spectrum frequencies by ComReg if all 28 blocks are sold; the projected yield; if the moneys will be retained by ComReg, returned to his Department or returned to the Central Fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47667/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 623, 627 to 629, inclusive, 631 and 633 together.

The management of the radio spectrum is a statutory function of the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) under the Communications Regulation Act, 2002 as amend-

ed.

I am advised by ComReg that the 800MHz spectrum which was allocated for use in broadcasting analogue television signals, until 24 October 2012, is included in ComReg's Multi-Band Spectrum Award which is currently under way.

This award process, initiated by the publication by ComReg of the Information Memorandum on 25 May 2012, is a vital step in allowing for the next generation of advance mobile services to be made available for Irish consumers and businesses. Roll out of 4G is one of the key elements of the Government's National Broadband Plan, which I published in August. This Plan aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed services of at least 30Mbps are available to all of our citizens and businesses well in advance of the EU's target date of 2020.

The level of spectrum fees that will be generated by the Multi-Band Spectrum Award process will be determined by the eventual level of demand expressed in the auction. I am, therefore, not in a position to speculate on the amounts that will be generated.

Regarding the date of rollout of 4G services, this will be a matter for the relevant telecommunications companies.

The Communications Regulation Act 2002, as amended, provides that licence fee income received by ComReg is paid by it into the Exchequer after provision is made for the operating expenses of ComReg. There is no statutory basis to utilise the revenue directly to fund capital projects. The capital programmes of Government Departments, including my own Department, are generally funded from central Exchequer resources.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

624. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47290/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): One member of staff who retired from my Department has been rehired since March 2011, on a short term assignment. The cost of this assignment, which is not significant, has yet to be fully determined but the normal abatement rules will apply. I will let the Deputy know the cost once it becomes available.

Question No. 625 withdrawn.

Energy Conservation

626. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to require all public sector bodies to implement targeted energy efficiency programmes immediately; and his views on whether an annual saving of €100 million in the public sector energy bill could be made within two years. [47566/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 626 and 619 together.

The current National Energy Efficiency Action Plan was published in May 2009, and outlined the framework for delivering Ireland's energy efficiency targets, including a 33% reduction in public sector energy consumption by 2020. The second Action Plan, which I will be publishing shortly, provides a progress report on delivery of the national energy savings targets. The Action Plan will show that Ireland is on track to deliver the 20% energy saving target.

The public sector is estimated to spend around €600 million per annum on energy. Achieving our 33% savings target for the public sector would save in the region of €150 million each year. The top 135 public bodies, which account for over 95% of public sector energy consumption, are required to submit detailed energy and activity data to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). From this data, detailed progress scorecards will be produced and published for each organisation. From 2013 on, an online energy data system will facilitate all public bodies, including schools and healthcare facilities, to report detailed energy data and allow SEAI to prepare detailed performance scorecards for all public bodies.

In September I wrote to the head of each public body, reminding them of their obligation to report annually their energy usage to SEAI. Enclosed with each letter was the SEAI report: 'Energy Use in the Public Sector', which outlines savings achieved across the public sector to end-2010 amounted to 650 GWh.

The SEAI Public Sector Programme is a comprehensive support framework to assist public bodies in meeting the 33% energy saving target by integrating energy management practices across organisations. While the Programme comprises four main elements including Monitoring and Reporting, Best Practice and Procurement, the flagship element is the Partnership Agreement, which provides tailored support delivered to those organisations who demonstrate commitment to strategic energy management. So far fourteen leading public bodies, with a combined annual energy spend of more than €200 million, have committed to Partnership Agreements that are anticipated to deliver cumulative energy savings of €330 million by 2020. My objective is to encourage other public bodies to join this initiative and demonstrate their commitment and leadership in realising significant energy savings.

As the above indicates, considerable progress with accompanying savings is being made in energy efficiency in the public sector. This effort will be intensified in the coming years. Achievement of €100m savings in just 2 years would require considerable appropriate investment by public bodies at a level which may not be realistic in the current financial climate. Nevertheless, the Deputies can be assured of my strong commitment to realising the goals we have set for energy efficiency in the public sector.

More recently, Better Energy Workplaces evaluates new approaches for implementing sustainable energy upgrades to existing facilities in the public, commercial, industrial and community sectors. By accelerating the scale and depth of retrofit across these sectors the programme aims to create energy efficiency exemplar projects. The scheme disbursed €11 million in grants in 2011, co-financed 85 projects and supported 250 jobs. This year the Better Energy Workplaces Fund has offered support to 145 projects – 44 of which are in the public sector. This scheme has developed public sector and market competence and capacity for pay-as-you-save type models.

Finally, the recently adopted Energy Efficiency Directive will translate elements of the European Efficiency Plan into binding measures on Member States, including an annual rate of renovation for central Government buildings of 3%; an inventory of central Government buildings with a total useful floor area over certain thresholds; and an obligation on public bodies to procure products, services and buildings with high energy efficient performance. The 3% renovation target for central Government buildings represents a challenge for the Office of Public

Works (OPW), however, the energy savings will greatly outweigh the costs of renovation. My Department will work closely with the OPW over the coming months to prepare a plan for the realisation of this target.

Questions Nos. 627 to 629, inclusive, answered with Question No. 623.

Radio Spectrum Management

630. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding spectrum sharing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47636/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The management of Ireland's radio spectrum is the responsibility of the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg). As the national regulatory authority for the management of our radio spectrum, ComReg has set out its position on spectrum sharing when it published its latest strategy statement for managing the radio spectrum in November 2011 and subsequently in Document 12/52 relating to the Multiband Spectrum Release Decision. In its Strategy ComReg notes the recent trend towards increased collaboration between operators in the provision of wireless/mobile services. There are various drivers for this, including operators' desire to reduce costs and/or provide a higher quality of service to consumers by using their combined resources. There are many forms of collaboration and the benefits and drawbacks of each type will vary depending on the specifics of the collaboration.

ComReg is of the view that spectrum sharing and pooling can, in principle, bring benefits such as reduced costs and improved quality of service. At the same time, ComReg is aware of the potential policy concerns, particularly in relation to competition. Each case would have to be judged on its merits. ComReg has however indicated that it would look more favourably on agreements that do not overly restrict competition and deliver demonstrable benefits that are shared with final consumers.

Question No. 631 answered with Question No. 623.

Broadband Services Provision

632. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the grants being provided to broadband suppliers to ensure that their services are connecting to schools in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47661/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The national roll-out of the 100Mp/s to post primary schools project, led by my Department in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills, will be completed over three stages with 202 schools, being connected in 2012, a further 200 being connected in 2013 and the remaining 250 schools being connected in 2014.

Expenditure on this project is not in the form of grants. All contracts are awarded following a competitive tendering process (in line with public procurement rules) and payments are only made on satisfactory completion of contractual obligations. In 2012 it is expected that service providers will be paid approximately €2m by my Department for the provision of services.

Under the separate Schools Broadband Access Programme the Department of Education and Skills provides for the supply of Internet connectivity for all recognised primary schools

and those post primary schools not connected under the 100Mbit/s programme to date. The latter schools will be upgraded to 100Mbit/s as my Department's scheme is progressively rolled out as set out above.

Question No. 633 answered with Question No. 623.

Energy Regulation

634. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the action he will take to curb the uncertified and unregulated gas boiler installers here (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47696/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Energy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 confers on the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) specific functions in the area of safety regulation of the natural gas industry. The legislation provides for natural gas installers to be registered as a Registered Gas Installer (RGI). It is a legal requirement that any gas works carried out on domestic gas installations may be carried out only by a Registered Gas Installer. The CER intends to consult next year on a proposal to extend this requirement to the carrying out of gas works on commercial installations.

The CER discharges its gas safety responsibility through the implementation of a Natural Gas Safety Regulatory Framework. The Framework has been in operation for five years. Since 2009, it has included a system for the regulation, certification, ongoing inspection of work and investigation of complaints regarding the competence of any particular natural gas installer. The legislation provides for prosecution through the court system of unregistered gas installers. The CER has attained three successful prosecutions to date in cases where unregistered installers have completed domestic gas works.

It is the responsibility of the public to ensure that they engage only registered installers. The CER is responsible for promoting the safety of natural gas and may direct a natural gas undertaking to engage in campaigns promoting natural gas safety. Campaigns encourage consumers to use only registered installers for the completion of gas works in a domestic setting and highlight that it is a legal requirement for anyone carrying out domestic gas works to be a registered gas installer. The 2012 campaign utilised TV, radio, online display, and search engines to reach its target audience. The details of the 2013 campaign have yet to be finalised.

Safety is a matter of highest priority for the CER and the regulator is currently undertaking a review of the Framework with a view to maximising its effectiveness. An initial consultation paper was published over the summer period and a further consultation is due to be carried out over the coming months.

Finally, the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has significant responsibilities in regard to health and safety in the workplace including gas works carried out in a commercial setting.

Electricity Transmission Network

635. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the amount of money the delay in the commercial operation of Eirgrid's East West Interconnector will cost electricity consumers and the reason for this delay. [47758/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):

The East/West Interconnector (EWIC) connects the national transmission grid systems of Ireland and Britain. It has been constructed on time and within budget.

As with any major, complex project using purpose-built technology, comprehensive testing is necessary in relation to the Interconnector. Recent tests have highlighted some issues with regard to localised incidents of noise interference with telephone lines. I understand from EirGrid that a programme of works involving EirGrid and its contractor is currently under way to address these issues. The start of commercial trading over the Interconnector has been deferred until such time as all of the localised issues are resolved.

I wish to emphasise that this issue relates to noise on some telephone lines in the vicinity of the interconnector and is not a health concern.

In relation to any costs arising from the delay in the commercial operation of the Interconnector, it should be noted that EirGrid has not yet taken over the Interconnector from the contractor which designed, manufactured and installed it, and intends to do so only when the interference issues have been satisfactorily addressed.

The figures previously supplied by EirGrid in an affidavit to the Commercial Court in unsuccessful legal proceedings taken by Rush Community Council related to the scenario in which EirGrid would have been prevented from operating the Interconnector due to a legal challenge, in which case all costs incurred and loss of revenue would have fallen to EirGrid and to Irish electricity customers. However, the current scenario is entirely different.

By way of conclusion, I wish to state that the Interconnector is a hugely significant step in delivering electricity connectivity between Ireland and the UK and towards lessening our isolation as an energy market. Any temporary issues will be resolved as soon as possible in order to allow the Interconnector operate at a level which allows it to benefit Irish electricity consumers.

Inland Fisheries Issues

636. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he has considered the feasibility of providing for a compensation scheme for eel fishermen following the prohibition of eel fishing; the efforts being made to provide for diversification schemes for those affected by the ban; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47851/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): I would draw the Deputy's attention to the questions I answered in this House on 2nd October and again on 11th October .

The International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES) advice is that the eel stock continued to decline in the period 2009 to 2011 and urgent action is needed. In 2011 ICES reiterated its previous advice that all anthropogenic mortality (e.g. recreational and commercial fishing, hydropower, pollution) affecting production and escapement of eels should be reduced to as close to zero as possible until there is clear evidence that both recruitment and the adult stock are increasing. In 2011, glass eel recruitment has fallen to 5% of their 1960-1979 level in the Atlantic region and less than 1% in the North Sea area, and showed no sign of recovery.

In Ireland, recruitment has been declining at many monitoring sites since the mid-1980s, for example in the 2000-2011 period, the glass eel catch in the Shannon was at 2% of the pre-1980 numbers. In summary, recruitment of glass eels and elvers remained low during the 2009 to 2011 period both in Ireland and across Europe.

In Ireland it is anticipated that there will be a considerable decline in silver eel production, as indicated by recruitment history, yellow eel stock indicators and modelled projections for index stocks. As part of Ireland's eel management regime, every three years, a review of the status of eel stocks is conducted, this coupled with input from stakeholders, supports the decision making process on the future of the commercial and recreational eel fishery. Inland Fisheries Ireland has just completed a full public consultation on the future of the commercial and recreation eel fishery; the recommendations from this review are being finalised.

Inland Fisheries Ireland has made a number of reports on eel stocks available on its website including The National Eel Stock Recovery Plan, The Status of Eel Stocks in Ireland and The Implementation of the Eel Management Plan for Ireland.

In 2009 the then Central and Regional Fisheries Boards (now Inland Fisheries Ireland – IFI) engaged with the eel fishermen representatives to investigate possible diversification schemes. I understand that a number of former eel fishermen were contracted by the ESB to undertake Trap and Transport operations to mitigate the impact of hydropower schemes as part of the eel management plan. As I already indicated the recommendations from IFI's review and the public consultation on the future of the commercial and recreation eel fishery are being finalised and the continuation of existing diversification activity will be considered in that process.

There is no property right attaching to public eel licences and consequently the issue of compensation does not arise, given that the closure of the fishery was applied for conservation reasons under the Fisheries Acts. Given that context and having regard to national economic circumstances, no provision has been made for compensation payments.

Television Reception

637. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will intervene and ensure that all households in County Kerry receive the quality television reception they deserve at the earliest possible date; has his attention been drawn to the fact that many households in County Kerry are now without a television reception due to the digital switchover to Saorview; if he will address this very difficult situation for hundreds of households in the county; his views on it being unfair to proceed with the switchover without in the first instance guaranteeing that all households would receive coverage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47978/12]

643. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide statistics regarding the progress of Saorview since its introduction on 24 October 2012 and in relation to areas of County Kerry where the existing TV transmission masts were decommissioned on that date; the number of residents in those areas where Saorview is not functioning, and saorsat option is on viable due to weather factors; if he will, in conjunction with RTÉ, address the deficiencies in the infrastructure and upgrade a retrofit of existing masts in these problematic areas. [48116/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 637 and 643 together.

As I explained to the Deputy in my reply to his question of 20th September, RTÉ has built, owns and controls the SAORVIEW TV network and is responsible for the roll-out, coverage and operation of that network. This includes information on transmitter sites being used. This is in accordance with Part 8 of the Broadcasting Act 2009, which provides that the development of the RTÉ network is an operational matter for RTÉ.

The SAORVIEW network is complete and is available to c. 98% of the population. It must be understood that it is impossible to cover 100% of the population by terrestrial means. Reasons for this include local topography for example. For technological reasons this is not going to change.

Furthermore, as also explained to the Deputy, I have been informed by RTÉNL that SAORVIEW has delivered a significant improvement in terrestrial coverage in both geographical and population coverage in County Kerry as set out in the following tables:

Geographical

Channel	Analogue Coverage	SAORVIEW Coverage	Increase
RTÉ One	75 % area	87%	12%
RTÉ Two	75% area	87%	12%
TV3	40% area	87%	47%
TG4	64% area	87%	23%

Population

Channel	Analogue Coverage	SAORVIEW Coverage	Increase
RTÉ One	90% population	95%	5%
RTÉ Two	90% population	95%	5%
TV3	44% population	95%	51%
TG4	75% population	95%	20%

In relation to SAORSAT in Co. Kerry, RTÉNL has organised training for installers. On October 1st ten installers attended a training course in Kerry. The course was open to any installer and the ones that attended were from areas such as Firies, Killorglin, Kenmare, Killarney, Cahersiveen, Beaufort, Waterville and Castleisland. It was demonstrated how SAORSAT works, the best dish type to use, how to fix the dish correctly and how to point it in the correct direction. On 22 October RTÉNL provided a demonstration of SAORSAT to about 60 attendees in Annascaul, County Kerry. Initial feedback from the meeting was positive. Should installers in Kerry have any difficulties installing SAORSAT, they should contact RTÉNL directly and RTÉNL will arrange the necessary training. Further information on SAORSAT is available on www.saorview.ie and www.rtenl.ie.

Exploration Licences Approvals

638. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when the offshore/onshore licences, in the Shell Corrib development, finally expire; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48074/12]

640. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the exploration or appraisal efforts that have been conducted in the geographical area known as the Corrib Gas field being developed by Shell; the proposals for further exploration in this area; if there are further finds or enhancements of oil or gas assets, will the Irish State find itself in the same revenue sharing position; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48076/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):

I propose to take Questions Nos. 638 and 640 together.

The Corrib Gas Partners are in receipt of a Petroleum Lease issued on 15 November 2001 pursuant to section 13 of the Petroleum and other Minerals Development Act, 1960, as amended. The duration of the Lease is 25 years but this can be extended with the agreement of the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources subject to terms and conditions, for example in circumstances such as where this were required in order to maximise production of the gas reserves.

The most recent appraisal activity carried out in the geographical area of the Corrib Gas Field is an Ocean Bottom Cable Seismic Survey to further refine the understanding of the Corrib Gas reservoir.

Profits from production of gas under the Corrib Petroleum Lease will be subject to corporate tax at a rate of 25%.

Offshore Exploration

639. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when he expect the Irish State to begin to receive net revenue from the Shell Corrib development; the monetary value expected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48075/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The principal direct financial return to the Exchequer from the Corrib gas field will be through the 25% tax that will apply to profits from the gas field. The level of profits will depend on a combination of factors including, the volume of recoverable gas, the cost of developing and operating the infrastructure, the price of gas over the life of the field, together with the timing and profile of production.

Completion of the Corrib gas field development works by the developer is the principal factor that will determine the date for first gas. Pending such completion, it is not possible to state a date for when gas from the Corrib gas field will become available. It is estimated that construction of the onshore section of the pipeline, including the construction of a 5km tunnel, which began last year, will take in the region of three years.

First gas cannot, therefore, reasonably be anticipated before the second half of 2014 and revenues payable to the State will not commence until the development goes into profit.

Question No. 640 answered with Question No. 638.

Exploration Licences Approvals

641. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the level of exploration or appraisal or development work that has been done on the Irish shelf since the award of the last licensing round; the level of activity expected in the next 24 months and if this activity will include the establishment of on-shore infrastructure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48077/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): Thirteen licensing options were awarded in November 2011 under the 2011 Licensing Round. There are currently eighteen exploration licences, sev-

enteen licensing options and five petroleum prospecting licences extant in respect of exploration in the Irish offshore.

All authorisations granted are subject to the carrying out of agreed work programmes. While work programmes in respect of licensing options are mainly of a desk-study nature, work programmes in respect of exploration licences include seismic surveys and drilling operations.

Since November 2011 the Barryroe appraisal well in the Celtei Sea was the only well drilled in the Irish offshore.

While my Department has not yet received any applications for drilling operations in 2013 and 2014, I understood that plans are being advanced for in the order of three to five wells.

In relation to seismic surveys 130 kms² of 3D seismic was acquired since 1 November 2011 and while my Department has not yet received applications for the shooting of seismic surveys over the next two years it is anticipated that in the region of 800km² of 3D seismic and 1800km² of 2D seismic will be acquired.

Given that no new discovery has been declared as a “commercial discovery” since the Corrib Gas Field was discovered in 1996, there are no other plans for new onshore infrastructure at this point in time.

Works in relation to the development of the Corrib Gas Field is ongoing with the principal remaining element being the onshore pipeline. It is estimated that construction of the onshore section of the pipeline, including the construction of a 5km tunnel, will take in the region of three years. First gas cannot therefore reasonably be anticipated before 2014.

Exploration Industry Data

642. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to develop an Irish knowledge base that can participate in the Irish oil or gas activity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48079/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O’Dowd): I would like to advise the Deputy that my Department maintains an extensive national archive of definitive petroleum exploration and production data on industry activities carried out in Ireland.

All operators and contractors are required to submit all technical data and information relating to all authorisations, drilling activities and exploration surveys to my Department. In order to promote and assist effective exploration and production in Ireland, much of this data is made available to exploration companies for purchase through my Department’s data agents, contact details for which are available on my Department’s website.

The importance and value of this major assist is recognised by both the industry and the research community.

Question No. 643 answered with Question No. 637.

Alternative Energy Projects

644. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural

Resources further to Parliamentary Question No. 271 of the 25 September 2012, the way he plans to meet the targets for the production of bio fuels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48213/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):

The Renewable Energy Directive requires that by 2020 each Member State must ensure that 10% of energy in transport will be from renewable energy sources. Ireland will meet this target primarily through the use of biofuels. The Biofuel Obligation Scheme, by requiring that large suppliers of road transport fuels include a certain percentage of biofuel across their general fuel mix, creates a market and demand for biofuels. Biofuels are defined as liquid or gaseous transport fuels produced from biomass and would also include Dimethyl ether (DME) produced from biomass. I will shortly be increasing the biofuel obligation which will further increase the demand for biofuels in Ireland.

Broadcasting Service Provision

645. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in view of the fact that persons living in parts of County Kerry such as Anascaul, Bonane, Lauragh and East Kerry are now looking at blank screens since the switchover on the 24 October, his views on whether houses that are now unable to receive television coverage should be completely exempt from paying a television licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48225/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):

As I have explained to the Deputy in previous replies to Parliamentary Questions, RTÉ has built, owns and controls the SAORVIEW TV network and is responsible for the roll-out, coverage and operation of that network. This is in accordance with Part 8 of the Broadcasting Act 2009, which provides that the development of the RTÉ network is an operational matter for RTÉ.

The SAORVIEW network is complete and provides c. 98% population coverage. It must be understood that it is simply not possible to provide 100% coverage by terrestrial means. Reasons for this include, for example, local topography.

In addition to SAORVIEW, RTÉ has developed SAORSAT, a new free-to-air satellite service unique to Ireland to ensure the RTÉ television services are available to the remaining 2% of the population. SAORSAT launched in March 2012. SAORVIEW and SAORSAT coverage and reception information is available on www.saorview.ie and www.rtenl.ie.

Specifically in relation to Kerry, as I explained to the Deputy in a Parliamentary Question reply of October 10th, I have been informed by RTÉNL that SAORVIEW has delivered a significant improvement in terrestrial coverage in both geographical and population coverage in County Kerry as set out in the following tables:

Geographical

Channel	Analogue Coverage	SAORVIEW Coverage	Increase
RTÉ One	75 % area	87%	12%
RTÉ Two	75% area	87%	12%
TV3	40% area	87%	47%
TG4	64% area	87%	23%

Population

Channel	Analogue Coverage	SAORVIEW Coverage	Increase
RTÉ One	90% population	95%	5%
RTÉ Two	90% population	95%	5%
TV3	44% population	95%	51%
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In relation to SAORSAT in Co. Kerry, RTÉNL has organised training for installers. On October 1st ten installers attended a training course in Kerry. The course was open to any installer and the ones that attended were from areas such as Firies, Killorglin, Kenmare, Killarney, Caherciveen, Beaufort, Waterville and Castleisland. It was demonstrated how SAORSAT works, the best dish type to use, how to fix the dish correctly and how to point it in the correct direction. On 22 October RTÉNL provided a demonstration of SAORSAT to about 60 attendees in Annascaul, County Kerry. Initial feedback from the meeting was positive.

Should installers in Kerry have any difficulties installing SAORSAT, they should contact RTÉNL directly and RTÉNL will arrange the necessary training. Further information on SAORSAT is available on www.saorview.ie and www.rtenl.ie.

In relation to the requirement to have a television licence, section 142(1) of the Broadcasting Act 2009 provides that "...a person shall not keep or have in his possession anywhere in the territory of the state a television set save in so far as such keeping or possession is authorised by a television licence for the time being in force".

The 2009 Act defines a television set as "any electronic apparatus capable of receiving and exhibiting television broadcasting services broadcast for general reception (whether or not its use for that purpose is dependent on the use of anything else in conjunction with it) and any software or assembly comprising such apparatus and other apparatus".

In effect, this means that, if you own a television set in Ireland, you must have a current television licence for that set. The requirement to have a TV licence is applied equally to all households in possession of a television set in the State.

Exploration Licences Approvals

646. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding the fracking planned for Ireland (details supplied) and the concerns raised in relation to the awarding of petroleum licensing options to three companies in areas in the north-west and mid-west of the country, which gives the companies, Tamboran, Langco and Enegi, the right to apply for an exclusive exploration license over the areas concerned in an industry that is not regulated and also the points raised re Northern Ireland who have just awarded a large contract to a state body in the Republic of Ireland to develop wave energy to meet a large percentage of energy needs over the next years, while a different form of energy, it still speaks to a demonstrated commitment to using natural resources in a sustainable way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48446/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): In February of last year, following an open competition, onshore petroleum licensing options were awarded by the then Minister of State at the De-

partment of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources to: Tamboran Resources PTY Ltd over parts of counties Cavan, Leitrim and Sligo; Lough Allen Natural Gas Company Ltd over parts of counties Cavan, Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo; and Enegi Oil plc over parts of County Clare. The Licensing Options are for a two-year period from 1st March 2011 to 28th February 2013 and specifically exclude exploration drilling.

I would like to advise the Deputy that Tamboran Resources Pty Ltd was also awarded a five-year exploration licence by the Northern Ireland authorities over adjacent acreage in County Fermanagh.

With regard to the regulatory process for the use of this technology, I can advise that the European Commission has confirmed that the exploration and exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbons has to comply with the requirements of EU legislation. A comprehensive legislative framework on environmental protection and access to hydrocarbon resources is already in place and applies to all hydrocarbons, conventional and unconventional from planning to the aftercare of sites following exploitation. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive plays a central role in the assessment of such applications as it ensures that the environmental implications of projects are taken into account in the permitting process, before decisions are made, and it involves the public in the decision-making process, making it more transparent.

Notwithstanding the existing statutory framework, in October of last year, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources requested the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to conduct research and advise on the environmental implications of hydraulic fracturing as a means of extracting natural gas from underground reserves.

In May 2012, the EPA published its preliminary research into the environmental aspects of shale gas extraction in the form of a small desk based study, which was carried out by the University of Aberdeen. The study provides an introduction to the environmental aspects of fracking including a review of regulatory approaches used in other countries and areas for further investigation and research such as geological principles of relevance in fracking and shale gas extraction, potential environmental impacts and establishing best environmental practice.

While the study is a preliminary study it will inform the development of the terms of reference for a much more detailed research study to be commissioned by the EPA later this year. The terms of reference for this more extensive research are currently being drawn up by a steering group including representatives from the EPA and my Department. The outcome of the further research to be commissioned by the EPA will assist in a robust scientific based assessment of any future application proposing the use of this technology and I can confirm that until there has been time to consider the second stage of the EPA research, the use of hydraulic fracturing in exploration drilling will not be authorised.

With regard to the issues raised by the Deputy with respect to plans for the development of wave energy, I should make clear that there is no contradiction in pursuing a policy of seeking to exploit our indigenous natural gas resources, while at the same time working towards achieving a significant increase in the generation of electricity from renewable energy sources. As natural gas will continue to be important to electricity generation in Ireland going forward, clearly Ireland would benefit if that natural gas was not imported, but instead came from our own indigenous natural resources.

Northern Ireland Issues

647. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural

Resources if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48541/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):
I would draw the Deputy's attention to the reply I gave in this house on 24 October.

There is extensive North/South cooperation on a range of issues in the areas of Energy, Communications and Broadcasting, which are under the remit of my Department. Staff discharge this work in addition to other functions in the relevant areas.

The extensive co-operation under the Joint Steering Group on Energy established between the departments North and South has yielded significant results to date, including the establishment of a Single Electricity Market (SEM) for the island of Ireland which has been operational for several years. In addition to cooperation on that front, the multi-million euro investment in Project Kelvin, involving North-South Direct International Telecoms Connectivity and a coordinated approach to the Digital TV switch-over process on the island of Ireland have been particular highlights. My department has also contributed to the very successful collaborative INTERREG projects across the sectors in recent years.

The priority areas going forward include:

- offshore renewable energy projects
- establishing common arrangements for gas on the island
- A €180 million investment on a cross-border electricity link to double the existing cross-border transfer capacity
- A cooperative approach to security of energy supply on the island of Ireland
- Continued interaction between the Communications Regulators: ComReg and Ofcom.
- Continued Geological cooperation on cross border geo-environmental mapping and hydrographic surveys to support exploration

In addition there is significant cooperation with Northern Ireland as part of the British-Irish Council (BIC) given the mutual interest among BIC Members in energy security

The North-South Coordination is a function of the Corporate Support area in my Department. This includes co-ordination of inputs to the NSMC plenary sessions and representation at Principal level on the Interdepartmental North-South Co-ordination Group chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Unit involves Officials at Principal, Higher executive Officer and Executive Officer level who carry out this work in addition to other co-ordination and cross cutting functions.

Finally, the North/South Body, the Loughs Agency of the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission is under the co-sponsorship of my Department and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland, and staff in the Natural Resources areas of my Department service this work in addition to their other duties.

648. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the plans, if any, he has to address the issue of cyber bullying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48565/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Office of Internet Safety has been established by the Government to take lead responsibility for Internet safety in Ireland particularly as it relates to children. This Office operates under the aegis of the Minister for Justice and Equality. The Office also aims at building linkages and cohesion between all Departments and Agencies to ensure that the State provides the best possible protection for the community and promotes Internet safety.

I also understand the Department of Education and Skills have recently set up an anti bullying working group to address this issue and to make recommendations on how to tackle the challenges associated with cyber bullying.

My Department has developed a web site called www.makeITsecure.ie to promote best practice in relation to many issues arising from the use of the Internet. This campaign, which was developed with industry, does provide some information in relation to use of ICT by children.

While my Department does not lead on the specific issue of cyber bullying, it is available to assist in any initiative taken forward by the other Departments and continues to engage across all Departments in issues relating to the use of the Internet and ICT generally.

Renewable Energy Generation

649. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if Bord na Móna is eligible or entitled to claim a rebate in respect of losses incurred from the burning of biomass materials, specifically miscanthus, under existing Public Service Obligation arrangements that are in place for the burning of peat; if they are eligible for the rebate; the date from which they are in receipt of it; for how many tons was a rebate paid and the net amount paid in respect of miscanthus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48619/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Section 39 of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 ('the Act') sets out the legal basis for the Public Service Obligation (PSO) levy.

It is designed to support the use of indigenous fuels (i.e. peat) and the use of renewable energy sources in electricity generation with the proceeds of the levy used to defray, inter alia, the additional costs incurred by electricity suppliers in sourcing, and ESB Power Generation producing, a proportion of their electricity from such generators.

The Bord na Móna Edenderry electricity generation station is powered by a combination of peat and biomass co-firing. Up to earlier this year the Public Service Obligation (PSO) levy operated in respect of the peat component of power generation only. No PSO levy was payable in respect of the biomass element. The agreement between the ESB and Bord na Móna provides for a separate flat rate payment for biomass irrespective of the biomass used and the price paid for that biomass.

Earlier this year I opened REFIT 3 to support electricity generation from biomass. This will be funded under the PSO. One of the technology categories supported is co-firing of biomass, including energy crops such as miscanthus, with peat in existing peat powered plants including

the Bord na Móna plant. It is anticipated that Bord na Móna will apply to participate in REFIT 3.

Sale of State Assets

650. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his attention has been drawn to negotiations taking place regarding the sale of the E.S.B.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48626/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): As part of the Government's asset disposal programme agreed with the Troika, the Government has agreed the sale of some non-strategic power generation assets of the ESB.

This decision has been conveyed to the Board of ESB. The matter will now be progressed by the company. It will also be overseen by a Steering Group co-chaired by my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform working with the assistance of NewERA.

Telephone Directories

651. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will take action to stop wastage by ensuring that telephone directories are printed in much larger print that at present to cater for half the population that current cannot read the current directories (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48647/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Regulation 4 (1) of the European Communities (Electronic Communications Networks and Services) (Universal Service and Users' Rights) Regulations 2011 requires that "a comprehensive directory of subscribers is made available to all end-users in a form approved of by the Regulator, whether printed or electronic or both, and is updated at least once in each year". ComReg undertook a public consultation earlier this year which concluded with the designation of Eircom as universal service provider (USP) for the provision of access to the public telephone network for a two-year period to 30 June 2014 (ComReg Document number 12/71 and ComReg Decision D07/12 refers). As designated USP Eircom must ensure that a comprehensive printed directory or directories of subscribers, is made available to all end-users and is updated at least once in each year. There is no specification in relation to the font size type or other characteristics to be used in the production of a telephone directory. However, I understand that ComReg will discuss this matter further at its Forum on Electronic Communications Services for People with Disabilities.

Renewable Energy Generation

652. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the level of engagement regarding the development of a renewable energy European supergrid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48674/12]

653. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the level of engagement of the European Investment Bank in the development of the renewable energy European supergrid and the way he is engaging with the European Investment Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48675/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):

I propose to take Questions Nos. 652 and 653 together.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is available to offer financing to Irish companies that are involved in developing renewable energy projects and infrastructure, e.g. some of the financing for the East West Interconnector was through a loan from the EIB. The EIB has also provided some loans to commercial developers of renewable energy projects in Ireland. The companies negotiate directly with the EIB themselves and I have no role in the process.

To develop the offshore grid sector, in December 2010, Ireland, along with 9 other countries, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the North Seas Offshore Grid Initiative (NSOGI). A copy of the Memorandum is available on the Department's website. The parties agreed they would work towards facilitating strategic, coordinated development of the offshore and onshore grids in the Northern European Seas to ensure more cost effective and sustainable development.

Since then, the parties to the agreement have been actively working through a number of working groups on aspects to take forward the goals expressed in the Memorandum. Ireland has been represented on all 3 working groups and has been a co-chair along with the UK of the market and regulatory group. The Programme Board intends to put a report on the work of the groups to Ministers who are meeting on 3rd December.

In October 2011, the European Commission tabled a comprehensive package to enhance trans-European infrastructure development in the areas of transport, energy and information society. The trans-European energy infrastructure guidelines identify twelve priority corridors and thematic areas that must be implemented in the coming decade to help the EU meet its short and longer term energy and climate objectives. To translate these corridors and areas into concrete projects, the guidelines include a new way of identifying energy infrastructure projects that can receive the label of Projects of Common Interest (PCI), which are necessary to implement these priority corridors and areas.

The NSOGI is among 10 priority corridors that have been identified as follows:

“Northern Seas offshore grid (“NSOG”): integrated offshore electricity grid in the North Sea, the Irish Sea, the English Channel, the Baltic Sea and neighbouring waters to transport electricity from renewable offshore energy sources to centres of consumption and storage and to increase cross-border electricity exchange.

Member States concerned: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom;”

The infrastructure package is currently being negotiated in the EU. Negotiations are expected to conclude by end year with a view to publication of the relevant legislative instruments in 2013. The final amount of funding available under the energy infrastructure package will be subject to budgetary negotiations and agreement in the context of the EU multi-annual financial framework for 2014-2020.

Departmental Functions

654. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his Department is engaging with the European Investment Bank and on what matters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48676/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):

I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has no engagement with the European Investment Bank (EIB). Semi-State companies under the aegis of my Department may engage with the EIB as appropriate and this is an operational matter for the individual companies in the first instance.

Energy Conservation

655. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of persons that have availed of sustainable energy grants during 2012; the range of funding provided for these grants; the total sum awarded; the type of work covered by these grants; the breakdown by county of the grants awarded; his plans to continue the scheme next year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48703/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) administers the Better Energy Programme. Better Energy: Homes provides financial assistance to private homeowners who wish to improve the energy performance of their homes. Fixed grants are provided towards the cost of a range of measures including attic insulation, wall insulation, heating systems upgrades, solar thermal panels and accompanying BER. The grants range from €200 for attic insulation to €3,600 for external wall insulation and the average grant value per household in 2012 is €1,100. Better Energy: Homes is a demand-led programme. From the start of 2012 to 31st October 2012, the scheme disbursed over €25.9m in grants and supported the installation of almost 64,000 measures in over 23,000 homes.

Better Energy: Warmer Homes delivers a range of energy efficiency measures to households that are vulnerable to energy poverty and is 100% funded by the Exchequer. The measures include attic insulation, draught proofing, lower energy light bulbs, energy advice, and cavity wall insulation, when appropriate. The scheme is managed by the SEAI and delivered through a range of Community Based Organisations (CBOs), augmented by a panel of private contractors in order to ensure national coverage. From the start of 2012 to 31st October 2012, the scheme has disbursed over €9.3m in Exchequer funds and supported the delivery of energy efficiency upgrades to over 7,400 homes.

The following tables provide a breakdown of the number of homes, measures and geographical distribution of grants paid under Better Energy Homes and Better Energy Warmer Homes from January to October 2012.

Table 1

Number of homes and measures completed under Better Energy Homes and Better Energy Warmer Homes

(Jan - Oct 2012)

2012 (Jan – Oct)	Better Energy: Homes	Better Energy: Warmer Homes
Homes Completed	23,023	7,401
Measures Completed	63,876	N/A
Total Spend (€ M)	€25.9 M	€9.3 M

Table 2

Breakdown of measures completed under Better Energy Homes (Jan - Oct 2012)

Table 2	Roof	Walls	Heating Systems	Solar	BER	Total
Measures Completed	15,348	17,893	5,142	1,815	23,678	63,876
Total Spend (€ M)	€3.103	€17.107	€2.829	€1.453	€1.501	€25.992

Table 3**Number of homes by County completed under Better Energy Homes and Better Energy Warmer Homes****(Jan - Oct 2012)**

County	Better Energy : Homes	Better Energy : Warmer Homes
Carlow	220	110
Cavan	398	161
Clare	902	194
Cork	3,856	854
Donegal	538	384
Dublin	4,387	1,146
Galway	1,794	221
Kerry	923	393
Kildare	638	101
Kilkenny	401	115
Laois	331	61
Leitrim	155	187
Limerick	1,527	450
Longford	155	106
Louth	539	38
Mayo	834	525
Meath	592	128
Monaghan	363	160
Offaly	289	165
Roscommon	315	201
Sligo	314	185
Tipperary	997	427
Waterford	1,065	308
Westmeath	335	166
Wexford	717	510
Wicklow	438	105
Total	23,023	7,401

Future plans for the Better Energy Programme will be taken in the context of the Estimates provision for 2013 for my Department which will be decided in the context of Budget 2013.

Questions - Written Answers
Public Sector Staff Issues

656. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49070/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): My Department does not employ any staff on a roster basis.

Information in respect of bodies and agencies under the aegis of my Department is a day to day matter for those organisations and my Department does not have the information sought by the Deputy. I will, however, request the relevant Agencies and bodies under the aegis of my Department to respond directly to the Deputy in the matter.

Planning Issues

657. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied that all local authorities are applying the same regime in respect of planning levies associated with compliance with animal welfare regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47928/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The adoption of development contribution schemes is a reserved function of the elected members of local authorities. My Department provides a policy guidance framework for development contributions which is designed to draw the attention of planning authorities to their obligations under the legislation, and provide for consistency between planning authority areas in the drawing up of development contribution schemes, while also recognising that the adoption of the schemes remains a reserved function.

Motor Tax Collection

658. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in view of the current financial pressures on many persons and families, if he will consider dropping the surcharge for paying motor tax for periods of less than 12 months or if any easy payment plan will be put in place. [47990/12]

722. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if any consideration has been given to equalising the cost to the public of taxing their motor vehicles online for a 12 month period, with the six or three month period, due to the financial difficulties that many households face and the possibility that this charge may lead to greater adherence to this tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48353/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 658 and 722 together.

I am not currently considering changing the basis for the charging of motor tax for three and six month discs or altering existing payment options for motor tax. Tax rates for three and six month discs are set at a higher rate than the annual fee to take account of the extra workload for the National Vehicle and Driver File (NVDF) and motor tax offices, and the resultant higher administrative and printing costs. In addition reminders are issued on each renewal.

Any proposal to introduce an easy payment option would further increase the workload and costs for the NVDF and motor tax offices and the rates set for motor tax would have to reflect that increase. It would also impact on the flow of income to the Local Government Fund and consequently on grant allocations to local authorities from the Fund.

European Court of Justice Rulings

659. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government with respect to Hearing C-279/11 (Case No. C-66/06) and C-374/11 (Case No C-188/08) of the European Court of Justice held on the 4 of October 2012, is it now the case that Ireland will in fact be required to pay multi-million euro fines in respect of our failure to comply with these two judgements. [47243/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) held oral hearings on 4 October in respect of two cases, C-279/11 (original case reference C-66/06) and C-374/11 (original case reference C-188/08), to consider whether fines should be imposed on Ireland for delays in implementing the Court rulings in these cases. However, no decision has yet been made by the Court as to whether fines will be imposed or if so, what level such fines should be set at. A decision is expected from the Court in the coming months.

In respect of these cases and notwithstanding the Commission's seeking of fines, it should be noted that the Commission considers Ireland to be now fully compliant in respect of the issues raised in Case C-66/06, which involved EIA of on-farm development and activities, and is no longer seeking the imposition of daily fines in this case. Similarly, the Commission has acknowledged the significant progress in recent times to enact legislation to introduce a robust system of registration and inspection of septic tanks and is satisfied that the measures being introduced will fully address the Court findings and will be compliant with Articles 4 and 8 of Council Directive 75/442/EEC.

Community Development Initiatives

660. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will consider under his community programme and in cooperation with the partnership companies across Ireland putting a place a specific short term course for home/family carer's (details supplied). [47262/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): This is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Health, in the first instance.

The key objectives of my Department's Community Division are to facilitate integrated development at local level and foster vibrant, sustainable and inclusive communities; and to support the Community and Voluntary Sector in its contribution to an active, democratic and pluralist society.

My Department is responsible for a range of programmes to support communities, including the Local and Community Development Programme which tackles poverty and social exclusion in disadvantaged communities; the RAPID Programme (Revitalising Areas through Planning Investment and Development) which tackles the spatial concentration of poverty and social exclusion in designated areas; and the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 which implements measures to improve the quality of life in rural areas and facilitate the diversifica-

tion of the rural economy. These Programmes do not specifically deal with health issues, although they have a role in addressing community wellbeing.

Some of these programmes are delivered at a local level by a nationwide network of Local Development Companies (LDCs). The LDCs are independent, not-for-profit, companies with their own boards of management (and memorandum & articles of association). These Companies provide a range of targeted activities dependent on needs identified in their geographic areas of operation. The LDCs also receive funding from other Government Departments and agencies to deliver various programmes and schemes on their behalf. It would be a matter for the Minister for Health, in this instance, to consider engaging with them in relation to the type of short-term course referred to in the question.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

661. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47293/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Retired staff are engaged from time to time by my Department in areas where specific expertise is required for a short fixed period, and relevant former staff provide a level of knowledge, experience and background compatible with such requirements.

The abatement principle, which ensures that the fee paid plus pension does not exceed the rate of pay the pensioner would receive if he/she had continued service in their former post, applies to all such payments made. The tasks carried out include time bound tasks or projects such as membership of expert groups, occasional service on interview boards, value for money reviews and process audits.

No former staff, who have retired from my Department, have been rehired by it since my appointment in March 2011.

Local Authority Housing Mortgages

662. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will increase the income limit thresholds for housing applicants to realistic levels, in view of the fact that the current low limits have the effect of ensuring that many families neither qualify for local authority housing or for a mortgage and are condemned to paying a significant part of their income on long term private rented accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47311/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Section 20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009, dealing with social housing support, was commenced on 1 April 2011. Under the Act, and the related Social Housing Assessment Regulations, 2011, a new standard procedure for assessing applicants for social housing was introduced in every housing authority. The Regulations contain, among other eligibility criteria, maximum income limits, which were subsequently amended upwards by the Social Housing Assessment (Amendment) Regulations 2011. The income bands contained therein refer to the net income of households, that is, net of income tax, PRSI and the Universal Social Charge. The maximum limits are €35,000, €30,000 and

€25,000 for a single-person household, depending on the local authority area concerned, with additional allowances based on each additional adult or child in the household. These provisions, taken together, provide a reasonable basis for ensuring that households on low incomes have access to social housing support. Given the cost to the State of providing social housing, it is considered prudent and fair to direct resources to those most in need of social housing support. The current income eligibility requirements generally achieve this aim.

The terms and conditions governing the operation, including eligibility terms, of annuity mortgages and the Home Choice Loan are set out under the Housing (Local Authority Loans) Regulations 2009 and the Housing (Home Choice Loan) Regulations 2009 respectively. These are available on my Department's website: www.environ.ie. Access to credit is just one of a number of reasons for the low level of transactions in the housing market at present and wider economic sentiment is also impacting on sentiment in the housing market. It is not the intention of these mortgage schemes – or of any other Government intervention in the housing sector – to incentivise or entice people into the market. These schemes are designed only to facilitate credit worthy households who have been affected by conditions in the mortgage market. The Home Choice Loan scheme is a temporary one which will be withdrawn once conditions in credit markets return to normal patterns. Recent data published by the Central Bank would indicate that that point has not yet been reached.

Property Taxation Application

663. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a decision has been made to exempt listed buildings from the proposed property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47434/12]

719. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if any decision has been made regarding the proposed property tax and waivers for pensioners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48289/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government(Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 663 and 719 together.

An independently-chaired Inter-Departmental Expert Group was established to consider the structures and modalities for an equitable Local Property Tax to replace the household charge. The Expert Group's terms of reference were to consider the design of a Local Property Tax to be approved by Government, which is equitable and is informed by previous work and international experience.

The Group submitted its report to me and proposals will be brought to Government as soon as possible. It would not be appropriate to comment on the content of the Expert Group's report at this point, pending Government's consideration of the report and the associated issues. It will then be a matter for Government to decide on the exact details of implementation, including considerations related to exemptions and waivers, taking into account the modalities involved.

The Government has decided that the Local Property Tax will be collected and administered by the Revenue Commissioners.

Property Taxation Application

664. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local

Government the position regarding a local enterprise (details supplied) and the position regarding rates on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47591/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Valuation Office comes under the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. I have no direct role in matters relating to valuation.

Capital Assistance Scheme Applications

665. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide details of projects submitted by local authority for consideration under his Departments capital assistance scheme and if he will outline the priority attached to the various submissions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47600/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): In June 2012 my Department invited local authorities to submit a prioritised list of projects for funding under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) over the period 2012 to 2014. Cork County Council submitted a list of fourteen projects for consideration by my Department. Details of the projects submitted are set out in the following table. CAS funding totalling €4,810,000 was approved in respect of the first three projects listed.

Name of Approved Housing Body	Location of Proposed Project	Priority Based on Need.	Category of Tenant
Renewal Sheltered Housing Ltd.	Fellowship House, Spur Hill, Togher, Cork	1 st priority	Homeless
Cork Mental Health Housing Association	No.19 The Woodlands, Cork Road, Cork.	Joint 2 ND priority	Special Needs
Cork Mental Health Housing Association	17 The Granary, The Maltings, Ballincollig, Cork.	Joint 2 nd priority	Special Needs
Focus Housing Association	The Kingfisher, Jacobs Island, Cork.	Joint 2 nd priority	Homeless
Cluid Housing Association	No.11 The Briary Rose Hill, Carrigaline	Joint 2 nd priority	Special Needs
Cluid Housing Association	No.42 College Wood, Woodland Drive, Mallow, Cork.	Joint 2 nd priority	Special Needs
Cluid Housing Association	No.24 The Meadows, Tir Cluain, dleton, Cork.	Joint 2 nd priority	Special Needs
Castlelyons Housing Association	Castlelyons.	Not prioritised	Elderly
Killavullen Community Housing Association	Killavullen.	Not prioritised	Elderly

Name of Approved Housing Body	Location of Proposed Project	Priority Based on Need.	Category of Tenant
St. Joseph's Foundation – Ardfern, Charleville	Ardfern, Charleville.	Not prioritised	Special Needs
Sue Ryder Foundation.	Kanturk.	Not prioritised	Elderly
Cuan Mhuire Teoranta	Knockshanawee, Farnenes	Not prioritised	Homeless
Macroom Senior Citizens	Luceys Lane, Macroom	Not prioritised	Elderly
Clara Foundation Ltd	Gortanimill, Reanaree, Macroom	Not prioritised	Homeless

Household Charge Cost

666. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there are any particular alleviation measure that will be put in place in respect of the household charge where the householder is entirely dependent on income from the Department of Social Protection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47580/12]

674. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if pensioners who have availed of equity release schemes are liable for the household charge on the basis that the houses are effectively owned by the financial bodies concerned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47659/12]

696. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a person (details supplied) in County Wexford will be granted a discretionary waiver from paying the household charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47859/12]

710. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has instructed local authorities to refuse to accept stage payments of the household charge; if he accepts that this approach would not be adopted by any commercial entity; his views on whether such a failure to allow stage payments will have a further negative impact on the finances of local authorities, whose funding he has reduced in line with their collection rates; if he will reverse this decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48187/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 666, 674, 696 and 710 together.

The Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011 provides the legislative basis for the household charge. Under the Act, an owner of a residential property on the liability date of 1 January 2012 is liable to pay the Household Charge, unless otherwise exempted or entitled to claim a waiver. Residential property is defined in the Act as a building that is occupied or suitable for occupation as a separate dwelling. Participation in an equity release scheme by a liable owner who is in receipt of a pension is not among the exemptions or waivers provided for in the Act.

The exemptions from payment of the Household Charge are:

- Residential properties that are part of the trading stock of a business and have not been sold or been the source of any income since construction;
- Residential property owned by a Minister of the Government, a housing authority or the Health Service Executive;
- Voluntary and co-operative housing;
- Residential property subject to commercial rates and wholly used as a dwelling;
- Residential property owned by certain charities or discretionary trusts; and,
- Residential property which an owner has vacated due to long-term mental or physical infirmity (e.g. elderly person that has moved into a nursing home).

The waivers which apply concern:

- Owners of residential property entitled to mortgage interest supplement; and,
- Owners of houses in certain unfinished housing estates.

The Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) is administering the Household Charge system on a shared service/agency basis for all county and city councils. Instalment payments were available by direct debit only and persons opting to pay in this way had to register their details with the LGMA before 1 March 2012. This deadline was necessary in order to meet banking requirements for direct debit arrangements.

I have not issued any instructions to local authorities concerning staged payments of the Household Charge. While there is no provision relating to ability to pay included in the Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011, the Act does place collection of the charge under the care and management of local authorities and application in particular circumstances is a matter for the relevant local authority.

Waste Management Issues

667. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide the results of the 36 enforcement visits to a premises (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47619/12]

669. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the evidence available to him indicating whether the waste and in particular the red mud waste at a premises (details supplied) in County Limerick is hazardous [47620/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 667 and 669 together.

The facility in question operates under an Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) licence granted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The monitoring and enforcement of conditions attaching to IPPC licences are a matter for the EPA and I am precluded from exercising any power in relation to the performance by the EPA of its licensing functions in specific cases under the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992, as amended.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding

668. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide emergency funding to replace five or six kilometres of the mid Kerry water supply scheme which serves Killorglin town. [47609/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Substantial funding towards local authorities' water conservation programmes is being provided under my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013. Watermains rehabilitation is a key priority under the Programme which includes the Kerry Watermains Rehabilitation Project valued at €18.79 million. As part of this project, I recently approved funding of €2.65 million for countywide rehabilitation works which included works to be carried out by direct labour in the Killorglin area. In addition, my Department recently approved a Procurement/Construction Stage Budget for mains rehabilitation works in mid and south Kerry, including work in the Killorglin, Beaufort and Milltown areas. The approval allows the Council to prepare contract documents for the proposed works.

Question No. 669 answered with Question No. 667.

Leader Programmes Funding

670. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when funding will be made available to North and East Kerry Development for new applications for Leader funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47622/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Axes 3 & 4 (LEADER) of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013 have funding of €314m for allocation to qualifying projects up to the end of 2013. There are 35 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 local development strategy of the individual groups and in line with Departmental operating rules and EU regulations.

Each Local Action Group has an allocation for the delivery of LEADER funding until the end of the current programming period. The LEADER elements of the RDP currently offer, and will continue to offer, substantial financial resources to rural communities all over Ireland including communities in the North and East Kerry area.

Climate Change Policy

671. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to develop an abatement strategy to deal with the effects of climate change for example flood alleviation and the way he intends to balance this with the adaptation strategy required to deal with climate change. [47630/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department is at an advanced stage in developing a National Climate Change Adaptation Framework, which will set out a process by which we can help to reduce Ireland's vulnerability and build resilience to the impacts of climate change. I expect the Framework, which will be designed to evolve over time as further evidence and policy options become available, to be finalised by year-end.

Register of Electors Administration

672. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline the purposes which are not related to elections, for which the electoral register will be used by statutory agencies or Government Departments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47642/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Section 13A(3) of the Electoral Act 1992, as inserted by section 4 of the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2001, makes it an offence to use the register of electors for a purpose other than an electoral or other statutory purpose. It would be a matter for any Department to ensure that adequate provision in law has been made for use of the electoral register by that Department or by its agencies.

I made provision in 2012 for use of the electoral register for the following purposes -

Article 5(2) of the European Union (Citizens' Initiative) Regulations 2012 provides that the designated Competent Authority may examine the Register

of European Electors, or require registration authorities to do so, in order to assess the eligibility of the signatory and the validity of the data

provided in support of a European Citizens Initiative, and

Section 1 of the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2012 provides for the use of the electoral register for the purpose of selecting citizens

of Ireland to participate in the Constitutional Convention.

Provision is also made under the Local Government Act 1946, as amended, to enable the register of electors to be used in relation to plebiscites regarding placename changes.

The main use of the electoral register, other than for elections and referendums, for which statutory provision has been made is for the selection of jury members. Section 6 of the Juries Act 1976, as amended by section 54 of the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008, provides that every citizen aged eighteen years or upwards who is entered in a register of Dáil electors in a jury district is qualified and liable to serve as a juror subject to certain qualifications.

Illegal Dumping

673. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans for tackling the increasing problems due to illegal dumping, especially in Dublin city; his Department's assessment of the success, or otherwise, of the privatisation of waste collection in the area covered by Dublin City Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47648/12]

704. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will introduce the necessary regulations or legislation requiring all waste management companies providing a domestic refuse collection service to Dublin households to clearly publish their charges in a prominent manner, including on their website. [47983/12]

706. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied with the service being provided by private contractors providing domestic refuse collection, specifically a company (details supplied); if he has re-

ceived many complaints regarding poor customer service and repeated missed waste collections; where the standards are clearly not being adhered to, if he will consider some sort of local appeal system and a request for this service to establish a dedicated Oireachtas help line in view of the volume of complaints local representatives have received since the privatisation of this service. [47992/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 673, 704 and 706 together.

Illegal dumping and the operational implications of the transfer of waste collection services in the area covered by Dublin City Council are matters in the first instance for the City Council. My Department's role is to provide a comprehensive legislative and waste policy framework through which the enforcement authorities, such as the City Council, operate. Penalties available under the Litter Pollution Acts for litter offences range from an on-the-spot fine of €150, to a maximum fine of €3,000 on summary conviction, and a maximum fine of €130,000 on conviction on indictment. The maximum fines for continuing offences are €600 per day for summary offences and €10,000 per day for indictable offences. A person convicted of a litter offence may also be required by the court to pay the local authority's costs and expenses in investigating the offence and bringing the prosecution.

Penalties for more serious dumping offences available under the Waste Management Acts are also substantial. Persons who are found to be responsible for, or involved in, the unauthorised disposal of waste are liable to a maximum fine of €3,000 on summary conviction and/or imprisonment for up to 12 months, and to a maximum fine of €15 million on conviction on indictment and/or imprisonment for up to 10 years. It is at the discretion of the local authorities, which have responsibilities for enforcement of both the Litter Pollution Act and the Waste Management Act, to decide whether a specific incident warrants the application of either Act. Notwithstanding the very significant penalties outlined above, I am currently considering the introduction to the Waste Management Act of an on-the-spot fine for incidences of fly tipping/small scale illegal dumping, of a significantly higher quantum than that which exists under the Litter Pollution Act.

My Department has also recently run an anti-dumping campaign in the print media to raise awareness of the value of our countryside both environmentally and economically. The campaign includes the contact details for the National Environmental Complaints hotline (1850 365 121) to encourage the reporting of instances of illegal dumping. I believe that the combined efforts of the public, communities, local authorities and the Environmental Protection Agency will produce a reduction in such instances and result in a cleaner countryside.

In July 2012, I published A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland. This policy sets out a range of measures which will significantly revise the current regulatory regime to ensure, inter alia, that waste collected is managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy; that mandated service levels are delivered; and that Customer Charters are put in place by all waste collection providers. Customer Charters will be required to clearly set out information for customers in relation to issues such as charging structures, procedures for dealing with customers who may fall into arrears, and arrangements for switching from one waste collector to another. I have written to the waste management industry in relation to the development of such Customer Charters ahead of the development of the new regulatory regime. The work of developing new regulatory structures to give effect to these measures has commenced and my Department has begun engaging with a range of key stakeholders in relation to the detailed design of the new system. It is my intention that the improved regulatory regime will aid local authorities to deliver both enhanced environmental performance and to ensure a quality service for consumers.

Question No. 674 answered with Question No. 666.

Local Authority Housing Provision

675. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of council housing loans that have been approved by each local authority in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47697/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The information sought is available on my Department's website at www.environ.ie .

Local Authority Housing Rents

676. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of council tenants that were in arrears in each local authority in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the total number that were in arrears for each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47700/12]

677. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of council tenants that were in arrears in each local authority in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47701/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 676 and 677 together.

My Department collates and publishes a wide range of housing and planning statistics that inform the preparation and evaluation of policy and those data are available on my Department's website www.environ.ie .

Since 2008, the Department has collected data on rent arrears, calculated by the total monetary amounts owing to local authorities. Data are not collected on the breakdown of this figure by households.

Local Authority Housing Rents

678. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of households that acquired council housing loans that were in arrears in each local authority in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47702/12]

690. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of households with council housing loans that were in arrears in each local authority in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the total number that were in arrears for each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47713/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 678 and 690 together.

My Department collates and publishes a wide range of housing and planning statistics that

inform the preparation and evaluation of policy and those data are available on my Department's website www.envron.ie .

Since 2010, data are collected from local authorities on the number of loans in arrears broken down by the length of time in arrears. The data to mid-2012 indicate that 6,280 such loans are in arrears of more than 90 days , which represents 28% of the total number of loans. The data are provided in a tabular format below.

County Councils	At the end of: 2010	At the end of: 2011	Number of loans in arrears over 90 days mid 2012
Carlow	39	44	49
Cavan	84	90	92
Clare	209	199	203
Cork	259	357	370
Donegal	144	169	165
DL/Rathdown	118	105	106
Fingal	129	180	212
Galway	172	176	195
Kerry	163	128	117
Kildare	400	399	379
Kilkenny	208	264	244
Laois	240	263	255
Leitrim	27	29	30
Limerick	168	157	164
Longford	105	109	116
Louth	145	118	102
Mayo	334	331	306
Meath	161	154	72
Monaghan	103	112	99
North Tipperary	106	94	90
Offaly	116	111	108
Roscommon	113	97	90
Sligo	211	178	183
South Dublin	126	136	152
South Tipperary	154	166	168
Waterford	100	109	111
Westmeath	334	337	347
Wexford	152	161	162
Wicklow	132	128	132
City Councils	-	-	-
Cork	222	212	206
Dublin	689	817	859
Galway	98	92	81
Limerick	136	132	131

County Councils	At the end of: 2010	At the end of: 2011	Number of loans in arrears over 90 days mid 2012
Waterford	168	190	184
Total	6,065	6,344	6,280

Local Government Reform

679. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a breakdown of the €5 to €9 million savings that he maintained will arise in Putting People First with the merger of Waterford City and county councils under the headings payroll, tendering, procurement, services and other. [47708/12]

680. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a breakdown of the cost of implementing the merger of Waterford city and county councils. [47709/12]

681. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a timescale for the proposal to merge Waterford city and county councils. [47710/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 679 to 681, inclusive, together.

I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 51 and 428 of 23 October 2012.

The Report of the Waterford Local Government Committee estimated savings, primarily payroll related, associated with the merger of Waterford City and County Councils at €3.87m. In addition, the Committee has indicated that further savings in the range of €1.3m to €5m, can be made in operational and administrative expenses. The amalgamation of authorities will also have implications both for local authority revenue and costs, including some one-off costs associated with the transition to the new arrangements which can be expected to arise.

As indicated in the Government's Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First, the primary purpose of local authority unification is to strengthen the effectiveness of local government in the areas concerned and its capacity to promote their development. The Committee indicated, in addition to the estimated financial savings, that the benefits from a merged authority, particularly with regard to its potential impact on economic and social development, outweigh any transitional costs involved and provide the best long-term option for local government in Waterford.

Homelessness Strategy

682. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of funding given by his Department to assist projects to address homelessness in County Wicklow, in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the organisation or local authority to which these funds were given; and the specific projects for which each tranche of funding was used; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47729/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of accommodation for homeless persons rests with the housing authorities and the purposes for

which housing authorities may incur expenditure in addressing homelessness are prescribed in Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988. Information in respect of funding provided under Section 10 for Wicklow is set out in the table below. Funding is provided at the rate of 90% of cost with the housing authorities providing a further 10% from their own resources.

Wicklow	-	2010 - €	2011 - €	2012 (to date) - €
Funds paid to	Purpose	-	-	-
Wicklow County Council	Harry Cullen Old Presbytery - emergency accommodation	43,800	72,072	54,612
-	Outreach Worker	29,890	-	-
-	Private Rented Accommodation	-	2,908	-
-	Bed & Breakfast emergency accommodation	-	7,905	1,093
Bray Town Council	Old Brighton Terrace - emergency accommodation	101,217	86,724	65,340
-	Total	174,907	169,609	121,045

Water Meters Expenditure

683. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding home inspections in respect of water metering (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47738/12]

703. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the current position in relation to the installation of water meters; when the positions will be put out to tender; if he and Irish Water will be supporting local employment by making the positions available to local plumbers and those who have completed the water meter installation training courses which have been run by development companies throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47976/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 683 and 703 together.

The Government has decided that Irish Water, a new State-owned water company to be established as an independent subsidiary within the Bord Gáis Éireann Group, will be responsible for the metering programme. In addition, the Government has recently approved the preparation of legislation to assign the necessary powers to allow Irish Water to undertake the metering programme. The objective is to have the Bill enacted by the end of this year. Pending the enactment of the legislation, my Department will be working with the local authorities to progress aspects of the metering programme including the carrying out of surveys of domestic connections. The intention is that the public will be informed of the surveying through advertisements in local and regional newspapers, on local authorities' websites and other media including radio in advance of the surveying commencing. As the surveying will involve an examination of the

service connection located at the perimeter of the property, there will be no requirement to seek access to individual houses. The surveying work will be carried out by local authority staff.

The installation of water meters is due to commence in 2013. Installation contracts will be awarded by Irish Water to private contractors who will be responsible for recruiting appropriately trained personnel to carry out the installation.

Departmental Expenditure

684. **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide the estimate of the finances available in each of the councils to be abolished and or amalgamated; the amounts for each council; where this funding will now be allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47739/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Audited financial information on the local government sector is available in the 2010 consolidated Annual Financial Statement available on my Department's website at www.environment.ie.

Each local authority is also required to prepare and publish a financial statement in respect of each financial year.

Detailed financial arrangements for the local authority mergers in Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford are being developed in the context of the implementation plans of the Reorganisation Implementation Groups. Definitive details, arrangements and procedures in relation to the funding of municipal district level functions, and financial relations between district and county levels, will be developed in the context of the new local government funding arrangements generally, the implementation of the new sub-county system, and the development of legislation in relation to the reform programme.

Local Government Reform

685. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in view of the recent local government reform proposal; the representation the social partners will have in new local government structures; what will replace the county and city development boards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47741/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government's approach to the reform of local government, as set out in Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government provides, *inter alia*, for the introduction of Socio-Economic Committees (SECs) within each city/county local authority area. These SECs will assume many of the local and community development responsibilities of City/County Development Boards (CDBs) and they will be responsible for planning and overseeing all local and community development activity at local level. It is envisaged that these new arrangements will deliver a more co-ordinated approach locally to identifying the needs of communities and citizens, and targeting resources in the most effective way to meet those needs. SECs will be established on a public-private partnership basis and will bring a broad range of socio-economic interests together in collaboration and co-operation at local level. The exact membership of SECs is yet to be finalised but would generally comprise representatives of local government, other appropriate State agencies and local and community interests, including representatives of civil society and social and economic partners.

The Action Programme for Effective Local Government provides for the gradual wind down of City/County Development Boards (CDBs). There is no longer sufficient rationale for the continued operation of CDBs, in view of the proposed introduction of SECs with planning and oversight responsibility for local/community development programmes, the establishment of Local Enterprise Offices that will provide a local enterprise support service, and the development of a broader, more direct role for local authorities in economic development generally.

Local Authority Housing Provision

686. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of council houses that were constructed in each local authority in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; the total number that were constructed each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47718/12]

687. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of houses that were purchased in each local authority in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012 for social housing; the total number that were purchased each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47720/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 686 and 687 together.

My Department collates and publishes a wide range of housing and planning statistics that inform the preparation and evaluation of policy and those data are available on my Department’s website *www.environ.ie*.

Data on the number of local authority houses constructed and purchased are included as part of that range. Data for 2012 are still being compiled and will be available in due course.

Housing for People with Disabilities

688. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the steps he will take to assist the emerging generation of children with disabilities and their parents living in apartments, who through negative equity or being tied into affordable housing conditions cannot adapt their accommodation through housing adaption grants or council assistance and are as a result living in inaccessible, unadaptable accommodation that poses a severe health and safety risk to the whole family. [47749/12]

699. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the action he will take to assist the emerging generation of children with disabilities, and their parents living in apartments, who through negative equity or being tied into affordable housing conditions, cannot adapt their accommodation through housing adaption grants or council assistance and are as a result living in inaccessible, unadaptable accommodation that poses a severe health and safety risk to the whole family. [47897/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 688 and 699 together.

In the case of privately owned properties, grants are available under my Department’s Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People With a Disability to assist households to have necessary repairs, adaptations or improvement works carried out in order to meet the accommodation needs of an older person or a person with a disability. The suite of grants include

three separate grant measures; the Mobility Aids Grant scheme with grants of up to €6,000, the Housing Aid for Older People scheme with grants of up to €10,500 and the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability with grants of up to €30,000, depending on household income. Exchequer allocations for 2012 totalling some €54.2 million were notified to local authorities in February 2012 in respect of these schemes which are administered by the local authorities.

In the case of families living in social rented accommodation, funding is provided by my Department to Local Authorities to have necessary adaptations carried out or extensions provided to meet the needs of tenants or a member of the household with a disability. This year some €6 million was allocated to local authorities for this purpose.

Since 1 January 2001, all dwellings are required to comply with the standards set out in Part M of the Building Regulations. The Regulations require, *inter alia*, that adequate provision is made for people with a disability to safely and independently access and use a building, its facilities and environs. Any further necessary works to adapt a house or an apartment to meet the specific needs of a member of the household may be carried out with assistance being provided under the grant schemes in appropriate cases.

Homelessness Strategy

689. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline his existing commitment to tackling homelessness; if he will provide an update on the progress of the implementation of the housing strategy; if current funding levels for homelessness will be maintained; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47750/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Programme for Government committed to reviewing the homeless strategy, *The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland 2008-2013* and to implementing a housing led approach to homelessness. Work on the review is almost complete and I intend to issue a policy statement on homelessness shortly. That statement will take account of demands on existing housing and will assess how best to continue providing services in a manner consistent with the elimination of existing homelessness and to ensure more effective prevention strategies. On its conclusion, I will be indicating what I expect from housing authorities and other stakeholders in accelerating progress towards realising the ambition of eliminating involuntary long-term homelessness. However, much progress has been made in otherwise implementing the strategy including *inter alia* :

- the publication of a detailed Implementation Plan in April 2009, which set out a range of priority actions to be undertaken to deliver on the six strategic aims of the Strategy;

- new legislative provisions in the Housing Act 2009 that came into force on 1 February 2010, which put Homelessness Fora and Homelessness Action Plans on a statutory basis, and are now being implemented at regional and local level;

- the adoption in 2010 by the 34 City and County Councils of their statutory Homelessness Action Plans;

- annual provision of current funding to provide for sufficient bed capacity to accommodate all those in need of emergency accommodation nationwide and to deliver on the commitment to eliminate the need for persons involuntarily to sleep rough;

- the ongoing reconfiguration of existing emergency or transitional homeless facilities to provide a substantial number of secure long-term tenancies for homeless persons;

- the development of a scheme, *Support to Live Independently*, to provide visiting supports for persons leaving homelessness which assists people to progress from homelessness to independent living in mainstream housing and forms an important element of follow up action to end long-term homelessness, by co-ordinating appropriate tenancy and other supports to meet each individuals' needs in their local community setting; and

- the new homelessness on-line data and bed management system, PASS, which is operational in Dublin and is being extended nationally on a phased basis with work currently under-way in other regions.

The National Implementation Plan for the Homeless Strategy also provides for the development of a more devolved allocation-based system for the provision of accommodation-related funding to housing authorities with emphasis on increased decision making at local level, in lieu of the existing individual project based arrangements, to improve overall efficiency, value for money and greater local decision making in homeless services.

A Protocol has been put in place with Dublin City Council to provide delegation of responsibility in relation to the management of homelessness funding. Similar arrangements are being put in place in respect of the other statutory homelessness regions.

My Department's current funding provision for the running costs of homeless accommodation and related services for 2012 is €50 million, which, together with 10% provided from housing authorities' own resources, brings the total available funding to €55.55 million in 2012. This level of funding means that there will be no reduction in the provision of essential frontline support services.

Question No. 690 answered with Question No. 678.

Election Management System

691. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on the possibility of reserving polling station and count staff positions for those on the live register where practicable; his views on whether such an initiative would be cost effective; his plans to include a general recommendation to this effect in the guidelines issued to returning officers in advance of each election; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47832/12]

692. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline the requirements in respect of the advertising of polling station and count staff positions in advance of each election; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47833/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 691 and 692 together.

The primary role of my Department in electoral matters is to provide an appropriate policy and legislative framework for a modern and efficient electoral system. Within that framework, local returning officers are responsible for all matters in connection with the actual conduct of elections and referendums, including the selection, appointment and training of polling station and count staff in accordance with the relevant provisions of electoral law.

My Department issues guidance to Returning Officers in advance of each election and referendum. The guidance emphasises that the smooth conduct of polls is dependent on maintaining a cadre of sufficiently skilled and experienced people. Having regard to that overall objective, returning officers are advised to employ competent and efficient persons as polling staff and asked to give consideration, where possible, to employing suitable persons who are unemployed.

In addition, at my request, my Department wrote to each Returning Officer on 4 October 2012, advising that, wherever practicable, the opportunity should be taken to employ unemployed persons at polling stations and in carrying out the subsequent counting of votes at elections and referendums so as to provide opportunity for work experience to unemployed persons. I believe that this should apply particularly in relation to the Polling Clerk position, where the responsibilities of the post can be fulfilled under the guidance of the Presiding Officer. Following the referendum on 10 November 2012, my Department will be writing to Returning Officers to ascertain the extent to which unemployed persons were engaged on that occasion and with a view to working with Returning Officers to address issues arising.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding

693. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of money that has been allocated to Donegal County Council for the upgrading of the sewage treatment scheme in the twin towns of Ballybofey and Stranorlar; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47834/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Ballybofey/Stranorlar Sewerage Scheme upgrade is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013, as a scheme to start construction during the lifetime of the Programme.

My Department is awaiting the submission by Donegal County Council of its Preliminary Report for the scheme.

Rural Development Programme Funding

694. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has considered correspondence sent by this Deputy to his Department in relation to a community group (details supplied); when this Deputy may expect to receive an answer to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47835/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Rural Development Programme (RDP) is governed by EU regulations and is subject to the rigorous audit and verification requirements. My Department is charged with ensuring that there is no misappropriation of funds and that all expenditure under the RDP is in line with the regulations as set out by the European Commission.

In this regard a robust system is in place to ensure that payments are made to promoters as soon as all the relevant checks have been carried out. During a regulatory inspection check of the project in question by the Inspection Services Division (ISD) of my Department, certain issues arose and were queried. It is my understanding that the findings of the inspection are currently under appeal with my Department; therefore it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on this project at this stage. However, once a final decision has been reached, a

response will issue immediately to the correspondence in question.

Rental Accommodation Scheme Application Numbers

695. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of families or persons on the rental accommodation scheme in each local authority area for each year since the scheme was first introduced; the cost of the scheme to each local authority; the total cost of operating the scheme each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47858/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): By end of September 2012 local authorities had transferred a total of 41,623 households to the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) from Rent Supplement since the former commenced in late 2005. Of these 24,472 were housed directly under RAS with 17,196 accommodated under other social housing options.

The following table sets out the transfer position annually by authority:

RAS Admin Fees 2005 - Sept. 2012

Local Authorities (Housing)	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	End Sept 2012	TOTAL
Carlow Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 4,050	€ -	€ 37,100	€ 88,600	€ 90,150	€ 100,600	€ 85,200	€ 405,700
Cavan Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 6,450	€ 13,850	€ 22,150	€ 50,800	€ 58,450	€ 83,050	€ 59,600	€ 294,350
Clare Co. Cl.	€ 6,450	€ 13,250	€ 21,650	€ 54,950	€ 73,650	€ 77,900	€ 86,500	€ 74,400	€ 408,750
Cork City Cl.	€ -	€ 23,750	€ 59,800	€ 100,250	€ 116,900	€ 159,300	€ 213,200	€ 149,800	€ 823,000
Cork Co. Cl.	€ -	€ -	€ 52,550	€ 146,800	€ 214,650	€ 226,200	€ 240,700	€ 197,200	€ 1,078,100
Donegal Co. Cl.	€ 7,950	€ 36,600	€ 21,850	€ 40,550	€ 77,850	€ 100,650	€ 122,100	€ 99,850	€ 507,400
Dublin City Cl.	€ 43,500	€ 37,900	€ 119,750	€ 355,450	€ 441,350	€ 435,800	€ 448,400	€ 406,500	€ 2,288,650
Dublin South Co. Cl.	€ 1,350	€ 4,400	€ 29,650	€ 100,100	€ 243,400	€ 282,000	€ 300,500	€ 248,450	€ 1,209,850
Dun/Rathdown Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 5,850	€ 39,750	€ 65,150	€ 102,900	€ 130,450	€ 135,750	€ 110,800	€ 590,650
Fingal Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 15,600	€ -	€ 84,650	€ 118,750	€ 129,850	€ 186,850	€ 139,400	€ 675,100
Galway City Cl.	€ 11,250	€ 21,500	€ 59,700	€ 159,568	€ 131,900	€ 125,700	€ 144,000	€ 116,800	€ 770,418
Galway Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 8,300	€ 20,550	€ 62,050	€ 85,250	€ 104,400	€ 109,500	€ 94,600	€ 484,650
Kerry Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 11,000	€ 38,200	€ 81,550	€ 110,700	€ 81,500	€ 151,050	€ 124,800	€ 598,800
Kildare Co. Cl.	€ -	€ -	€ 35,450	€ 59,950	€ 88,400	€ 92,900	€ 125,550	€ 106,800	€ 509,050

Questions - Written Answers

Local Authorities (Housing)	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	End Sept 2012	TOTAL
Kilkenny Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 24,400	€ 50,150	€ 85,400	€ 97,150	€ 104,250	€ 13,600	€ 109,800	€ 484,750
Laois Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 1,600	€ 13,200	€ 27,750	€ 32,300	€ 41,200	€ 54,200	€ 43,000	€ 213,250
Leitrim Co. Cl.	€ -	€ -	€ 12,750	€ 2,850	€ 4,250	€ 22,500	€ 32,750	€ 24,800	€ 99,900
Limerick City Cl.	€ -	€ 15,550	€ 26,100	€ 68,000	€ 95,500	€ 122,800	€ 93,300	€ 166,300	€ 587,550
Limerick Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 21,400	€ 17,800	€ 51,500	€ 78,800	€ 83,800	€ 100,750	€ 88,600	€ 442,650
Longford Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 3,300	€ 14,900	€ 45,650	€ 67,900	€ 71,900	€ 64,850	€ 54,800	€ 323,300
Louth Co. Cl.	€ 2,250	€ 6,000	€ 20,000	€ 43,350	€ 46,350	€ 56,800	€ 58,450	€ 50,000	€ 283,200
Mayo Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 11,900	€ 55,600	€ 107,600	€ 144,450	€ 166,700	€ 189,400	€ 155,450	€ 831,100
Meath Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 3,750	€ 13,550	€ 15,850	€ 31,200	€ 18,200	€ 57,500	€ 84,900	€ 224,950
Monaghan Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 7,200	€ 14,750	€ 28,950	€ 45,450	€ 60,350	€ 65,050	€ 55,600	€ 277,350
Nth Tipperary Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 9,600	€ 20,050	€ 41,950	€ 60,100	€ 74,350	€ 95,150	€ 70,600	€ 371,800
Offaly Co. Cl.	€ 7,500	€ -	€ 10,500	€ 22,350	€ 43,900	€ 49,000	€ 46,850	€ 33,200	€ 213,300
Roscommon Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 3,550	€ 19,400	€ 48,450	€ 63,500	€ 79,300	€ 91,500	€ 71,800	€ 377,500
Sligo Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 13,550	€ 18,200	€ 50,000	€ 60,500	€ 125,900	€ 92,650	€ 74,000	€ 434,800
Sth Tipperary Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 10,300	€ 22,100	€ 55,450	€ 95,100	€ 120,600	€ 142,500	€ 120,400	€ 566,450

RAS Admin Fees 2005 - Sept. 2012

Local Authorities (Housing)	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	End Sept 2012	TOTAL
Waterford City Cl.	€ -	€ 32,850	€ 32,950	€ 54,150	€ 88,000	€ 103,500	€ 129,250	€ 112,400	€ 553,100
Waterford Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 2,300	€ 4,050	€ 19,800	€ 45,000	€ 57,100	€ 67,500	€ 52,350	€ 248,100
Westmeath Co. Cl.	€ 7,500	€ -	€ 17,250	€ 44,950	€ 70,200	€ 75,700	€ 81,950	€ 63,650	€ 361,200
Wexford Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 19,600	€ 22,700	€ 39,900	€ 72,200	€ 89,450	€ 125,250	€ 79,800	€ 448,900
Wicklow Co. Cl.	€ -	€ 4,200	€ 12,700	€ 38,850	€ 53,000	€ 65,900	€ 84,750	€ 67,400	€ 326,800

Local Authorities (Housing)	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	End Sept 2012	TOTAL
Totals	€ 87,750	€ 379,700	€ 931,450	€ 2,263,018	€ 3,239,950	€ 3,684,550	€ 4,134,950	€ 3,593,050	€ 18,314,418

Funding for the RAS is provided by a transfer of monies from the Department of Social Protection's Vote to the Vote of my Department. Monies are provided on an Exchequer neutral basis to meet the costs of persons transferring from the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Rent Supplement Scheme to the RAS. Since its inception total expenditure on RAS to the end of September 2012 was some €480.43 million. The following table sets out details of annual expenditure on the scheme:

RAS Spend

Year	Spend
2004	€164,836
2005	€723,281
2006	€6,199,980
2007	€27,384,837
2008	€53,025,430
2009	€83,394,513
2010	€100,076,430
2011	€115,917,365
2012	€93,542,392
Total	€480,429,064

The €135m budget provided for RAS in 2012 is intended to support the costs of all existing rent supplement households transferred to the scheme prior to 2012 and to fund the costs of rents of additional new transfers to the scheme (new supply) during the year.

The on-going costs of administering the scheme including staff and office accommodation costs, legal fees, advertising costs and general expenses are met out of savings under the scheme together with a direct payment from the Exchequer in the form of an administrative fee for each household managed under RAS. In addition a once-off administration fee is available to authorities who have assessed a Rent Supplement case for RAS but have subsequently accommodated the household in local authority social housing.

Transfers to RAS and Social Housing 2005 - Sept. 2012

Local Authorities (Housing)	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	End Sept 2012	TOTAL
Carlow Co. Cl.	0	28	113	133	150	132	128	99	783
Cavan Co. Cl.	0	68	77	68	155	144	162	160	834
Clare Co. Cl.	44	96	94	134	135	102	102	73	780
Cork City Cl.	50	308	267	362	279	353	359	176	2,154

Questions - Written Answers

Local Authorities (Housing)	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	End Sept 2012	TOTAL
Cork Co. Cl.	0	0	518	620	490	438	429	251	2,746
Donegal Co. Cl.	141	373	402	222	298	323	277	106	2,142
Dublin City Cl.	224	523	456	618	596	478	251	220	3,366
Dublin South Co. Cl.	7	388	425	393	527	452	365	264	2,821
Dun/Rathdown Co.Cl.	0	49	232	229	256	256	154	82	1,258
Fingal Co. Cl.	0	122	171	281	347	331	548	327	2,127
Galway City Cl.	62	184	227	244	208	135	168	46	1,274
Galway Co. Cl.	0	112	132	142	157	158	113	105	919
Kerry Co. Cl.	0	167	272	266	280	231	212	135	1,563
Kildare Co. Cl.	0	0	286	346	93	201	202	86	1,214
Kilkenny Co. Cl.	0	162	279	173	143	110	159	130	1,156
Laois Co. Cl.	0	61	69	122	53	64	75	48	492
Leitrim Co. Cl.	0	24	0	28	44	64	75	5	240

Transfers to RAS and Social Housing 2005 - Sept. 2012

Local Authority Housing	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	End Sept 2012	Total
Limerick City Cl.	42	116	118	123	133	174	175	110	991
Limerick Co. Cl.	0	131	112	122	133	111	149	81	839
Longford Co. Cl.	0	51	81	121	106	94	42	8	503
Louth Co. Cl.	17	169	158	281	201	197	156	29	1,208
Mayo Co. Cl.	0	128	245	244	234	251	224	126	1,452
Meath Co. Cl.	0	39	43	108	135	164	168	88	745
Monaghan Co. Cl.	0	76	88	83	72	117	59	30	525
Nth Tipperary Co. Cl.	0	77	89	100	132	144	173	115	830
Offaly Co. Cl.	7	53	65	376	127	113	86	63	890
Roscommon Co.Cl.	0	57	148	13	145	165	144	96	768

Local Authority Housing	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	End Sept 2012	Total
Sligo Co. Cl.	3	121	63	156	163	117	128	87	838
Sth Tipperary Co. Cl.	0	129	179	13	200	196	199	157	1,073
Waterford City Cl.	0	226	140	118	181	111	250	115	1,141
Waterford Co. Cl.	0	40	46	101	142	155	99	70	653
Westmeath Co. Cl.	0	72	83	140	162	91	71	51	670
Wexford Co. Cl.	9	198	304	260	191	283	274	203	1,722
Wicklow Co. Cl.	0	88	72	175	134	154	161	122	906
Totals	606	4,436	6,054	6,915	6,802	6,609	6,337	3,864	41,623

Question No. 696 answered with Question No. 666.

Local Authority Leases

697. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of contracts signed and the number of houses that were leased to qualified housing applicants in each local authority in 2011 and to date in 2012; the total number of properties leased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47853/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Since the Scheme began in 2009, 3,458 housing units have been made available for use as social housing under the Social Housing Leasing Initiative. A breakdown of units provided in 2011, to date in 2012 and in total, by housing authority, is show in the following table.

Housing Authority	Leasing Units provided in 2011*	Leasing units provided to date in 2012*	Cumulative Leasing Units provided
Athlone Town Council	10	33	50
Athy Town Council	21	-	21
Birr Town Council	4	16	20
Bray Town Council	1	-	1
Buncrana Town Council	21	12	38
Bundoran Town Council	1	-	1
Carlow County Council	-	6	23
Carlow Town Council	14	-	14
Cashel Town Council	-	3	4

Questions - Written Answers

Housing Authority	Leasing Units provided in 2011*	Leasing units provided to date in 2012*	Cumulative Leasing Units provided
Castlebar Town Council	-	-	20
Cavan County Council	3	3	6
Clare County Council	24	17	44
Clonmel Borough Council	12	2	16
Cork City Council	44	25	135
Cork County Council	89	192	506
DLR County Council	44	69	113
Donegal County Council	29	38	87
Drogheda Borough Council	-	27	31
Dublin City Council	166	-	444
Dundalk Town Council	42	89	155
Ennis Town Council	6	7	15
Enniscorthy Town Council	-	9	9
Fingal County Council	107	102	242
Galway City Council	123	29	152
Galway County Council	-	12	12
Kerry County Council	-	7	7
Kildare County Council	2	10	98
Kilkenny County Council	1	9	37
Laois County Council	30	10	134
Leitrim County Council	-	1	1
Letterkenny Town Council	14	10	42
Limerick City Council	-	10	10
Limerick County Council	11	5	18
Longford County Council	16	-	20

Housing Authority	Leasing Units provided in 2011*	Leasing units provided to date in 2012*	Cumulative Leasing Units provided
Louth County Council	24	-	24
Mayo County Council	14	15	31
Meath County Council	38	17	82
Monaghan County Council	1	-	1
Nenagh Town Council	24	6	30
North Tipperary County Co	7	6	13
Offaly County Council	14	27	64
Roscommon County Council	4	-	10
Sligo Borough Council	8	2	10
Sligo County Council	8	11	19
South Tipperary County Co	7	12	20
Sth Dublin County Council	116	29	305
Templemore Town Council	32	18	50
Thurles Town Council	6	6	12
Waterford City Council	12	33	46
Waterford County Council	19	15	63
Westmeath County Council	11	22	96
Westport Town Council	3	-	3
Wexford Borough Council	2	4	6
Wexford County Council	24	12	46
Wicklow County Council	1	-	1
Grand Total	1,193	962	3,458

* The figures compare the cumulative units at the end of 2011 to the most recent cumulative figure available.

Building Regulations Amendments

698. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will respond to correspondence outstanding since July 2012 (details supplied). [47862/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The correspondence in question relates to proposals to amend the Building Control Regulations which were the subject of an extensive public consultation process earlier this year and which are currently being finalised for signature into law. A detailed reply to the representations will issue shortly.

Question No. 699 answered with Question No. 688.

Legislative Programme

700. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the Climate Bill will be ready for publication by the fourth quarter of 2012; the date on which in the fourth quarter of 2012 he will issue the heads of a Climate Bill to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht; if the Climate Bill will contain legally binding emission reduction targets for 2050 and 2020 and interim targets in the form of five year carbon budgets adopted by Dáil Éireann; if it ensure that these targets will be met domestically without buying offset credits overseas; if it will establish an independent climate change commission that advises Government and has the power to publish its own reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47941/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): As set out in the programme for the development of climate policy and legislation which I published in January 2012, the commitment to issue heads of a Climate Bill in the fourth quarter of 2012 to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht, and stakeholders, for their consideration, remains on schedule. While I am committed to an open and transparent policy and legislation development process, it would be inappropriate for me to engage on the possible provisions of the climate Bill in advance of the heads being finalised and approved by Government.

Planning Issues

701. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the length of time on average a planning application that is appealed to An Bord Pleanála take to be processed by the Bord; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47942/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): An Bord Pleanála has a statutory objective to determine appeals and referrals within 18 weeks. The compliance rate with the statutory objective time period for normal planning appeals stood at 37% as of the end of September 2012 and the average time taken was 22.7 weeks.

Local Authority Housing Provision

702. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will assist long term tenants of local authority houses with impeccable rent repayment records who wish to purchase their houses but are unable to access credit due to their age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47969/12]

717. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason persons in receipt of social welfare payments are not eligible for a council loan to buy out their own houses under the tenant purchase scheme, even if the repayments on such a loan would be less than their current rent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48229/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 702 and 717 together.

In advancing loans for house purchase by lower income borrowers it is of critical importance that local authorities make such funding available on the basis of sound lending criteria. My Department and individual local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that mortgage lending is prudentially based and that the capacity of a borrower fully to service a loan over the full term is realistically assessed and stress-tested. Provisions governing mortgage lending by local authorities are set out under the Housing (Local Authority Loans) Regulations 2012 and associated credit policy.

The regulations provide for an upper age limit for borrowers of 70 years and a maximum loan term of 30 years. The age limit implies that borrowers over 40 must have a shorter loan period which impacts on their monthly costs of borrowing. In these instances, capacity to repay over the shorter period rather than the age of the applicant is a determining factor in respect of a loan application.

Persons in receipt of social welfare payments are not specifically precluded from purchasing their home under any tenant purchase scheme. However, if the applicants are applying to fund the purchase through loan finance from the local authority they must meet the criteria which apply to such loans. While, as a general rule, the credit policy provides that loans are not available to those in receipt of unemployment/social welfare benefits, an exception may be made where there is a primary income of a permanent waged/salaried nature and where the secondary income is from the Department of Social Protection.

In such cases long term social welfare payments can be considered, provided the long term nature of the payment is confirmed. The final decision on whether to grant/refuse an applicant lies solely with the relevant local authority. All local authorities must satisfy themselves on the financial risk they are undertaking. However, the relevance of the difference between projected mortgage repayments and current rental payments for a prospective purchaser is very limited. It takes no account, for example, of the fact that while rent levels can be adjusted to reflect changing household income, mortgage repayments cannot. Nor does it take account of the additional costs taken on when a household becomes a homeowner thereby assuming responsibility for the on-going maintenance of the home.

Question No. 703 answered with Question No. 683.

Question No. 704 answered with Question No. 673.

Waste Disposal

705. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Lo-

cal Government the position regarding bin waivers for low income households; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that private waste collection companies are now executing orders to customers for payments which require high up-front payments; if he will outline the assistance available to low income households who are unable to pay such high costs for this service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47991/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government's new waste policy, *A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland*, was published in July 2012. Among the measures included in the policy is the establishment of an interdepartmental working group to report to Government with options to minimise the impact of waste charges on low income households. The working group, which comprises representatives of my Department and the Departments of Social Protection; Public Expenditure and Reform; Finance; and the Tánaiste's Office, is currently engaged in finalising its report for submission to Government.

Approaches to best address the impact of waste charges on low income households will be considered by Government following receipt of the report. I have also written to the industry setting out the requirement for the development of Customer Charters, so that all consumers can be clear as to the level of service and charging structures in place.

Question No. 706 answered with Question No. 673.

Homeless Persons Numbers

707. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if any of the National Assets Management Agency allocated social housing properties will be utilised to meet the needs of the rising homeless population; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48104/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of accommodation for homeless persons rests with the housing authorities. NAMA has identified over 3,800 units to be considered for social housing. Of those that have been examined to date, 449 have been deemed unsuitable by housing authorities and a further 594 have been withdrawn. 2,010 units are being examined by housing authorities as to their suitability for social housing purposes including accommodating homeless persons.

Departmental Expenditure

708. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the expenditure of regeneration funding for the Waterford Regeneration project in each of the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 spent on project staff salaries and wages, project office overheads and consultant fees; the total funding for the regeneration project recouped in 2008, 2009 and 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48146/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department supports an ambitious programme of regeneration projects to deliver integrated physical, social and economic regeneration, ranging from large-scale urban regeneration projects such as Ballymun and Limerick city to smaller estate regeneration projects in a number of regional cities and towns around the country, including Waterford.

In the case of complex regeneration schemes, professional staff are involved at every stage in the project life cycle ranging from initial socio-economic appraisal, planning and design, preparation of contract documents, procurement of services and works contracts, construction supervision and post project review. Depending on the availability of resources within individual authorities and the competencies and skill-sets required to progress projects through the various stages, project staff may be assigned to a regeneration scheme from within an authority's own staff complement or may be procured through open competition by way of fixed term or services contract. Contract management and project supervision costs may be project-specific or may, in cases such as engineering services, health and safety services contracts or other specialist service provision, relate to a number of projects under a particular regeneration scheme.

Based on the information available in my Department, it is not possible with the necessary degree of certainty to disaggregate consultant and project management/supervision fees in the case of the various regeneration projects which were being progressed by Waterford City during the years 2008, 2009 and 2010. Details of the amounts allocated and recouped to the Council for the years 2008 to 2010 for the Waterford City Regeneration Projects are set out in the following table:

Year	Amount Recouped
2008	€10,553,497.00
2009	€8,123,692.00
2010	€8,286,389.00

Household Charge Collection

709. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will invoice those householders who have not yet paid the household charge; his views on the number of householders who have paid the charge and who are now receiving repeat demands for payment; if he is satisfied to place the onus on such compliant householders to contact the payment agencies; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the CEO of the Local Government Management Agency has claimed that compliant householders who failed to respond to these demands may be liable to a penalty; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48186/12]

716. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will give an assurance that local authorities will be directed to desist from writing demanding letters for the household charge to persons who are deceased as this is causing upset; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48227/12]

718. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on letters demanding payment of the household charge being sent to persons who have already paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48284/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 709, 716 and 718 together.

The Local Government Management Agency is administering the Household Charge system on a shared service/agency basis for all county and city councils. There was no existing comprehensive database of residential properties and their owners within the State prior to the Household Charge being introduced. The collection of the Household Charge via self-assessment declaration provides for the collation of such information in relation to residential property and will be an essential component for implementing a full local property tax. Local

authorities are continuing to identify undeclared properties through appropriate data sharing provisions, and significant efforts have been expended in matching self-declared information with other datasets and in refining the resulting data.

I also understand that the addresses and names used in the current batch of letters which are being issued by Local Authorities reminding people to pay the Household Charge have been based on a data matching exercise with the Property Registration Authority. I understand that every effort has been made to try and ensure letters are sent to current property owners. However there are some instances where letters are being sent to previous owners of properties, due to the fact that the more recent property owners may not have registered their property with the Authority or the transfer of the property has not been completed. Thus in some cases the information contained within these datasets may not reflect the most recent and relevant details. As a consequence, the data matching exercise can give rise to situations in which people may receive a letter where they have already paid the charge. Due to differences in the formats of addresses between datasets, it has also been the case that some owners who have paid the charge are receiving reminder letters.

In other instances, letters have unfortunately been sent to deceased persons. I appreciate that receipt of such a letter may cause upset to relatives of a deceased person. However, in the absence of a comprehensive database, such instances, while regrettable, are also unavoidable if the Agency and local authorities are to continue their work in maximising compliance with a charge which funds essential local services for communities. I understand that the letters which issued in recent weeks invite recipients who are not liable, or who have previously paid the household charge, or in the event of inaccuracy or error, to contact the Household Charge Bureau to allow the Agency to update their records accordingly.

Question No. 710 answered with Question No. 666.

Local Authority Housing Provision

711. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of housing units for each housing authority currently tenanted under the residential accommodation scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48199/12]

712. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide details, on a county basis, of the number of houses currently tenanted under the long term leasing arrangement; the management agency responsible for these units; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48200/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 711 and 712 together.

Data in relation to leasing and RAS units are generally provided as numbers of operational units under leasing or households transferred under RAS. The number of these units tenanted at any particular time varies as leases end, tenants move on to other properties or new tenancies are allocated. Recoupment in relation to both leasing and RAS is based on the securing of the property and making it available to social housing tenants. Where vacancies arise, local authorities, or approved housing bodies, have 3 months to re-let the unit. Where a new tenant is not in place within that 3 month period, recoupment under both schemes ceases until such time as a tenant is in situ. To the end of September 2012, local authorities had transferred a total of 41,623 households to the Rental Accommodation Scheme from Rent Supplement since the for-

mer commenced in late 2005. To the end of October 2012, 3,458 housing units have been made available for use as social housing under the Social Housing Leasing Initiative.

Local Authority Housing Provision

713. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total number of social housing units currently owned by voluntary housing associations; the number of these units that are specialised, that is sheltered, OPDs, specially adapted and so on; the number that are standard family housing on a county basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48201/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department’s records show that a total of 25,900 units of accommodation have been provided by the approved Voluntary and Co-operative Housing Bodies. Some 10,501 of these were provided under the Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) and comprise largely standard housing for low-income families. 15,399 units of accommodation were funded under my Department’s Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) which provides funding of up to 100% of the cost of accommodation for persons with a disability, older persons, homeless etc. Given that individual housing bodies may cater for a range of special housing needs and that the accommodation provided by those bodies may be multi-purpose, it is not possible definitively to state the number of units which may be allocated to meet specialised housing need.

Information in relation to the numbers of CLSS and CAS units in each local authority area is set out in the following table:

Local Authority	No. of Units under Capital Assistance Scheme	No. of Units under Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme
Carlow County Council	272	254
Cavan County Council	152	48
Clare County Council	270	131
Cork County Council	1,013	631
Cork City Council	870	258
Donegal County Council	625	452
Dublin City Council	2,935	1731
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council	490	366
Fingal County Council	453	607
Galway County Council	367	179
Galway City Council	349	180
Kerry County Council	429	179
Kildare County Council	539	501
Kilkenny County Council	638	137
Laois County Council	284	271
Leitrim County Council	95	44
Limerick County Council	605	103
Limerick City Council	307	99
Longford County Council	170	200

Local Authority	No. of Units under Capital Assistance Scheme	No. of Units under Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme
Louth County Council	222	659
Mayo County Council	676	194
Meath County Council	211	180
Monaghan County Council	248	76
Offaly County Council	163	271
Roscommon County Council	152	35
Sligo County Council	306	265
South Dublin County Council	362	941
Tipperary North County Council	252	280
Tipperary South County Council	327	418
Waterford County Council	169	141
Waterford City Council	594	268
Westmeath County Council	199	0
Wexford County Council	384	310
Wicklow County Council	271	92
-	15,399	10,501

Voluntary Housing Sector Issues

714. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of voluntary housing associations operating here; the number of units being managed or owned by each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48202/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Government’s Housing Policy Statement, published in June 2011, recognises the approved housing body sector as a key partner in the delivery of social housing solutions for low-income families and persons with specific categories of housing need, including older people, persons with a physical, intellectual or mental health disability, homeless persons and elderly returning emigrants.

Some 700 voluntary and co-operative bodies have been granted Approved Housing Body status by my Department in accordance with section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 1992. The number of active approved housing bodies is considerably lower and 443 bodies have completed one or more than one housing project yielding a total of 25,363 housing units to date.

In September 2009 the Centre for Housing Research published the Strategic Review of the Capital Funding Schemes for Voluntary and Co-operative Housing by Grant Thornton and Fitzpatrick Associates. The report recommended, *inter alia*, that the status of bodies in the voluntary and co-operative housing sector be reviewed and, specifically, that approved housing bodies (AHBs) that have never received funding should have their approved status reviewed and withdrawn if appropriate, for example if the approved body never was, or is no longer, active. My Department has recently rescinded the approved housing body designation of more

than 80 inactive bodies that have also been wound up with the Companies Registration Office. A further cohort of approved housing bodies, that appear to be inactive, is currently under examination and I expect to de-list more bodies in 2013 in order to present a more accurate picture of the size of the sector operating in Ireland.

Household Charge Collection

715. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will investigate the situation in an estate in North County Dublin (details supplied) which is unfinished and exempt from the household charge but where residents living in the unfinished section of the estate have been issued with late payment penalty notices, when no resident should have to pay any household charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48210/12]

723. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the recourse there is for residents of unfinished estates who contend that they have not been properly categorised for the household charge and that they should be entitled to the unfinished housing estate waiver; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48368/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 715 and 723 together.

The Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011 and the Local Government (Household Charge) Regulations 2012 provide the legislation underpinning the Household Charge.

Under section 4(4) of the 2011 Act, a person is currently entitled to a waiver if the residential property is situated in an unfinished housing estate. The 2012 Regulations prescribe a list of all such developments, which are based on a number of factors, including whether the development is in receivership, whether the developer is active, and:

- The state of completion of roads, footpaths, public lighting facilities, piped water and sewerage facilities and open spaces or similar amenities within the development;
- The extent to which the development complies with the terms of applicable planning permission;
- The extent to which it complies with the provisions of the Building Control Acts 1990 and 2007;
- The provisions of the Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act 1964 as they pertain to dangerous places and dangerous structures within the meaning of the Act;
- The extent to which facilities within the development have been taken in charge by the local authority concerned; and,
- Where there is an agreement regarding the maintenance of such facilities, the extent to which this agreement has been complied with.

My Department has been working closely with the Local Authorities to have available a revised list of estates for 2013. Again, this will refer to relevant factors such as completion of roads, footpaths, public lighting facilities, piped water and sewerage facilities and open spaces or similar amenities within the development. If any owners of homes in an unfinished housing estate, as specified in the 2012 Regulations and therefore entitled to a waiver under the 2011 Act, have been issued, in error, with late payment penalty notices I advise them to contact the

Household Charge Bureau or their local authority to resolve the matter.

Question No. 716 answered with Question No. 709.

Question No. 717 answered with Question No. 702.

Question No. 718 answered with Question No. 709.

Question No. 719 answered with Question No. 663.

Commercial Rates Calculations

720. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the commercial rate payable in tabular form for each of the following, county councils, city councils and town councils; the average rate for each county including city and town councils where applicable; the average rate for all county and city and town councils in the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48294/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Local authorities have a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Act 2001. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority.

The Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) is decided by the elected members of each local authority in the annual budget and its determination is a reserved function. The ARV is applied to the valuation of each property determined by the Valuation Office and set out in the valuation lists in order to obtain the amount payable in rates. My Department does not hold information on the value of individual properties in each local authority area. The 2012 Annual Rate on Valuation in respect of each local authority is set out in the following table.

Local Authority	2012 Annual Rate on Valuation
County Councils	-
Carlow	66.47
Cavan	56.85
Clare	72.99
Cork	74.75
Donegal	69.70
Fingal*	0.17
Dun Laoghaire* Rathdown	0.14
Galway	66.59
Kerry	80.35
Kildare	68.95
Kilkenny	52.05
Laois	64.63
Leitrim	62.15
Limerick	59.92
Longford	66.01
Louth	55.08
Mayo	68.76

Local Authority	2012 Annual Rate on Valuation
Meath	69.62
Monaghan	56.20
North Tipperary	59.53
Offaly	56.77
Roscommon	74.38
Sligo	64.43
South Dublin*	0.16
South Tipperary	56.77
Waterford	69.92
Westmeath	52.27
Wexford	71.52
Wicklow	76.78
City Councils	
Cork	74.05
Dublin	61.19
Galway	65.46
Limerick	74.93
Waterford	66.22
Borough Councils	
Clonmel	58.84
Drogheda	66.49
Kilkenny	59.55
Sligo	68.94
Wexford	67.66
Rating Town Councils	
Arklow	63.95
Athlone	60.72
Athy	56.29
Ballina	64.52
Ballinasloe	52.00
Birr	68.28
Bray	67.66
Buncrana	44.29
Bundoran	59.64
Carlow	74.49
Carrick on Suir	50.99
Carrickmacross	65.66
Cashel	57.56
Castlebar	70.94
Castleblayney	56.00
Cavan	73.02
Clonakilty	67.65
Clones	59.90
Cobh	71.53

Local Authority	2012 Annual Rate on Valuation
Dundalk	66.49
Dungarvan	60.37
Ennis	65.45
Enniscorthy	65.13
Fermoy	61.00
Kells	65.35
Killarney	70.37
Kilrush	61.93
Kinsale	65.11
Letterkenny	65.21
Listowel	77.07
Longford	69.01
Macroom	65.37
Mallow	57.88
Wexford	63.53
Monaghan	72.00
Naas	67.41
Navan	64.83
Nenagh	55.68
New Ross	55.47
Skibbereen	71.00
Templemore	55.00
Thurles	58.00
Tipperary	52.20
Tralee	81.18
Trim	64.10
Tullamore	67.65
Westport	63.55
Wicklow	63.24
Youghal	65.31

*Revalued by the Valuation Office under the Valuation Act 2001.

Exchequer Savings

721. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the annual saving to the Exchequer if a pay cap of €100,000 was in place for the 226.65 City and County Managers, Assistant Managers and Directors of Service within local authorities in receipt of annual basic salaries in excess of €100,000. [48352/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Information regarding potential cost savings which could arise if the salaries in question were reduced is not available in my Department.

Question No. 722 answered with Question No. 658.

Question No. 723 answered with Question No. 715.

Household Charge Exemptions

724. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a person (details supplied) who is not liable to pay the household property charge but who nonetheless paid the charge can obtain a refund of the charge they paid in error; the reason it is taking so long for him to obtain the refund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48396/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I see no reason why a person who is not liable for the Household Charge and who has paid in error should not obtain a refund. Queries in relation to operational issues, such as the time taken to process a valid refund, should be directed to the Household Charge Bureau or to the local authority in question.

Water and Sewerage Scheme Grants

725. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has reviewed the grants for group water/ waste water group schemes (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48403/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The rate of grant available for Group Sewerage Schemes is €2,031.58 per house or 75% of the cost of the scheme, whichever is the lesser. The National Rural Water Services Committee, which has a role in advising me on rural water policy, proposed that the rate of grant be reviewed during 2012. As a result of a review carried out by my Department, I propose, in the first instance, to carry out a number of pilot schemes based on an increased grant level. My Department will ask local authorities to include in their requests for funding under the 2013 Rural Water Programme proposals for group sewerage schemes which might be viable if an increased grant was available. The selection of the pilot schemes and related funding arrangements will be completed as soon as possible after proposals have been received from local authorities in 2013. I have no plans to increase the existing grant for group water schemes.

Regeneration Projects Funding

726. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of regeneration funding provided in the current year for the replacement of windows and doors and remedial works on local authority houses in an area (details supplied) in County Sligo; if any proposal has been made by Sligo Borough Council to use Regeneration funding for similar remedial works on private houses in the estate and if private households in the estate will be offered the opportunity to avail of a 50/50 scheme where certain approved remedial/refurbishment works are 50% funded from regeneration funds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48443/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department supports an ambitious programme of regeneration projects to deliver integrated physical, social and economic regeneration, ranging from large-scale urban regeneration projects such as Ballymun and Limerick city to smaller estate regeneration projects in a number of regional towns around the country. Funding of €90 million has been set aside to support the National Regeneration Programme in 2012. Of that €3 million has been allocated to Sligo Borough Council in respect of its regeneration project.

In advance of the completion of the masterplan for the regeneration of the Eastern Quadrant of Sligo, my Department is supporting a number of “early win ” projects put forward by Sligo Borough Council, including a window and doors replacement programme costing €121,564, a refurbishment programme for vacant houses costing €272,230 and an energy efficiency programme costing €144,840.

There are no proposals with my Department for refurbishment works on private houses. It will be a matter for the master planning process to set out a vision for the regeneration of the Eastern Quadrant and the implementation strategies to be put in place to deliver regeneration locally.

Local Authority Housing Provision

727. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update on efforts being made to retain the vital Estate Management Projects in Fettercairn and Killinarden, Dublin 24 and if he will outline contacts which have been made in respect of this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48511/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The projects concerned operated as mainstreamed drugs projects under my Department’s housing programme. Following significant reductions in the funding available to support these projects in 2012 my Department, exceptionally, provided *pro rata* funding to support the projects until end June 2012.

Following a consultation process, South Dublin County Council identified interim funding to maintain the projects during the second half of 2012. The funding was identified on a partnership basis between the Council and the Tallaght Local Drugs Task Force. The Council has advised that this funding represents a once-off contribution and will allow the projects to continue while the report of my colleague, the Minister of State with responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy, on the review of the structures that underpin the strategy at local, regional and national level is finalised. It is understood that this report, which is expected shortly, will consider how current funding structures can be improved or streamlined, particularly with regard to local and regional drugs task forces.

The provision of funding by South Dublin County Council to end 2012 has also allowed the projects additional time to explore alternative funding mechanisms and to identify resources to deliver on the overall objectives of the projects beyond 2012, including through alternative service delivery models.

Northern Ireland Issues

728. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48544/12]

729. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Lo-

cal Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 170 of 24 October 2012, the number of staff who have been working on north south cooperation issues in each year since 2007; and the number currently working in this area. [48554/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 728 and 729 together.

My Department and I are directly involved in ongoing and frequent North South engagement up to a very high level. This involves regular contact with the Department of Environment in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the North South Joint Secretariat based in Armagh. This work is undertaken in the context of actively pursuing our priorities for advancing co-operation through the North South Ministerial Council in Environment and Agriculture formations, most recently at the meetings held on 31 October 2012.

Current priorities include:

- Co-ordinated implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive including preparation of River Basin Management Plans and programmes of measures for the protection and improvement of water quality. This work is brought forward by the North South Working Group on Water Quality.

- Sharing of information on waste policy development in each jurisdiction.

- Arrangements for the repatriation of waste which originated in this State but which was illegally disposed of in Northern Ireland.

- Joint approaches to environmental research and monitoring involving my Department, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

- Co-operation on measures to examine the potential for the development of all-island markets for recyclable materials. A programme of work in this area is guided by the North South Market Development Steering Group with assistance from the Department's Market Development Programme.

- Carrying out the Department's role as Accountable Department under the PEACE 111 and Interreg IVA Programmes.

Engagement on the foregoing issues involves many officials in my Department at Assistant Secretary, Principal Officer, Assistant Principal Officer, Higher Executive Officer, Executive Officer and Clerical Officer levels spread across a number of business units. The degree of engagement by each individual or grade is determined by the frequency of Council meetings and the requirement to pursue our objectives through meetings of a number of North South working groups and committees.

The Department operates within the staffing levels set by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform through the implementation of the Employment Control Framework and the moratorium on filling of vacancies by recruitment or promotion. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that the business units concerned are adequately staffed to discharge their North South and other responsibilities.

Local Authority Housing Provision

730. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of qualified housing applicants in each local authority for social

housing; the total number of housing applicants; the measures he will take to address the housing crisis here; when the National Assets Management Agency properties will be released to local authorities; the format that this will take; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48558/12]

760. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the measures he proposes to take to address the housing situation in County Kerry; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there are almost 5,000 qualified housing applicants between the three town councils and Kerry County Council; if his further attention has been drawn to the fact that his Department has informed Kerry County Council that they will only receive funding to construct three local authority houses over the next three years; when the National Assets Management Agency properties will be released to local authorities; the format this will take; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48732/12]

761. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the discussions and negotiations he has had with the National Management Agency regarding the release of National Assets Management Agency properties for social housing; when Kerry County Council and the three town councils will be informed of their allocation as there is now a housing crisis in the county with almost 5,000 qualified housing applicants on the waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48733/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 730, 760 and 761 together.

My Department does not hold information on the number of households on local authorities' waiting lists. This figure continuously fluctuates as households are allocated housing and new households apply for housing support. Detailed information on the latest statutory assessment of housing need, carried out in March 2011 and including a breakdown by housing authority, is available on my Department's website – www.envion.ie or on the Housing Agency's website at www.housing.ie. My Department intends to carry a full Housing Needs Assessment in 2013, and will publish the results as soon as possible thereafter. In terms of the delivery of social housing, the Government's housing policy statement, published in June 2011, clearly identifies that the priority for Government will be to meet the most acute needs of households applying for social housing support.

Delivery of social housing has been significantly facilitated through more flexible funding models such as the Rental Accommodation Scheme and leasing, but the Government is also committed to developing other funding mechanisms that will increase the supply of permanent new social housing. Such mechanisms will include options to purchase, build to lease and the sourcing of loan finance by approved housing bodies for construction and acquisition. There is also obvious potential, across a range of housing programmes, for the Government's objective of sourcing and providing suitable residential units for use as social housing to be aligned with the commercial objectives of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA).

The Department recently advised Kerry County Council that funding will be provided for the construction of three single instance rural dwellings over the period 2012 to 2014. Capital allocations to Kerry County Council under the range of measures under the social housing investment programme in 2013 will be considered in the context of the budgetary provision for housing for 2013.

I refer to the reply to Questions Nos 53 of 23 October and 440 of 16 of October respectively, for the most up to date information in relation to the delivery of NAMA units generally and in relation to units in Kerry in particular.

Waste Disposal

731. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the historic landfills working group was established; who is the chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issue; the action taken and a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48572/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Historical Landfills Working Group was established in September 2011. The Working Group provides a platform to share experience and to assist local authorities to standardise the certification of old unlicensed legacy municipal landfills, in accordance with the Waste Management (Certification of Historical Unlicensed Waste Disposal and Recovery Activity) Regulations 2008. Given its role, as primarily, an informal and experience sharing vehicle, the Working Group has not prepared formal reports/conclusions.

The Working Group is currently chaired by my Department and membership is open to each of the local authorities. Four meetings have taken place, beginning in September 2011. The meetings have in some cases included site visits, to facilitate training for local authority personnel. The most recent meeting, which took place on 24 October 2012, focussed on a Road Map for certification of sites, and the development of an on-line system to facilitate applications for such certification. I would envisage the Working Group continuing to operate in support of local authorities carrying out the certification process.

Departmental Bodies

732. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the joint working group of the transfer of rent supplement from the Department of Social Protection to his Department was established; who is the chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meeting that have been held and the number of reports and conclusions issue; the action being taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48573/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Programme for Government included a commitment to review the operation of the Rent Supplement Scheme in order to achieve better value for money and to address concerns about the increase in households who have been receiving rent supplement in the longer term. A Steering Group was established in May 2011 to undertake this review and progress proposals as to the future operation of the Scheme.

The Steering Group is comprised of officials from my Department, the Departments of Social Protection and Public Expenditure and Reform, the City and County Managers Association, the Housing Agency and the Revenue Commissioners. My Department normally chairs the Steering Group. Since its establishment the Steering Group has met on 14 occasions and has reported four times to Government in relation to progress in developing the proposal.

In March 2012, the Government approved in principle a joint proposal by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Minister for Social Protection to transfer responsibility for recipients of rent supplement with an established long-term housing need from the Department of Social Protection to local (housing) authorities through the establishment of a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). To implement this decision both Ministers will be bringing forward legislation over the coming months to enable the new arrangements to

be put in place.

Mortgage Arrears Proposals

733. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the local authority mortgage arrears guidance group was established; who is the chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meeting that have been held and the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action being taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48574/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The mortgage arrears guidance group was convened in early 2010 and is made up of representatives of the local authority sector and my Department. It is chaired by my Department. The group’s remit is to examine trends in local authority mortgage arrears and to devise appropriate responses. To date it has convened on five occasions and as a result of its work revised mortgage arrears guidance issued to local authorities earlier this year. This guidance is closely based on the Central Bank’s most recent code of practice on mortgage arrears which came into effect from 1 January 2011. As a result of the guidance developed by the group, all local authorities are now implementing a revised Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP). The group continues to work to ensure the smooth roll-out of the guidance and the options set out therein for borrowers.

Local Authority Services

734. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the Waterford local Government committee group was established; who is the chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meeting that have been held and the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action being taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48575/12]

743. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which the Limerick reorganisation implementation group was established; the person who is chairman of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48585/12]

744. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which the Tipperary reorganisation implementation group was established; the person who is chairman of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48586/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 734, 743 and 744 together.

The Waterford Local Government Committee was established on 23 September 2011. Full details in relation to its work, including the matters raised in the question, are contained in The Report of the Waterford Local Government Committee which was submitted in March 2012. The Limerick Reorganisation Implementation Group was established on 26 July 2011 and has submitted two reports to date, an Initial Report in February 2012 and a Progress Report in July 2012. The Group’s Implementation Plan in respect of local government reorganisation in Lim-

erick is expected to be submitted in the near future. The Tipperary Reorganisation Implementation Group was established on 23 September 2011 and submitted a Progress Report in November 2011 and Implementation Plan in June 2012. While information regarding the number of meetings held by both Groups is not available in the Department, details in relation to the other matters raised in the questions are set out in the aforementioned reports. Arrangements for local authority unification in both cases will proceed in line with Implementation Plans. Copies of the publications referred to are available on my Department's website at www.environ.ie.

Water Services Provision

735. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the steering group to oversee reform of the water sector was established; who is the chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meeting that have been held and the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action being taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48576/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The steering group referred to in the Question was established in June 2011 to oversee the independent assessment on the transfer of responsibility for water provision from local authorities to a water utility which was required under the Programme of Financial Support for Ireland with the EU/IMF/ECB. The group, which is chaired by my Department (Mr Mark Griffin, Assistant Secretary), has met on four occasions to date.

As well as my own Department, membership is drawn from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, NewERA and the County and City Managers' Association. PricewaterhouseCoopers, the consultants appointed to undertake the independent assessment, also attended meetings of the group.

The group oversaw the preparation of the independent assessment and, based on the recommendations of that assessment, the Government decided in December 2011 to establish Irish Water as a public water utility. Following the Government decision in April 2012 that Irish Water should be established as an independent subsidiary of Bord Gáis Eireann, membership of the group was extended to include a representative of Bord Gáis. During the course of this year, the group's main focus has been on the development of an implementation strategy to give effect to Government decisions in relation to the water reform programme. This has included consideration of the appropriate programme governance arrangements for the implementation phase.

Waste Disposal

736. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the waste management planing national coordination committee was established; who is the chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meeting that have been held and the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action being taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48577/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Under the European Communities (Waste Directive) Regulations 2011, which transposed the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) into Irish law, there is a requirement to evaluate existing waste management plans by 31 December 2012 and, consequent to such an evaluation, to revise plans as appropriate.

The Waste Framework Directive requires waste management plans to set out “an analysis of the current waste management situation in the geographical entity concerned, as well as the measures to be taken to improve environmentally sound preparing for re-use, recycling, recovery and disposal of waste and an evaluation of how the plan will support the implementation of the objectives and provisions of the Directive”. Under Regulation 8 of the transposing Regulations, which amends section 22 of the Waste Management Act 1996, all waste management plans must:

- Lay down measures to protect the environment and human health by preventing or reducing the adverse impacts of the generation and management of waste and by reducing overall impacts of resource use and improving the efficiency of such use;
- Be in accordance with the waste hierarchy set out in section 21A of the 1996 Act;
- Meet the protection of human health and the environment obligations set out in section 32(1) of the 1996 Act; and
- Meet the principles of self-sufficiency and proximity set out in section 37A of the 1996 Act.

The evaluation and subsequent revision of waste management plans will require Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and will also have regard to the requirements of Appropriate Assessment (AA) under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

My Department established a National Coordination Committee in October 2011 as an appropriate support mechanism for the evaluation process, including in relation to scoping SEA and AA requirements, so as to provide a framework or template to guide the evaluation and, where appropriate, revision of waste management plans. Seven meetings of the Committee have been held to date and a number of working documents have been produced including in relation to technical support, waste legislation and waste data. The membership of the Committee, chaired by my Department (Mr. Eoin Deegan, Administrative Officer), comprises representatives of my Department, the Environmental Protection Agency and the ten waste management regions.

Foreshore Advisory Group

737. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the foreshore advisory group was established; who is the chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meeting that have been held and the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action being taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48578/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Foreshore Advisory Group is a cross departmental/agency working group which was established by my Department in November 2011 to contribute to the preparation of legislation to give effect to the Programme for Government commitments in relation to the foreshore leasing and licensing regime by considering key policy and implementation issues in this area. The group is chaired by a Principal Officer in my Department and has met on 3 occasions to date.

As well as my own Department, membership is drawn from the Departments of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Transport, Tourism and Sport and Public Expenditure and Reform, as well as An Bord Pleanála, the City and

County Managers Association and the Marine Institute. Other organisations, such as the Attorney General's Office, also participate as necessary.

Pyrite Panel Report Implementation

738. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the independent panel to facilitate a resolution to the problem of pyrite was established; who is the chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meeting that have been held and the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action being taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48579/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I established the independent Pyrite Panel in September 2011, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Brendan Tuohy with Mr. Noel Carroll and Mr. Malcolm Edger as the other members. The Panel held 67 meetings and issued a comprehensive report containing 24 recommendations in July 2012. I am now in the process of implementing the report's recommendations in a way that will deliver solutions for homeowners. I recently announced that my Department will now finalise arrangements and terms of reference for the establishment of a Resolution Board. I have written to the Construction Industry Federation, the Irish Concrete Federation, HomeBond, the Irish Insurance Federation and the Irish Banking Federation giving them one final opportunity to engage constructively with me in putting in place a remediation programme and to contribute to its cost. I have set a deadline of 9 November for the parties to advise me of their responses. In the event that I do not receive positive responses by that date, I will ask Government to sanction the necessary steps to impose the type of levy recommended in the pyrite report to provide the necessary funding for a remediation programme.

Unfinished Housing Developments

739. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the National coordination committee for unfinished housing developments was established; who is the chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meeting that have been held and the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action being taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48580/12]

747. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans for resolving the issue of ghost estates. [48595/12]

752. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which he will be publishing his survey on incomplete developments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48715/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 739, 747 and 752 together.

The resolution of the various issues presented by unfinished developments is one of the major challenges faced by my Department and local authorities. The National Co-ordination Committee on Unfinished Housing Developments (NCC), which I chair, is charged with overseeing the implementation of the Report of the Advisory Group on Unfinished Housing Developments, together with the Government's response to the recommendations. The NCC includes representatives from the Irish Banking Federation, local authorities, the Housing and Sustainable

Communities Agency, NAMA and the construction sector and real progress is being made with regard to the public safety works required to improve the living conditions of existing residents on some unfinished estates.

The NCC was established in June 2011 and has met on 9 occasions, and a Progress Report was published in July 2012. Under the Public Safety Initiative (PSI), my Department has made allocations totalling some €3.549 million to 21 local authorities from the funding made available to address immediate public safety issues in 2011. The types of works that have been approved to date under the PSI include the fencing off of unsecured and hazardous areas, capping of pipes, installation of street lighting and other works to secure sites. A provision of €2 million has been made for 2012 by my Department and to date, a total of €1.897 million has been drawn down by local authorities.

I anticipate that the progress made in tackling the challenges faced by residents of unfinished housing developments will be reflected in the 2012 National Housing Development Survey which was conducted over the summer months. This Survey report, which I expect to publish by the end of November, should provide a clear picture of the progress which has been made to date in tackling the issues surrounding unfinished housing developments.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

740. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which local government/local development alignment steering group was established; the person who is chairman of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48582/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I established the Alignment Steering Group on 28 September 2011 with the following membership:

Mr Jim Ley, Chairperson; business strategy consultant and company director;

Dr. Patricia O'Hara, regional policy expert and Adjunct Professor at the National Institute for Regional Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) NUI Maynooth;

Mr. Liam Keane; former public servant with the HSE;

Ms. Martina Moloney; Galway County Manager;

Mr. Gerry Kearney, former Secretary General of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs;

Ms Geraldine Tallon, Secretary General of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

The Group met on 11 occasions and produced an interim report in December 2011 outlining some initial conclusions and suggestions for a way forward. The Group's final report, which sets out the Group's findings and recommendations, was published on 16 October 2012 and is available on my Department's website at www.environ.ie. The Steering Group's recommendations as reflected in Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government will be implemented on a phased basis over the period 2012-2014.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

741. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which the local government efficiency review implementation group was established; the person who is chairman of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process [48583/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The local government efficiency review implementation group was established on 29 April 2011. The Implementation Group is independently chaired by Mr. Pat McLoughlin (Chief Executive, Irish Payments Services Organisation, and former chairperson of the Local Government Efficiency Review Group). In addition to the Chair, the members of the Implementation Group are as follows;

Mr. Des Dowling, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government

Mr Garrett Fennell, Managing Director, GFC Consulting Ltd.

Mr. David Hearn, Consulting Partner in Charge, Deloitte

Ms. Anne O’Keeffe, Former Director, Office of Local Authority Management

The Group has met on sixteen occasions to date and submitted its first interim progress report to me in December 2011 which I asked to be developed further. A revised progress report was submitted and has been published on my Department’s website at www.environ.ie.

Direct savings identified in the Local Government Efficiency Review due to efficiency measures in local government are estimated as totalling €345m, comprising some €195m achieved in the period 2010 to 2011 and estimated further savings of €150m to be achieved in the period up to the end of 2013. These savings have been achieved to date primarily from areas such as staffing and procurement and I expect that further efficiency savings will continue to accrue in these areas and also into the future following the examination of a shared services approach across a number of programmes, particularly in relation to treasury management, transactional HR, shared payroll systems, and ICT back office functions. This estimate does not include any reductions in expenditure due to reduced activity.

The focus of the Group is on furthering efficiency gains and in this context, it is working closely with the local government sector in examining a wide range of business processes that could yield significant efficiency savings should they be delivered through a shared services or a lead authority approach. I am advised that the Implementation Group is currently drafting its next progress report, which I expect to have submitted to me shortly.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

742. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which the independent group to review staffing levels in Cork City Council was established; the person who is chairman of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48584/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The independent group to review staffing levels in Cork City Council was established in December 2011. The Implementation Group is independently chaired by Mr. Pat McLoughlin (Chief Executive, Irish Payments Services Organisation, and former chairperson of the Local Government Efficiency Review Group). In addition to the Chair, the members of the Implementation Group are as follows;

Mr. Des Dowling, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government

Ms. Anne O’Keeffe, Former Director, Office of Local Authority Management

Mr Alf Smiddy, Chairman, Granite Consulting

Dr. Aodh Quinlivan, Director of BSc Government, Department of Government, University College Cork.

The Group has met on four occasions to date and its work is on-going . I am advised that the Group will publish a report once its consideration of all matters is concluded.

Questions Nos. 743 and 744 answered with Question No. 734.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

745. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which the environmental law implementation group was established; the person who is chairman of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48587/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Environmental Law Implementation Group (ELIG) was established in December 2011 to assist in the protection and enhancement of Ireland’s environment by seeking to support further transposition, implementation and enforcement of environmental law through improved communication between policy makers and environmental non-Government organisations, including An Taisce. The membership of the ELIG will vary, depending on the environmental legislation under consideration. The ELIG is overseen by a Bureau, comprising one nominated representative from An Taisce, one nominated representative from the Environmental Pillar and two senior officials of my Department, which will normally meet bi-annually, with chairmanship of these meetings rotating between the members. Currently the nominated representatives are Ms. Attracta Ui Bhroin (An Taisce), Mr. Michael Ewing (Environmental Pillar) and Ms. Fiona Quinn and Mr. David Walsh of my Department. The role of the Bureau is to maintain an overview of all ELIG activity and to ensure that the ELIG facilitates a cohesive, consistent, efficient and timely approach to communication and consultation.

Since its establishment, the ELIG Bureau members have maintained regular contact by email and phone and have also met formally on two occasions - on 17 July and 24 September 2012. The next ELIG Bureau meeting is scheduled for 19 November 2012.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

746. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local

Government the date on which the inter-departmental group on property tax was established; the person who is chairman of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48588/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I established the independently-chaired Inter-Departmental Expert Group to consider the structures and modalities for an equitable Local Property Tax in the context of decisions to replace the Household Charge.

The Group had an independent chair, Dr. Don Thornhill, and comprised the following representation:

- Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
- Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
- Department of Finance
- Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
- Department of Social Protection, and
- Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

The Group met ten times , between 8 February and 10 May, before submitting its report to me. Since then, considerable work has been progressing to prepare proposals for Government. It would not be appropriate to comment on the content of the Expert Group's report at this point, pending Government's consideration of the report and the associated issues. It will then be a matter for Government to decide on the exact details of implementation, taking into account the modalities involved.

The Government has decided that the Local Property Tax will be collected and administered by the Revenue Commissioners.

Question No. 747 answered with Question No. 739.

Household Charge Exemptions

748. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will ensure that householders living in estates (details supplied) in Dublin 13 will be exempt from paying the household charge and excluded from paying any prospective property related taxes for at least seven to ten years in view of the fact that both estates have been significantly affected by pyrite; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48668/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011 and the Local Government (Household Charge) Regulations 2012 provide the legislation underpinning the Household Charge. The legislation provides for a number of exemptions and waivers from payment of the Household Charge. The waivers which apply concern -

- Owners of residential property entitled to mortgage interest supplement, and
- Owners of houses in certain unfinished housing estates.

While there is no specific exemption for properties affected by pyrite, the owner of a property which is not occupied or suitable for occupation on the liability date would not be liable for the Household Charge.

An independently-chaired Inter-Departmental Expert Group was established to consider the structures and modalities for an equitable Local Property Tax to replace the Household Charge.

The Group submitted its report and proposals will be brought to Government as soon as possible. It will then be a matter for the Government to decide on the exact details of implementation taking into account the modalities involved. The Government has decided that the Local Property Tax will be collected and administered by the Revenue Commissioners.

I have published the report of the independent Pyrite Panel which recommends that consideration be given to providing an exemption from the proposed property tax, for a set period, for dwellings where damage from pyritic heave has been proved by testing. While the Government will have regard to this recommendation as appropriate in the context of the proposed property tax legislation, no decisions have been made as yet on the details of the Local Property tax, including the exemptions which may apply.

Housing Adaptation Grants Expenditure

749. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will consider setting aside a specific budget for the housing adaptation grant scheme, as funding for accessible living environments has been prioritised in the National Carers' Strategy, but programmes in most local authorities are either on hold or are moving very slowly because of a lack of funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48678/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department remains committed to providing financial assistance to older people and people with a disability who wish to carry out essential repairs, extensions/adaptations or improvement works to their homes in order to meet their accommodation needs. A suite of grants is available under my Department's Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability that includes three separate grant measures; the Mobility Aids Grant scheme with grants of up to €6,000, the Housing Aid for Older People scheme with grants of up to €10,500 and the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability with grants of up to €30,000, depending on household income. The schemes are funded by 80% recoupment available from my Department together with a 20% contribution from local authority resources.

Exchequer allocations for 2012 totalling some €54.2 million were notified to local authorities in February 2012 in respect of these schemes which are administered by the local authorities. At the end of October 2012, some €38.9m (72%) of this funding had been recouped to the local authorities. My Department monitors expenditure under these schemes on an on-going basis and any savings, resulting from an under-spend by local authorities of their 2012 allocation, will be made available for re-allocation to authorities whose allocations have been fully spent.

The capital allocations to local authorities, including allocations under the grant scheme, will be determined in the light of the overall budgetary provision for the housing programme in 2013. It is a matter for each local authority to determine the priority of individual applications and the scope of the works to be funded under the relevant scheme.

In relation to accessible living environments, since 1 January 2001 all dwellings are required to comply with the standards set out in Part M of the Building Regulations. The Regula-

tions require, *inter alia*, that adequate provision is made for people with a disability to safely and independently access and use a building, its facilities and environs. Any further necessary works to adapt a house or an apartment to meet the specific needs of a member of the household may be carried out with assistance being provided under the grant schemes in appropriate cases.

Local Government Reform

750. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if under Putting People First there will be an increase in the number of elected councillors in each of the existing Dublin Local Authorities; what that increase will be; and the expected cost and the justification for this decision. [48684/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The proposals in relation to local government arrangements within counties contained in the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* will give rise to a review of local electoral areas and associated membership in Dublin. This will be a matter for examination by an independent statutory boundary committee in accordance with relevant criteria to be set out in terms of reference. It is my intention that the Committee will be established shortly.

Local Government Reform

751. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the estimated national cost of councillors under Putting People First including salaries, expenses and so on; the total estimated cost broken down by local authority; the current total costs per annum of County and Town Councillors; the estimated savings under Putting People First compared to current costs per annum; the total number of councillors per local authority under Putting People First; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48685/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government's Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First, indicated that it would be reasonable to project a target for overall savings in the range €15 to €20 million per annum relative to 2010 expenditure figures as potentially achievable from changes in sub-county governance when the new arrangements have bedded down.

In relation to payments to councillors, it is estimated that the current total cost per annum for county and town councillors amounts to some €30.7m per annum. This includes representational payments, the annual expenses allowance, training, and telephone allowances, together with allowances for chairing County Development Boards and Strategic Policy Committees. At existing rates, estimated savings under the Action Programme compared to current costs per annum would be likely to be approximately €3.7m from mid-2014 onwards arising from the reduction from the current total of 1,627 local authority members to not more than 950 as indicated in the Action Programme. Estimates of likely savings arising from changes are not available in respect of individual authorities.

The future number of councillors per local authority was not specified in the Action Programme. More detailed information in that regard will emerge in the context of the review of local electoral areas by an independent statutory boundary committee. It is my intention that the Committee will be established shortly.

Question No. 752 answered with Question No. 739.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

753. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which the fix your street review group was established; the person who is chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48719/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The *FixYourStreet* Review Group was established in September 2011 and was chaired by my Department (Mr Donal Enright, Principal Officer). The Review Group included representatives from my Department, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, South Dublin County Council and the Local Government Management Agency.

The Review Group met once, subsequently finalised the drafting of its report by way of written procedure, and reported to me in December 2011. It concluded, inter alia, that it is important that the rollout of the FixYourStreet initiative is beneficial to all local authorities; that it should avoid significant fiscal or staffing cost being incurred by local authorities in its operation and that it should be integrated with local business processes. The Group also recommended that where re-engineering of processes is required that this should be done with the intention of driving down overall administrative costs and optimising the customer service function.

I am advised that six local authorities, South Dublin, Fingal, Galway and Kildare County Councils together with Dublin and Waterford City Councils have gone live on the *FixYourStreet* website. I am also advised that another 21 local authorities will go live shortly.

The *FixYourStreet* website assists residents in reporting problems with street lighting, drainage, graffiti, waste collection and road and path maintenance in their neighbourhoods, with a guarantee that the authority will respond within two working days. It incorporates interactive mapping, allowing users to locate on an online map the precise location of the problem or issue being reported.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

754. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which the local government audit service of the Comptroller and Auditor General critical review group was established; the person who is chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48720/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Local Government Audit Service and the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General Critical Review Group was established in June 2012. The Group was independently chaired by Mr. Pat McLoughlin (Chief Executive, Irish Payments Services Organisation, and former chairperson of the Local Government Efficiency Review Group). It included representatives from my Department, the Departments of Public Expenditure and Reform and Finance, the audit services in question and a former County Manager.

The Review Group, including a sub-group, met on four occasions to date. Arising from the Government's Action Programme for Effective Local Government, *Putting People First*, new governance and accountability arrangements are being put in place in local government. In this

context, the Government decided that the Local Government Audit Service and the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General should not be merged. However, cooperation and other measures to underpin enhanced audit arrangements will be pursued in accordance with the Government's Action Programme.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

755. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the local government, the Private Residential Tenancies Board and the Property Services Regulatory Authority critical review group was established; the person who is chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48721/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): A working group to examine the proposed merger of the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) and the Property Services Regulatory Authority (PSRA) was established in July 2012, and chaired by my Department (Mr. Cian Ó Lionáin, Principal Officer) with representation from my Department, the Department of Justice and Law Reform, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the two bodies in question.

The group commenced activity with the circulation of detailed briefing papers on the two bodies. On 10 September 2012, the group met to consider those papers and all issues pertaining to the proposed merger. A draft report was subsequently prepared and was the subject of further correspondence until, on 16 October 2012, my Department submitted a final report on behalf of the working group to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The report recommended against a merger of the PRTB and the PSRA on the basis that a merger would be likely to give rise to additional costs and to have a significant negative impact on the delivery of both bodies' core activities. Notwithstanding this, my Department will continue to engage with the PRTB and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to achieve further efficiencies in the operation of the Board.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

756. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the Environmental Protection Agency and the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland critical review group was established; the person who is chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48722/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII) critical review group was convened in May 2012 under the chairmanship of my Department (Mr. John McCarthy, Assistant Secretary), building on a process of prior consideration of the potential for a merger between the two organisations. The membership of the group comprises representatives of my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, together with the Director General of the EPA and the Chief Executive of the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland. My Department supported the work of the group, which met on two occasions and carried out other elements of its work electronically.

On 31 October 2012, my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, published an update on the Government's overall agency rationalisation programme, in which the merger of the EPA and the RPII was included in a list of mergers to be undertaken in 2013, although it was noted that this merger may require a longer timeframe. My Department will now be working closely with the EPA, the RPII and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to develop a programme for the merger process, taking particular account of the priority which must attach to the work of my Department and both agencies in supporting Ireland's Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2013.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

757. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the steering group to oversee independent review by consultants of part five of the Planning and Development Acts was established; the person who is chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48723/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): A steering group to oversee the review of Part V of the Planning and Development Acts was established in June 2012 with membership from my Department, the local authority sector and the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency.

The group is chaired by my Department (Mr. Cian Ó Lionáin, Principal Officer) and has met on 3 occasions to date. While the review process is on-going I expect to receive a finalised report shortly, and any future changes to the legislation governing Part V will be informed by this review.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

758. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when inter-departmental committee on the implementation of green tenders - an action plan on green public procurement was established; the person who is chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48724/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): A group has been established to oversee implementation of Green Tenders: An Action Plan on Green Public Procurement which was published earlier in 2012. The Group is co-chaired at Principal Officer level by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and my Department. The first meeting of the Group was held on 18 July 2012. A further meeting of the Group is due to take place in December 2012.

The Group also includes representation from the Departments of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; Defence; Education and Skills; Health; Justice and Equality; and Transport, Tourism and Sport; the Health Service Executive; the Office of Public Works; and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland are also represented on the Group.

A Sub-group of the Implementation Group is currently examining a range of issues, includ-

ing the development of more detailed sectoral plans as required by Green Tenders. This and other issues will be considered by the Implementation Group as part of its ongoing work in overseeing implementation of the Plan. Green Tenders also provides for the publication of annual reports which will outline progress under the various actions contained in the Action Plan.

Departmental Bodies Establishment

759. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the steering group to oversee independent assessment being undertaken by consultants on the establishment of a tenancy deposit protection scheme was established; the person who is chairperson of this group; the membership of same; the number of meetings that have been held; the number of reports and conclusions issued; the action taken or to be taken as a result of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48725/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): On foot of a commitment in the Programme for Government 2011 to introduce a tenancy deposit protection scheme I asked the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) to commission research on such a scheme and to report back to me with recommendations.

A steering group to oversee this research was established in May 2012 with representation from my Department, the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency and the PRTB. The Group is chaired by Mr. David Silke of the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency, and it has met on 2 occasions to date. I understand that a draft final report has been submitted to the steering group and that I will receive a finalised report and recommendations shortly. I will consider the scope for actions arising from the report in the context of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2012.

Questions Nos. 760 and 761 answered with Question No. 730.

Public Sector Staff Issues

762. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49073/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): A roster system is in use in the local authority sector and in Met Éireann, a division of my Department. There are no plans at present to change those systems, which are necessary for business reasons.

There are no employees employed on a roster basis in the State agencies under the aegis of my Department.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

763. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49085/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): There are no retired staff employed by my Department

There are two former public servants employed on a consultative basis in State agencies under the aegis of my Department.

I understand that there were two requests to my Department for derogations in relation to very short term arrangements for two local authority personnel, who retired before the end of the grace period this year, to be engaged post retirement for one month and three months respectively to carry out specific duties. Both requests were initially refused. However, the request for a one month arrangement in relation to an Officer at Grade 6 was subsequently approved.

Judicial Pay

764. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount in expenses that Judges receive tax free; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47565/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Payments are made to members of the judiciary in respect of travel and subsistence necessarily incurred on court business. The cost is largely determined by the number and location of court sittings and the travelling expenses payable to judges cover the use of their own private car. In addition vouched costs may be claimed relating to judicial attire. Such expenses are paid exclusive of income tax, in keeping with the practice throughout the public service. Details are set out in a table.

Court Jurisdiction	*No. of Judges as-signed	Travel	Subsistence	Judicial Attire & Incidental Expenses	Total
Supreme Court	8	€1,181.75	€8,097.23	€487.34	€9,766.32
High Court	37	€7,065.71	€96,313.27	€16,170.71	€119,549.69
Circuit Court	38	€242,178.63	€299,722.41	€9,822.95	€551,723.99
District Court	66	€422,892.65	€518,069.65	€14,926.48	€955,888.78
Total	149	€673,318.74	€922,202.56	€41,407.48	€1,636,928.78

*The number of Judges above relates to all judges who served throughout the year, however not all judges claimed expenses.

It should be noted that 98% of total travel relates to mileage, the balance relates to taxi, car parking and other public transport. 95% of total subsistence relates to subsistence in Ireland, the balance relates to subsistence outside of Ireland including attendance at judicial training/conferences. In some instances payments include arrears from previous years. Costs incurred by judges sitting on Tribunals/Boards of Inquiry are recoupable from the relevant Department to the Courts Service.

In addition to the above expenses which are paid from the Courts Service Vote, an annual expense allowance is paid to members of the judiciary under the provisions of section 164 of the Finance Act 1994. This is paid monthly from the Department of Finance as part of salary. The levels are currently as follows:

Current Annual Allowance

Judicial Office	Annual Allowance Rate
Chief Justice President of the High Court- Judge of the Supreme Court Judge of the High Court President of the Circuit Court- President of the District Court	€9,057.96 (€754.83 monthly)
Judge of the Circuit Court	€2,730.02 (€227.50 monthly)
Judge of the District Court	€1365.01 (€113.75 monthly)

Refugee Status Applications

765. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his policy regarding the provision of refugee status to Syrian nationals fleeing Aleppo via Turkey; if any provision exists for granting refugee status to family members in Syria of persons already granted refugee status here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47572/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): In Ireland, the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended), the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006, the European Communities (Asylum Procedures) Regulations 2011 and the Refugee Act 1996 (Asylum Procedures) Regulations 2011 are the principal domestic legal instruments which reflect current national policy in the area of asylum.

Asylum applications are not generally accepted from persons present in other countries as our refugee law is based on applications for asylum being made in the State. Specifically, section 8 of the Refugee Act, 1996 provides that any person who arrives at the frontiers of the State, or any person who at any time is in the State seeking the status of a refugee may apply to the Minister for a declaration of refugee status. It is a generally accepted principle internationally, and one which Ireland applies, that a person should seek asylum in the first safe host country in which they arrive. The granting of refugee status in Ireland is considered in accordance with the definition contained in the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, as amended by the 1967 New York Protocol thereto, and as defined in section 2 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended). Any Syrian national who arrives in the State and who seeks protection will have his or her application considered in the context of the above mentioned legal framework. In 2011, 9 asylum applications were received from persons claiming to be from Syria. In 2012, 13 applications have been received to date.

A person who has been granted refugee status in the State, or who having failed to secure that status is granted subsidiary protection status, is entitled to make a family reunification application to the Minister for permission for a family member to enter and to reside in the State.

Departmental Expenditure

766. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the annual cost of leasing the Property Registration Authority offices at Setanta Centre, Dublin 2; when this lease will expire; the number of staff currently employed in the building by the PRA; the vacant capacity in the PRA building in Roscommon town; his plans for the relocation of staff; his plans for the completion of the decentralisation programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47742/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised that the number of Property Registration Authority (PRA) staff currently located in the in the Setanta Centre, Nassau Street is 84. The property is leased by the Office of Public Works (OPW) at a cost of

€996,164 per annum.

The lease for this accommodation expires in March 2013 and staff will have to be re-located before the expiry of the lease. The PRA has been in continuing discussions with the OPW to finalise the proposed location of staff. The OPW are now looking at a suitable location. However, it is unlikely that the proposed location will be sufficient to accommodate all the staff currently located in the Setanta Centre and some staff will have to be re-located to the PRA's Chancery Street offices.

Following the Government Review on the viability of all decentralisation projects, it was decided, in the case of the Property Registration Authority, that the Authority should remain in situ in the new premises located at the Golf Links Road in Roscommon. The building was originally designed to accommodate 230. The number of PRA staff currently located in the Roscommon building is 77. Due to a number of factors the PRA has not been in a position to locate the planned number of staff in this building. These include the moratorium on recruitment, a proposed redeployment programme and the ongoing reduction in staff numbers required under the Employment Control Framework (ECF). In view of these circumstances, the PRA has been working with the Office of Public Works to ensure the optimum utilisation of the accommodation by other suitable public sector occupants.

For some months now, a small number of staff from the Roscommon Enterprise Board has been occupying part of the accommodation. Approximately 50 staff from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine are scheduled to re-locate to the Golf Links Road building in the early part of December 2012. The PRA will continue to work with the OPW to seek opportunities to fully maximise the occupancy of this building.

Gender Recognition Issues

767. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his view on the proposed 40% female corporate gender quota in the EU; if he will support the quota; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48113/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to the reply I gave to PQ ref 38842/12 on this topic, answered on 18 September 2012, as follows:

“I understand that discussions are still ongoing at European Commission level in relation to a proposal by Commission Vice-President Reding to strengthen the role of Women on Corporate Boards. A policy orientation discussion was held during the Danish Presidency and this was attended by Minister of State Kathleen Lynch T.D.

When the Commission's proposals are tabled, I will examine them and will consult with my colleague, Minister Richard Bruton, with regard to the formulation of an Irish policy position”.

While I understand there have been some discussions among the College of the Commission recently, further discussion is anticipated in the coming weeks and the Commission proposals will not be tabled until they are agreed in that forum.

Visa Applications

768. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will clarify when a visa will issue to a person (details supplied) who hopes to travel to Ireland to bring their sister, who is very unwell, back to the Phillipines; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[48437/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person in question has not yet lodged the necessary supporting documentation for their application with the Consulate General for Ireland in Manila. Until the signed Declaration, supporting documents and appropriate fee are lodged in the Consulate, the Visa application cannot be processed. However, given the circumstances of the case, I will arrange for the Consulate to be contacted by the Visa office in Dublin in order that processing of the visa application can be expedited.

All information/supporting evidence that it is wished to have taken into consideration with the application should be included when the visa application is submitted. It should be borne in mind however, that the provision of the suggested evidence in no way guarantees that a visa will be granted. Furthermore, it does not limit the discretion of the visa officer in dealing with individual applications.

I should remind the Deputy that queries in relation to the status of individual Immigration cases may also be made direct to INIS by Email using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. The service enables up-to-date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek this information through the more administratively expensive Parliamentary Questions process.

Visa Applications

769. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the plans, if any, he has to implement the recommendation of the report by Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation entitled A review of the ICT skills demand in Ireland, seeking the introduction of a Technology Visa for IT professionals to address the present temporary skills shortage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47216/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I would refer the Deputy to my answers to previous Parliamentary Questions on this issue. My most recent reply to Parliamentary Question 42802/12 on 9 October last is reproduced for the Deputy's information.

While I am not averse in principle to the establishment of an immigration regime specifically geared to the technology sector, it would have to be on the basis that there was concrete evidence of a particular skills deficit in the labour market that cannot be filled by Irish or EU citizens. That labour market assessment would ultimately be a matter for my colleague the Minister for Jobs Enterprise and Innovation. In this regard it should be borne in mind that the technology sector spans a broad range of skills with differing levels of supply and demand.

I would also envisage that applicants for any such programmes would be subject to a rigorous assessment of their qualifications and experience to ensure that their skill sets are appropriate for the sector in question.

In any event, the existing visa application arrangements are entirely flexible and designed to cater for the widest possible range of applicants who may wish to come here as workers, visitors, professionals and so forth.

While I appreciate that the term "Technology Visa" is in common usage in respect of this issue, that description is somewhat misleading. In reality what we are talking about here are employment permits and any person who is successful in obtaining such a permit can reasonably expect to be granted immigration status on foot of it. My Department and the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation are also working together to see how our collective processes

can be streamlined.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

770. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47298/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): In the period 01 March 2011 to date, a total of 89 staff retired from my Department, none of whom have been rehired.

It should be noted that, on occasion, retired public servants may be engaged mainly on a short term basis because of their specific knowledge and expertise in a particular area, for example, to serve on interview boards, complete investigations etc.

Garda Complaints Procedures

771. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the complaints procedure in place for those who feel they have been treated inappropriately by the Garda National Immigration Bureau officials; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47335/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Complaints relating to the alleged misbehaviour of any member of An Garda Síochána come within the remit of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005, and the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission. Such complaints can be made either directly to the office of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission or to An Garda Síochána by stating, giving or sending it-

(a) to the Garda Commissioner

(b) to any member of the Garda Síochána at a Garda Síochána station, or

(c) to a member at or above the rank of Chief Superintendent at a place other than a Garda Síochána station

In cases where the complaint is made directly to An Garda Síochána, it will be forwarded to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission in accordance with section 85 of the Act.

It is also important to note that Section 84 of the Act requires that a complaint must be made within the period of 6 months beginning on the date of the conduct giving rise to the complaint.

Complaints against non-Garda officials attached to the Garda National Immigration Bureau can be made to the Detective Chief Superintendent in GNIB, to the Garda Commissioner or to the Director of Human Resources of An Garda Síochána.

Garda Investigations

772. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the Gardaí did not take a complaint of anti-semitic intimidation seriously, according to an internet blog which has received international attention (details supplied); if he will confirm that the Gardaí received these complaints; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47339/12]

787. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 427 of 2 October 2012, if he will provide an update on the report he has requested from the Garda Commissioner; his plans regarding the growing problem of online abuse, bullying and harassment which is frequently conducted through social media; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47821/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 772 and 787 together.

I have been informed by the Garda authorities that local Garda management in the area referred to are unaware of any incident reported to Gardaí of the kind referred to in the Deputies' questions. I want to make it clear that I have been assured by the Garda authorities that if the incident referred to is reported to them it will be fully investigated, as would any such reports, in accordance with relevant legislation and having regard to the Garda Diversity Strategy which encourages victims to come forward to report race and hate crimes.

There are significant provisions in the Criminal Law in place which Gardaí may utilise in relation to investigations in this area. In particular, the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 was enacted to prohibit incitement to hatred on account of race, religion, nationality or sexual orientation. Furthermore, section 10 of the Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997 provides that any person who, without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, by any means including by use of the telephone, harasses another by persistently following, watching, pestering, besetting or communicating with him or her, shall be guilty of the offence of harassment. In addition, section 5 of that Act makes it an offence for any person, without lawful excuse, to make to another a threat, by any means intending the other to believe it will be carried out, to kill or cause serious harm to that other or a third person.

Any complaint of alleged on-line abuse, bullying or harassment is fully investigated by An Garda Síochána. The Garda Síochána Computer Crime Investigation Unit is available to assist local Garda officers in the investigation of alleged offences. Bullying in any form may amount to an assault or harassment and I therefore urge anyone subjected to bullying of whatever variety to contact the Gardaí.

I can also inform the Deputies that assistance is available from a number of sources to help those affected by cyberbullying. The Safer Internet Ireland project is coordinated by the Office for Internet Safety in my Department. The body now called Technology in Education under the remit of the Professional Development service for Teachers (formerly known as the National Centre for Technology in Education) participates in the project. It operates www.webwise.ie which provides advice and information to parents and teachers. The ISPCC and the National Parents Council (Primary) also participate. Both organisations offer assistance through their confidential telephone helplines on how to deal with cyberbullying. The Office for Internet Safety itself supplies very useful guides, including "A Parents Guide to Social Networking Sites" and "A Guide to Cyberbullying".

Private Security Authority Membership

773. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the conditions attached for contractors applying to the private security authority for registration on the register of CCTV and access control licence holders; the provisions in place for small electrical contractors to become licence holders; if he will instruct the P.A. to consider the introduction of an instalment system for small contractors to pay the licence fee and associated costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47485/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that the Private Security Authority (PSA), an independent agency under the remit of my Department, is the regulatory body with responsibility for regulating and licensing the private security industry in the State. The Private Security Services Act 2004 (as amended) sets out the activities in the private security industry which are, or will be, subject to licensing.

Since the 1st October 2012, contractors providing security services in the access control and CCTV sectors require a licence from the PSA. I am informed by the Authority that contractors seeking a licence are required to provide a valid tax clearance certificate, evidence of having obtained a standard endorsed by the Authority and a certificate of incorporation, if applicable. The standard required for the access control sector is SR 40:2005 - an Irish Standard Recommendation for electronic security services. For CCTV, both the SR 40 standard and PSA 2006:12 are required, the latter being the Authority's requirements for CCTV installation. In addition, all sole traders, partners, company directors and shareholders with a holding of 5% or more are vetted by An Garda Síochána before a licence issues.

Contractors such as those in the access control and CCTV sectors are required to pay a licence fee to the Authority and the Deputy may wish to note that an instalment payment option to assist contractors with paying for their licence has already been introduced. The PSA's licence fee structure is monitored by the Authority on a regular basis and I am advised that the Board of the Authority is, in fact, currently reviewing the licence fee structure and will consider it at its next meeting.

Garda Resources

774. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the additional resources Gardaí in the R District are being provided with to deal with Halloween; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47552/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As you are aware, the Commissioner is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources, including personnel, throughout the organisation and I have no direct function in the matter.

Notwithstanding this, the Commissioner informs me that there are approximately 224 Gardaí assigned to the Coolock District in the Dublin Metropolitan North Division. The Division is also supported by 63 Garda Reserves and 42 civilians. These resources are augmented, when appropriate, by Gardaí from national units such as the Garda National Drug Unit and the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

With regard to the recent Hallow'en period, a policing plan was in place in this District. This plan was designed to address all aspects associated with the policing of the period concerned including the prevention and detection of sale of fireworks and other anti-social behaviour. Local Management is satisfied that sufficient resources were deployed to police the period.

Local policing plans are predicated on the prevention of anti-social and public order offences and the prevention of crime including crimes of violence against persons and property. In order to reduce incidences of public disorder and anti-social behaviour type activities, particularly at this time of year, patrols in general are directed to pay particular attention to those areas where local youths tend to congregate and where the likelihood of both anti-social behaviour and drinking on the streets may occur.

Criminal Prosecutions

775. **Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons who have a criminal record for cannabis possession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47593/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to advise the Deputy that I have had enquiries made with the relevant authorities concerning the availability of the information requested.

In this regard, I am advised by the Courts Service that data of the detail being sought are not readily available.

The collation of such information would require a disproportionate use of available resources. However, detailed information in respect of total drug offences, including possession offences, and related court outcomes is provided in the annual reports of the Courts Service which are available at www.courts.ie.

Further information on overall drug offence data is also provided by the Central Statistics Office which can be accessed at www.cso.ie.

Visa Applications

776. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a re-entry visa will be granted in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47579/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that there is no record of applications for re-entry visas in respect of the children concerned. The mother of the children concerned was granted temporary permission to remain in the State on 14 June, 2005 for a two year period, under the revised arrangements applicable to the non-EEA national parents of Irish born children born in the State before 1 January, 2005, more commonly known as the IBC/05 Scheme. This permission to remain was subject to the condition that she accepted that the granting of the permission did not confer any entitlement or legitimate expectation on any other person, whether related to the person granted permission or not, to enter the State. This permission was renewed in 2007 and again in 2010. Her permission to remain in the State is valid until 14 June, 2013.

In April of 2012, the mother of the children concerned made an application seeking permission to remain in the State for her children. I am informed that as it appeared that the children have been residing in the State since 2007 without the appropriate permission to do so, the immigration service wrote to the person concerned on 19 April 2012 requesting documentation and information regarding the circumstances of her children’s arrival in the State. Some documentation was supplied in May of 2012, but the issue of the children’s entry into the State was not adequately addressed. On foot of the receipt of a letter dated 16 October last from the legal representative of the mother concerned, she has again been requested to reply comprehensively to the queries raised by INIS last April. Upon receipt of the requested documentation and information, the case of the children concerned will be examined with a view to deciding on their future status in the State. Once a decision has been made, the decision and the consequences of the decision will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Employment Appeals Tribunal

777. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he intends to bring forward proposals to consider changing procedure of appealing decision of the Employment Appeals Tribunal by the Circuit Court through the High Court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47610/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Disputes about entitlements under the Maternity Protection Acts, the Parental Leave Acts and the Adoptive Leave Acts are referred in the first instance to a rights commissioner. Decisions of a rights commissioner are subject to appeal to the Employment Appeals Tribunal. There is no further appeal other than to the High Court on a point of law. Decisions of a rights commissioner or a determination of the Employment Appeals Tribunal may be enforced by application to the Circuit Court.

I have no plans to change these arrangements.

Matters relating to review of the complaints and enforcement infrastructure in regard to employment rights legislation generally are a matter for the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

Child Protection Issues

778. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which support and child protection services are available in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47626/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): If the Deputy could provide more detail in relation to this case, I would be happy to examine the matter further.

Asylum Seeker Accommodation

779. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has plans to revisit his plans to close a number of the direct provision centres for asylum seekers in view of the fact that the disruption this will have on the lives of those living in them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47652/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Reception & Integration Agency (RIA) is an operational unit of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department and is responsible for the accommodation of asylum seekers while their applications for protection are being processed. On 28 October 2012, RIA was providing accommodation for 4,917 persons in 36 centres located in 17 counties.

The Value for Money Report and Policy Review - Asylum Seeker Accommodation Pro-

gramme, published in 2010 - which was laid before the Oireachtas and is available on the Oireachtas website and RIA's website www.ria.gov.ie - indicated that the RIA should strive to keep its occupancy levels at 90% or more of its available capacity. The Report accepted that it is not possible for RIA to achieve 100% occupancy - due to family configuration, sickness requiring isolation, and so on.

Given the current downward trend in the number of asylum seekers requiring accommodation, when a contract comes up for renewal a decision has to be made to seek to reduce its capacity, including adjusting capacity across a group of related centres, or to close it. RIA makes every effort to keep family centres open, preferring instead to reduce contracted capacities. In some cases, because of economies of scale, a reduction in capacity is not an option and a centre has to close. This was the case with Lisbrook House in Galway which is in the process of being closed down. Another three centres have already closed down in 2012. All of these closures, coupled with capacity reductions in 11 other centres, will provide a total reduction of 618 beds from the portfolio. These reductions will enable RIA, based on current occupancy levels, to stay within the 10% spare capacity target recommended by the VFM report and will provide commensurate financial savings for the State both this year and in 2013. RIA has no plans for further closures in 2012.

RIA acknowledges that the closure of a centre can be disruptive for the residents concerned, particularly in the case of family centres. The situation in 2013 will require constant monitoring to ensure that no more accommodation than is needed is being paid for. If centres have to be either downsized or closed altogether I am informed by RIA that every attempt will be made to minimise disruption as far as practicable.

UN Conventions Ratification

780. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No.478 of 16 October 2012, if he will provide the timeframe for ratification of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. [47621/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As I explained to the Deputy on 16th October, one of the key requirements with regard to the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is the enactment of capacity legislation. The Programme for Government contains a commitment to introduce a Bill that is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Bill is at an advanced stage of drafting. Work is ongoing to properly align the provisions of the Bill with the principles contained in the UN Convention on supporting people with impaired capacity in making decisions and exercising their basic rights. I envisage that the title of the Bill will reflect this approach.

In addition, an Inter-Departmental Committee on the UNCRPD monitors the remaining legislative and administrative actions required to enable ratification. At the Committee's request, the National Disability Authority, the lead statutory agency for the sector, is in the process of assisting the Committee to assess the remaining requirements for ratification so as to ensure conclusively that all such issues will be addressed.

I can assure the Deputy that the UNCRPD will be ratified as quickly as possible once all the necessary legislative and administrative requirements under the Convention have been met.

Structured Court Settlements

781. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views regarding the possibility of reforming the process of court awarded medical expenses from a lump sum to a payment that is issued on a periodic basis to match the medical expenses of the person each year throughout the course of their lifetime to ensure that there is no shortfall in funds; his view on whether legislative changes are required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47730/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Questions Nos. 466 and 484 of 23 October 2012 in which I said the following:

“The Programme for Government includes a commitment to introduce legislation to facilitate courts making provision for structured settlements in circumstances where lump sums are currently awarded as a consequence of individuals suffering catastrophic injury because of the negligence of another.

The High Court Working Group Report on Periodic Payments recommended in October 2011 that legislation be enacted to empower the courts, as an alternative to lump sum awards, to make consensual and non-consensual periodic payments to compensate injured victims in cases of catastrophic injury where long term permanent care and treatment will be required. The Working Group also recommended that periodic payment orders should only be made where the court is satisfied that continuity of payment under the periodic payments order is reasonably secure.

The successful operation of a statutory scheme for periodic payments requires the establishment of a financial infrastructure to ensure that continuity of payment is secure. In this regard the Working Group recommended that the State, through the agency of the National Treasury Management Agency, be empowered to provide injured victims with the necessary security for periodic payments either by the provision of annuities to insurers and others or in such other manner as may be appropriate. Alternatively it was recommended that consideration be given to the introduction of a statutory scheme whereby payments made under periodic payment orders will be statutorily protected and guaranteed. The NTMA has concluded an actuarial review on the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of the State acting as an annuity provider to insurers and indemnity providers in personal injury actions to enable compliance with the security of payment principle. The NTMA report is being considered in consultation with the Minister for Finance with a view to the development of legislative proposals.”

Prison Staff

782. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the opportunities available for prison officers to retrain or redeploy within the public service particularly occupational injuries make it difficult to resume front line duties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47735/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to advise the Deputy that there are no mechanisms available for a Prison Officer to directly transfer to the mainstream Civil Service or other Public Service Bodies.

However, in the case of Officers who have suffered occupational injury, the medical advice of the Chief Medical officer is always sought. In the event that the Chief Medical Officer’s prognosis confirms that an injury restricts the range of duties which an officer can undertake, the Irish Prison Service make every effort to facilitate the Officer with a position within the Irish Prison Service which allows him/her to attend work. The Irish Prison Service provide specialist

training as required for any area an officer works in, and provides refresher training as necessary to all staff. Furthermore, Officers who are returning from long periods of absence due to illness or injury where the Chief Medical Officer's prognosis is for full recovery over time may have a phased return to work implemented, where possible, whereby they are on restricted duties for a set period of time before progressing to a full range of duties in due course.

Illegal Moneylenders

783. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the action he will take against illegal money lenders (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47721/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to advise the Deputy that the regulation of money lending is provided for in the Consumer Credit Act 1995 which is the responsibility of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

Persons who engage in money lending and who do not hold the necessary licence granted by the Central Bank are committing an offence under section 98 of the Act, which provides for a prohibition on engaging in the business of money lending without a licence.

With regard to any allegations of such criminal activity, complaints concerning the operation of illegal money lenders may be made to An Garda Síochána which has power to bring prosecutions against unlicensed operators.

A person who is found guilty of an offence under the Act is liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or both, or on conviction on indictment, to a fine not exceeding €100,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or both.

I have been assured by the Garda authorities that where offences under section 98 of the Consumer Credit Act 1995 are disclosed, and are reported to An Garda Síochána, the matter will be the subject of investigation under the direction of the local District Officer, with relevant expert assistance available from the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation.

As I have stated previously, I would encourage those who may have information concerning the operation of unlicensed money lenders in particular circumstances to make that information available to An Garda Síochána who will take all measures open to them to enforce the law in this area.

Prisoner Discipline

784. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will outline the number of prisoners in prisons here who have been subjected to 56 days disciplinary punishment in 2012; and if he will indicate what entitlements are withdrawn during this period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47780/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy may be aware Part 3 of the Prisons Act, 2007 provides a basis in primary legislation for disciplinary procedures applicable to prisoners. Section 12 provides for an inquiry to be held by a prison governor if a prisoner is alleged to have committed a breach of discipline. The governor will record the finding and the sanction, or record that the allegation was unsubstantiated. Section 13 lists the sanctions that may be imposed.

Under Section 14, a prisoner who is found by a governor to have committed a breach of prison discipline and on whom a sanction under Section 13 has been imposed, may within 7 days of its imposition, submit a petition to me. I can then either affirm, modify, suspend or revoke the sanction imposed.

Prior to March 2012 the record of each disciplinary inquiry was retained on each individual prisoner file. Therefore, it is not possible to provide the Deputy with the information prior to March as this would require the manual examination of individual records to determine the number who were specifically sanctioned for 56 days. Such an examination would require a disproportionate and inordinate amount of staff time and effort and can not be justified in current circumstances where there are other significant demands on resources.

However, a new Prisoner Information Management System (PIMS) came into operation in all prisons at the beginning of March 2012 and all disciplinary inquiries are now recorded on this system. Accordingly, I can confirm that since the 2nd March 2012 to date a total of 282 prisoners were subjected to a sanction of 56 days loss of privileges as a disciplinary punishment. The entitlements which are withdrawn during this punishment period include all or part of the following; loss of gym facilities, tuck shop, personal phone calls, personal visits excluding family, receiving or sending personal letters and loss of evening recreation.

The Deputy may be aware the Irish Prison Service has recently introduced new Guidelines on the Imposition of Disciplinary Sanctions in Accordance with the Prison Rules 2007 to provide uniformity in the use of disciplinary sanctions and procedures throughout the Irish Prison Service. Under these guidelines prisoners should not lose the right to communicate with their families and the loss of family visits is not employed as a sanction in response to a breach of prison discipline.

Garda Transport Expenditure

785. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality in view of the fact that the Garda Representative Association estimate that a one fifth of the Garda fleet amounting to 500 vehicles will need to be replaced by the end of the year and the money proposed to be spent on the Garda fleet will only buy 170 patrol cars, unmarked cars and vans, his plans to make up the shortfall; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47817/12]

786. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the allocation of Garda cars in rural areas (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47818/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 785 and 786 together.

The Deputy will appreciate that the withdrawal of Garda vehicles from service is an on-going process. In the overall context I am very pleased that arrangements have been put in place, with special funding being made available for that purpose, to allow the Garda authorities to purchase a significant number of new vehicles. This has been done at a time of severe budgetary constraints and it represents a substantial investment in Garda transport. I have no doubt that the provision of the additional 170 vehicles, which will be commissioned in December/January, will considerably strengthen the overall effectiveness of the Force in delivering a policing service throughout the country.

The allocation of Garda transport is a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the context of his operational requirements. In turn, at Garda Divisional level, the allocation of Garda ve-

hicles is a matter for the Chief Superintendent who may make and revise arrangements for the deployment of vehicles throughout a Division in response to policing demands. This flexibility in allocating and re-allocating vehicles among stations, so as to best match resources with policing priorities, is crucial to the efficient management of the Garda fleet.

I am assured by the Garda authorities that the deployment of all vehicles is subject to on-going analysis and review to ensure that available resources are allocated throughout the Force to meet policing demands as efficiently as possible, including the policing requirements of rural communities.

Question No. 787 answered with Question No. 772.

Garda Investigations

788. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will have the case of a serious injury assault with a chain saw reviewed in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47875/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed that the incident referred to by the Deputy was fully investigated at the time by members of An Garda Síochána and a file was prepared for the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) who directed a prosecution in the case. The case in question was heard before Cavan District Court on the 26th of February 2009 where applications to bind certain individuals to the peace were dismissed. As the Deputy is aware, the DPP and the Courts are independent in the execution of their functions. Accordingly, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the matter.

Decentralisation Programme Staff Transfers

789. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the decentralisation of the Property Registration Authority offices to Roscommon town will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47899/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy should be aware that the offices of the Property Registration Authority (PRA) in Roscommon Town have opened and that 77 staff have been accommodated into the building. I am informed that the PRA is not currently in a position to assign further staff to Roscommon, due to the necessary staff recruitment and promotion restrictions that apply generally as well as to changing business needs and practices of the organisation.

I am further advised that 3 staff from the County Enterprise Board have also been accommodated in this building and that approximately 50 staff will re-locate from the Department of Agriculture and Food to this building in early December 2012.

Garda Investigations

790. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the forensic files relating to the attempted bombing of the Widow Scallan's pub and the murder of person (details supplied) will be released for scrutiny to his family. [47946/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda

authorities that it is not the practice to provide documentation of the kind outlined by the Deputy, which has been acquired in the course of a criminal investigation.

Missing Children

791. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality in view of the recent abduction and disappearance of children in other jurisdictions, if additional legislation, powers or resources are required to be given to the relevant authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47950/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can advise the Deputy that An Garda Síochána has put in place Child Rescue Ireland (CRI) Alert, to enable the Gardaí seek the assistance of members of the public in circumstances where a child has been abducted and there is a reasonable belief that there is an immediate and serious risk to the health or welfare of a child. The system was launched by myself and the Garda Commissioner on 25 May, 2012, International Missing Children Day.

CRI Alerts may be initiated by an Assistant Commissioner of An Garda Síochána when the following criteria are met: 1. The child is under the age of eighteen years; 2. There is a reasonable belief that the child has been abducted; 3. There is a reasonable belief that there is an immediate and serious risk to the health or welfare of a child; and 4. There is sufficient information available to enable the public to assist An Garda Síochána in locating the child.

The Garda Missing Persons Bureau, which is responsible for all data relating to missing persons, provides expert assistance and advice in all high risk missing persons cases. The Garda authorities are satisfied that adequate resources, including staff and technology, are in place to deal with this issue and investigations are carried out in line with best international practice. The services of Interpol and Europol can also be availed of during such investigations, if necessary.

The relevant legislation relating to abduction in this State is to be found in the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997. Section 16 of the Act provides for an offence of abduction of a child by a parent where it is an offence for a person to take, send or keep a child under the age of 16 years out of the State or cause a child to be so taken in defiance of a court order or without the consent of each person who is a parent, guardian or a person granted custody of the child by a court unless a court has consented. This section does not apply to a parent who is not a guardian of the child. Section 17 of the Act provides for an offence of abduction of a child by other persons, where a person other than a person to whom section 16 applies, intentionally takes or detains a child under 16 years of age or causes such a child to be taken or detained, in order to remove the child from, or keep the child out of, the lawful control of any person having such control. The legislation in this regard is being kept under ongoing review.

Garda Deployment

792. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total number of Gardaí stationed in each district and division for the years 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47961/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will be aware that the Commissioner is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources, including personnel, throughout the organisation and I have no direct function in the matter. This allocation of re-

sources is constantly monitored in the context of crime trends, policing needs and other operational strategies in place on a District, Divisional and Regional level to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public.

I have been informed by the Garda authorities that the personnel strength of An Garda Síochána broken down by District and Division for the years 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991 is not readily available.

I have however, been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the overall personnel strength of An Garda Síochána on the 31 December for the years 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 was as set out in the table.

1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
6,640	6,703	9,933	10,776	11,815	13,894

In addition, the personnel strength broken down by Station, District and Division for the years 2001 and 2011 was as set out in the table.

Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/District	Strength 31/12/2011
D.M.R.South Central		D.M.R.South Central	
District "A"		District "A"	
Kevin St.	117	Kevin St.	153
Kilmainham	76	Kilmainham	74
District "B"		District "B"	
Pearse St	216	Pearse St	255
Harcourt Tce.	80	Harcourt Tce.	79
District "E"		District "E"	
Donnybrook	116	Donnybrook	122
Irishtown	54	Irishtown	52
TOTAL	659	TOTAL	735
D.M.R. North Central		D.M.R. North Central	
District "C"		District "C"	
Store St.	228	Store St.	274
District "D"		D/Dock Immigration	6
Bridewell	155	District "D"	
Fixed Penalty Office		Bridewell	167
District "U"		Fixed Penalty Office	0
Fitzgibbon St.	112	District "U"	
Mountjoy	77	Fitzgibbon St.	113
TOTAL	572	Mountjoy	100
D.M.R.South		TOTAL	660
District "G"		D.M.R.South	
Crumlin	86	District "G"	
Sundrive Rd.	58	Crumlin	102
District "M"		Sundrive Rd.	71
Rathfarnham	67	District "M"	

Questions - Written Answers

Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/Dis- trict	Strength 31/12/2011
Tallaght	159	Rathfarnham	73
District "P"		Tallaght	194
Rathmines	81	District "P"	
Terenure	66	Rathmines	66
TOTAL	517	Terenure	99
D.M.R.North		TOTAL	605
District "H"		D.M.R.North	
Santry	83	District "H"	
Whitehall	40	Ballymun	113
Ballymun	64	Dublin Airport	33
Dublin Airport	58	Santry	81
District "R"		Whitehall	44
Coolock	85	District "R"	
Malahide	43	Coolock	117
Swords	54	Malahide	35
District "J"		Swords	77
Raheny	61	District "J"	
Clontarf	60	Clontarf	77
Howth	39	Howth	39
District "Y"		Raheny	68
Balbriggan	32	District "Y"	
Skerries	11	Balbriggan	70
Lusk	4	Garristown	3
Rush	5	Lusk	6
Garristown	3	Rush	5
TOTAL	587	Skerries	11
D.M.R.West		TOTAL	779
District "K"		D.M.R.West	
Blanchardstown	124	District "K"	
Cabra	76	Blanchardstown	186
Finglas	78	Cabra	75
District "Q"		Finglas	120
Lucan	75	District "Q"	
Leixlip	18	Lucan	72
Ronanstown	66	Ronanstown	97
District "L"		District "L"	
Ballyfermot	75	Ballyfermot	96
Clondalkin	66	Clondalkin	98
Rathcoole	23	Rathcoole	27
TOTAL	601	TOTAL	771
D.M.R.East	-	D.M.R.East	-
District "F"	-	District "F"	-
Dun Laoghaire	109	Cabinteeley	38

Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/District	Strength 31/12/2011
Dalkey	23	Dalkey	31
Kill-O-Grange	33	Dun Laoghaire	104
Cabinteeley	41	Kill-O-Grange	29
District "N"	-	Shankhill	57
Bray	77	District "W"	-
Enniskerry	6	Blackrock	91
Shankhill	48	Dundrum	73
Greystones	26	Stepaside	29
District "W"	-	TOTAL	452
Blackrock	74	Eastern Region	-
Dundrum	62	Louth	-
Stepaside	37	District: Drogheda	-
TOTAL	536	Clougherhead	4
Eastern Region	-	Drogheda	98
Louth/Meath	-	Dunleer	5
District: Drogheda	-	District: Ardee	-
Drogheda	89	Ardee	28
Castlebellingham	4	Castlebellingham	4
Clougherhead	3	Collon	7
Dunleer	3	Louth	1
Laytown	8	District: Dundalk	-
District: Dundalk	-	Blackrock	5
Dundalk	99	Carlingford	6
Carlingford	3	Dromad	6
Hackballscross	14	Dundalk	130
Dromad	14	Hackballscross	6
Omeath	13	Omeath	5
Louth	2	TOTAL	305
Blackrock	4	Meath	-
District: Kells	-	District: Kells	-
Kells	33	Athboy	3
Crossakeel	1	Crossakeel	1
Athboy	5	Kells	54
Oldcastle	4	Oldcastle	3
Nobber	3	District: Trim	-
District: Trim	-	Ballivor	3
Trim	25	Enfield	7
Kilmessan	1	Kilmessan	1
Summerhill	2	Longwood	2
Longwood	0	Summerhill	3
Enfield	19	Trim	31
Ballivor	2	District: Ashbourne	-
District: Ashbourne	-	Ashbourne	47

Questions - Written Answers

Region/Division/District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/District	Strength 31/12/2011
Ashbourne	36	Dunboyne	13
Dunboyne	16	Dunshaughlin	21
Dunshaughlin	11	District: Navan	-
Kilcock	6	Navan	76
District: Navan	-	Nobber	4
Navan	44	Slane	4
Ardee	9	District: Laytown	-
Collon	3	Duleek	4
Duleek	4	Laytown	25
Slane	4	TOTAL	302
TOTAL	484	Kildare	-
Carlow/Kildare	-	District: Naas	-
District: Naas	-	Ballymore Eustace	2
Naas	76	Clane	11
Celbridge	19	Kilcullen	2
Clane	6	Kill	2
Kill	3	Naas	101
Maynooth	14	Robertstown	6
District: Kildare	-	District: Kildare	-
Kildare	29	Athy	31
Robertstown	3	Ballytore	2
Kilcullen	3	Castledermot	3
Monasterevan	3	Kildare	26
Newbridge	30	Monasterevan	5
Rathangan	2	Newbridge	47
Carbury/Derrinturn	2	Rathangan	3
District: Carlow	-	District: Leixlip	-
Carlow	46	Carbury/Derrinturn	4
Leighlinbridge	1	Celbridge	17
Ballon	1	Kilcock	9
Myshall	1	Leixlip	34
Muinebheag	7	Maynooth	13
Athy	18	TOTAL	318
Castledermot	1	Laois/Offaly	-
District: Baltinglass	-	District: Portlaoise	-
Baltinglass	23	Clonaslee	1
Blessington	14	Mountmellick	6
Dunlavin	1	Mountrath	3
Hollywood	1	Portarlinton	14
Donard	1	Portlaoise	101
Shillelagh	1	Stradbally	2
Tinahely	2	District: Abbeyleix	-
Hacketstown	2	Abbeyleix	24

Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/District	Strength 31/12/2011
Rathvilly	1	Arles	2
Ballymore Eustace	1	Ballacolla	1
Tullow	8	Ballinakill	1
Ballytore	1	Ballylinan	3
TOTAL	321	Borris-On-Ossory	1
Laois/Offaly	-	Durrow	2
District: Portlaoise	-	Rathdowney	4
Portlaoise	99	District: Birr	-
Mountmellick	6	Banagher	5
Mountrath	3	Birr	29
Portarlinton	9	Cloghan	1
Stradbally	3	Ferbane	5
Clonaslee	3	Kilcormac	2
District: Abbeyleix	-	Kinnitty	1
Abbeyleix	25	Shannonbridge	1
Ballacolla	1	Shinrone	2
Durrow	2	District: Tullamore	-
Rathdowney	3	Clara	5
Ballylinan	3	Clonbologue	1
Arles	1	Daingean	2
Ballinakill	1	Edenderry	12
Borris-On-Ossory	1	Geashill	0
District: Birr	-	Rhode	2
Birr	24	Tullamore	71
Banagher	6	TOTAL	304
Cloghan	1	Westmeath	-
Ferbane	5	District: Mullingar	-
Kilcormac	2	Ballynacargy	2
Kinnitty	2	Castlepollard	4
Shinrone	2	Castletowngeoghegan	1
Shannonbridge	1	Delvin	16
Lorrha	2	Finea	1
District: Tullamore	-	Killucan	5
Tullamore	45	Kinnegad	5
Clara	7	Mullingar	123
Clonbologue	1	Multyfarnham	1
Daingean	3	Rathowen	1
Edenderry	14	Rochfortbridge	4
Rhode	1	District: Athlone	-
Geashill	1	Athlone	66
TOTAL	277	Ballinahown	1
Longford/Westmeath	-	Ballymore	1
District: Mullingar	-	Glasson	2

Questions - Written Answers

Region/Division/District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/District	Strength 31/12/2011
Mullingar	73	Kilbeggan	5
Killucan	2	Moate	17
Kinnegad	6	TOTAL	255
Rochfortbridge	3	Carlow/Kilkenny	
Castletowngeoghegan	1	District: Carlow	-
Delvin	3	Ballon	1
District: Athlone	-	Borris	2
Athlone	49	Carlow	77
Ballinahown	1	Hacketstown	1
Ballymore	1	Leighlinbridge	2
Glasson	1	Muinebheag	12
Kilbeggan	3	Myshall	1
Moate	4	Rathvilly	1
Ballymahon	3	Tullow	17
District: Longford	-	District: Kilkenny	-
Longford	33	Ballyragget	1
Ardagh	1	Callan	6
Drumlish	1	Castlecomer	14
Kenagh	1	Freshford	1
Newtowncashel	1	Johnstown	2
Lanesboro	7	Kilkenny	98
Tarmonbarry	1	Urlingford	1
District: Granard	-	District: Thomastown	-
Granard	26	Ballyhale	1
Ballinallee	1	Bennetsbridge	1
Edgeworthstown	4	Glenmore	0
Smear	1	Goresbridge	2
Ballynacargy	2	Graiguenamanagh	5
Castlepollard	3	Inistioge	0
Multyfarnham	2	Kilmacow	1
Rathowen	1	Kilmoganny	1
TOTAL	235	Mooncoin	14
South Eastern Region	-	Mullinavat	1
Wicklow/Wexford	-	Piltown	1
District: Wexford	-	Stoneyford	1
Wexford	70	Thomastown	38
Taghmon	3	TOTAL	303
Baldwinstown	0	Roscommon/Longford	-
Castlebridge	1	District: Boyle	-
Kilmore Quay	2	Boyle	25
Glynn	1	Cootehall	0

Region/Division/District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/District	Strength 31/12/2011
Rosslare Strand	2	Elphin	1
Rosslare Pier	10	Keadue	1
District: Gorey	-	Roosky	3
Gorey	42	Strokestown	3
Bunclody	4	Tarmonbarry	2
Courtown Harbour	4	District: Castlerea	
Arklow	25	Ballaghaderreen	8
Carnew	1	Ballinlough	2
District: Enniscorthy	-	Ballintubber	0
Enniscorthy	32	Castlerea	33
Blackwater	6	Frenchpark	2
Ferns	2	Loughglynn	0
Kiltealy	1	Tulsk	1
Region/Division/District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/District	Strength 31/12/2011
D.M.R.South Central	-	D.M.R.South Central	-
Oylegate	1	District: Granard	-
Oulart	0	Ardagh	1
Clonroche	2	Ballinalee	1
District: New Ross	-	Drumlish	2
New Ross	32	Edgeworthstown	8
Ballycullane	2	Granard	28
Carrick-On-Bannow	1	Smear	1
Duncannon	2	District: Longford	-
Carrickbyrne	2	Ballymahon	6
Campile	2	Kenagh	1
District: Wicklow	-	Lanesboro	6
Wicklow	40	Longford	60
Ashford	1	Newtowncashel	1
Rathdrum	4	District: Roscommon	-
Newtownmountkenedy	4	Athleague	1
Avoca	3	Ballyforan	1
Roundwood	4	Clonark	7
Aughrim	2	Knockcroghery	1
TOTAL	308	Roscommon	79
Waterford/Kilkenny	-	Taughmaconnell	1
District: Waterford	-	TOTAL	286
Waterford	130	South Eastern Region	-
Dunmore East	3	Wexford	-
Ferrybank	6	District: Wexford	-
Passage East	1	Baldwinstown	1

Questions - Written Answers

Oylegate	1	District: Granard	-
Mooncoin	2	Castlebridge	2
Glenmore	1	Glynn	1
Kilmacow	1	Kilmore Quay	2
District: Dungarvan	-	Rosslare Pier	6
Dungarvan	36	Rosslare Strand	2
Cappoquin	2	Taghmon	3
Tallow	3	Wexford	92
Ballymacarberry	2	District: Gorey	-
Aglish	0	Bunclody	8
Ring	2	Courtown Harbour	4
Lismore	4	Gorey	50
District: Tramore	-	District: Enniscorthy	-
Tramore	28	Blackwater	3
Kill	1	Clonroche	2
Kilmacthomas	3	Enniscorthy	40
Kilmeaden	2	Ferns	3
Portlaw	3	Kiltealy	1
Rathgormack	1	Oulart	1
Leamybrien	1	Oylegate	2
District: Kilkenny	-	District: New Ross	-
Kilkenny	66	Ballycullane	2
Freshford	1	Ballywilliam	0
Callan	4	Campile	1
Castlecomer	7	Carrickbyrne	2
Ballyragget	1	Carrick-On-Bannow	1
District: Thomastown	-	Duncannon	4
Thomastown	20	New Ross	40
Goresbridge	0	TOTAL	273
Bennetsbridge	2	Wicklow	-
Graiguenamanagh	6	District: Baltinglass	-
Stonyford	1	Baltinglass	37
Ballyhale	1	Blessington	17
Inistioge	1	Carnew	4
Kilmoganny	1	Donard	1
Mullinavat	1	Dunlavin	2
Borris	2	Hollywood	1
TOTAL	346	Shillelagh	1
Tipperary	-	Tinahely	2
District: Thurles	-	District: Bray	-
Thurles	62	Bray	125
Ballingarry South	1	Enniskerry	6
Holycross	2	Greystones	35

Oylegate	1	District: Granard	-
Killenaule	3	Newtownmountken- nedy	4
Ballinure	1	District: Wicklow	-
Johnstown	2	Arklow	33
Urlingford	2	Ashford	11
Littleton	1	Aughrim	2
G.C.V.U.	N/A	Avoca	2
District: Clonmel	-	Rathdrum	5
Clonmel	40	Roundwood	4
Kilsheelan	1	Wicklow	47
Mullinahone	2	TOTAL	339
Grangemoekler	1	Tipperary	-
Fethard	3	District: Thurles	-
Carrick-On-Suir	16	Ballingarry South	2
Piltown	2	Ballinure	0
District: Cahir	-	G.C.V.U.	NA
Cahir	25	Holycross	0
Ardfinnan	2	Killenaule	4
Ballyporeen	1	Littleton	1
New Inn	1	Thurles	74
Cashel	12	District: Clonmel	-
Clogheen	1	Carrick-On-Suir	16
District: Nenagh	-	Clonmel	52
Nenagh	29	Fethard	3
Ballingarry North	1	Grangemoekler	1
Borrisokane	6	Kilsheelan	1
Cloughjordan	2	Mullinahone	1
Dolla	1	District: Cahir	-
Portroe	2	Ardfinnan	2
Toomevara	1	Ballyporeen	1
Terryglass/Ball- inderry	1	Cahir	42
District: Templemore	-	Cashel	14
Templemore	25	Clogheen	1
Templetuohy	1	New Inn	1
Roscrea	18	District: Nenagh	-
Moyne	2	Ballingarry North	0
Templederry	2	Borrisokane	6
Borrisoleigh	1	Cloughjordan	1
Shevry	1	Dolla	0
Moneygall	1	Lorrha	1
District: Tipperary Town	-	Nenagh	38
Tipperary Town	28	Newport	11

Questions - Written Answers

Oylegate	1	District: Granard	-
Dundrum	1	Portroe	1
Emly	1	Terryglass/Ball-inderry	0
Golden	1	Toomevara	2
Cappawhite	2	District: Templemore	-
Bansha	2	Borrisoleigh	2
Oola	1	Moneygall	1
Doon	1	Moyne	1
Galbally	1	Rearcross	1
TOTAL	313	Roscrea	19
Southern Region	-	Shevry	0
Cork City	-	Templederry	0
District: Anglesea Street	-	Templemore	40
Anglesea Street	208	Templetuohy	1
Barrack Street	24	District: Tipperary Town	-
Bridewell	30	Bansha	1
Blackrock	29	Cappawhite	0
District: Gurrabraher	-	Dundrum	1
Gurrabraher	44	Emly	1
Blarney	15	Golden	1
Ballincollig	21	Tipperary Town	31
Rathduff	2	TOTAL	376
District: Mayfield	-	Waterford	-
Mayfield	35	District: Dungarvan	-
McCurtain Street	35	Aglish	1
Watercourse Road	31	Ardmore	2
Mallow Road	6	Ballyduff	1
District: Togher	-	Ballymacarberry	1
Togher	53	Cappoquin	2
Douglas	23	Dungarvan	46
Bishopstown	25	Lismore	4
Carrigaline	17	Ring	1
Passage West	5	Tallow	3
Crosshaven	2	District: Tramore	-
TOTAL	605	Kill	1
Cork North	-	Kilmacthomas	5
District: Fermoy	-	Kilmeaden	1
Fermoy	44	Leamybrien	1
Mitchelstown	17	Portlaw	2
Ballynoe	2	Rathgormack	1
Kilworth	1	Stradbally	-

Oylegate	1	District: Granard	-
Kildorrery	2	Tramore	36
Castletownroche	3	District: Waterford	-
Rathcormack	2	Dunmore East	3
Ballyduff	2	Ferrybank	6
District: Cobh	-	Passage East	1
Cobh	30	Waterford	172
Carrig na Bhfear	2	TOTAL	290
Carrigtwohill	3	Southern Region	-
Glanmire	15	Cork City	-
Watergrasshill	2	District: Anglesea Street	-
Glenville	1	Anglesea Street	274
District: Midleton	-	Barrack Street	22
Midleton	35	Blackrock	29
Ardmore	2	Bridewell	24
Ballycotton	2	District: Gurrabraher	-
Cloyne	1	Ballincollig	25
Youghal	23	Blarney	17
Whitegate	3	Gurrabraher	55
Killeagh	4	Rathduff	2
District: Mallow	-	District: Mayfield	-
Mallow	31	Mallow Road	5
Buttevant	2	Mayfield	53
Doneraile	2	McCurtain Street	0
Milford	2	Watercourse Road	52
Charleville	15	District: Togher	-
Glantane	1	Bishopstown	24
Liscarroll	1	Carrigaline	20
TOTAL	250	Crosshaven	3
Cork West	-	Douglas	27
District: Bandon	-	Passage West	3
Bandon	68	Togher	55
Ballineen	2	TOTAL	690
Ballinhassig	2	Cork North	-
Ballinspittle	0	District: Fermoy	-
Ballyfeard	1	Ballynoe	1
Innishannon	1	Castletownroche	2
Kilbrittan	1	Fermoy	56
Kinsale	12	Kildorrery	1
Timoleague	1	Kilworth	2
District: Bantry	-	Mitchelstown	23
Bantry	24	Rathcormack	1
Adrigole	1	District: Cobh	-

Questions - Written Answers

Oylegate	1	District: Granard	-
Ballydehob	1	Carrig na Bhfear	1
Castletownbere	5	Carrigtwohill	3
Drimoleague	1	Cobh	38
Durrus	1	Glanmire	22
Glengarrif	2	Glenville	1
Goleen	1	Watergrasshill	1
Kealkil	1	District: Midleton	-
Schull	4	Ballycotton	1
District: Clonakilty	-	Cloyne	1
Clonakilty	21	Killeagh	1
Ballygurteen	1	Midleton	51
Baltimore	1	Whitegate	1
Castletownsend	1	Youghal	24
Drinagh	1	District: Mallow	-
Dunmanway	4	Buttevant	1
Roscarbery	2	Charleville	17
Skibereen	9	Doneraile	2
District: Kanturk	-	Glantane	1
Kanturk	25	Liscarroll	1
Ballydesmond	1	Mallow	49
Boherbue	1	Milford	2
Knocknagree	1	TOTAL	304
Meelin	1	Cork West	-
Millstreet	6	District: Bandon	-
Newmarket	4	Ballineen	2
Rathmore	2	Ballinhassig	2
District: Macroom	-	Ballinspittle	0
Macroom	25	Ballyfeard	1
Ballingeary	1	Bandon	84
Ballyvourney	2	Innishannon	1
Coachford	2	Kilbrittan	1
Crookstown	4	Kinsale	15
Inchigeela	1	Timoleague	1
Stuake	2	District: Bantry	-
Tarelton	1	Adrigole	1
TOTAL	248	Ballydehob	0
Kerry	-	Bantry	35
District: Tralee	-	Castletownbere	4
Tralee	85	Drimoleague	1
Ardfert	2	Durrus	1
Fenit	1	Glengarrif	1
Abbeydorney	1	Goleen	1
Dingle	9	Kealkil	1
Clochan	1	Schull	4

Oylegate	1	District: Granard	-
Castlegregory	2	District: Clonakilty	-
Annascaul	1	Ballygurteen	0
Ballyferriter	1	Baltimore	1
Camp	1	Castletownsend	0
District: Caherciveen	-	Clonakilty	28
Caherciveen	20	Drinagh	1
Ballinskelligs	1	Dunmanway	9
Valentia Island	1	Roscarbery	2
Glenbeigh	3	Skibereen	10
Portmagee	1	District: Kanturk	-
Killorglin	9	Ballydesmond	0
Waterville	2	Boherbue	1
Sneem	2	Kanturk	33
Castlemaine	1	Knocknagree	1
District: Killarney	-	Meelin	1
Killarney	48	Millstreet	9
Kilgarvan	1	Newmarket	3
Kenmare	6	Rathmore	1
Castleisland	10	District: Macroom	-
Farranfore	2	Ballingeary	1
Barraduff	1	Ballyvourney	3
Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/2011
D.M.R.South Central	-	D.M.R.South Central	-
Beaufort	1	Coachford	2
Lauragh	1	Crookstown	5
District: Listowel		Inchigeela	1
Listowel	30	Macroom	42
Ballyheigue	2	Stuake	1
Ballylongford	1	Tarelton	1
Ballybunion	8	TOTAL	312
Ballyduff	2	Kerry	-
Brosna	1	District: Tralee	-
Knocknagoshall	1	Abbeydorney	1
Lixnaw	2	Annascaul	1
Moyvane	1	Ardfert	2
Tarbert	1	Ballyferriter	1
TOTAL	263	Camp	1
Limerick	-	Castlegregory	2
District: Henry Street	-	Clochan	1
Henry St	181	Dingle	10
Mary St	5	Fenit	1
Castleconnell	4	Tralee	109

Questions - Written Answers

Beaufort	1	Coachford	2
Ardnacrusha	3	District: Caherciveen	-
Mayorstone Pk.	39	Ballinskelligs	1
District: Roxboro Road	-	Caherciveen	21
Roxboro Rd	93	Castlemaine	1
Patrickswell	5	Glenbeigh	1
Ballyneety	2	Killorglin	12
Caherconlish	2	Portmagee	1
District: Askeaton	-	Sneem	2
Askeaton	21	Valentia Island	1
Adare	4	Waterville	1
Pallaskenry	2	District: Killarney	-
Croom	4	Barraduff	0
Foynes	3	Beaufort	1
Glin	1	Castleisland	11
Shanagolden	1	Farranfore	2
Rathkeale	7	Kenmare	9
District: Bruff	-	Kilgarvan	1
Bruff	17	Killarney	66
Kilfinane	2	Lauragh	0
Ballylanders	2	District: Listowel	-
Hospital	3	Ballybunion	7
Bruree	2	Ballyduff	1
Kilmallock	5	Ballyheigue	2
Pallas	4	Ballylongford	1
Cappamore	3	Brosna	1
Murroe	1	Knocknagoshall	1
District: Newcastlewest	-	Listowel	38
Drumcollogher	1	Lixnaw	1
Newcastlewest	26	Moyvane	1
Abbeyfeale	13	Tarbert	1
Ballingarry	1	TOTAL	314
Tournafulla	1	Limerick	-
Athea	1	District: Henry Street	-
Kilmeedy	1	Ardnacrusha	4
Castletown	1	Castleconnell	5
TOTAL	461	Henry St	252
Western Region	-	Mary St	18
Clare	-	Mayorstone Pk.	84
District: Ennis	-	District: Roxboro Road	-
Ennis	78	Ballyneety	2

Beaufort	1	Coachford	2
Crusheen	1	Caherconlish	3
Lissycasey	1	Patrickswell	1
Newmarket On Fergus	4	Roxboro Rd	142
Quin	1	District: Askeaton	-
Shannon	45	Adare	2
Sixmilebridge	3	Askeaton	20
Immigration Office	-	Croom	4
District: Kilrush	-	Foynes	1
Kilrush	23	Glin	1
Carrigaholt	1	Pallaskenry	1
Doonbeg	1	Rathkeale	7
Kilmihil	1	Shanagolden	1
Labasheeda	1	District: Bruff	-
Kildysart	3	Ballylanders	1
Kilkee	3	Bruff	24
District: Killaloe	-	Bruree	1
Killaloe	22	Cappamore	2
Broadford	1	Doon	1
Newport	3	Galbally	1
Scariff	6	Hospital	1
Mountshannon	1	Kilfinane	1
Tulla	1	Kilmallock	6
Rearcross	1	Murroe	3
District: Ennistymon	-	Oola	1
Ennistymon	22	Pallas	2
Ballyvaughan	2	District: Newcastlewest	-
Corofin	3	Abbeyfeale	10
Inagh	1	Athea	1
Lahinch	1	Ballingarry	1
Lisdoonvarna	2	Castletown	1
Miltown Malbay	3	Drumcollogher	2
TOTAL	235	Kilmeedy	1
Galway West	-	Newcastlewest	28
District: Galway	-	Tournafulla	1
Galway	163	TOTAL	637
Oranmore	4	Western Region	-
Carndolla	2	Clare	-
Lough George	2	District: Ennis	-
Headford	5	Crusheen	1
Athenry	4	Ennis	119
Monivea	2	Immigration Office	5
Kiltullagh	1	Lissycasey	1

Questions - Written Answers

Beaufort	1	Coachford	2
District: Clifden	-	Newmarket On Fergus	3
Clifden	17	Quin	1
Recess	1	Shannon	62
Letterfrack	1	Sixmilebridge	4
Lennaun	1	District: Kilrush	-
Carna	2	Carrigaholt	0
Maam	1	Doonbeg	0
Roundstone	1	Kildysart	1
District: Loughrea	-	Kilkee	2
Loughrea	30	Kilmihil	1
Tynagh	1	Kilrush	32
Killimor	1	Labasheeda	0
Woodford	1	District: Killaloe	-
New Inn	1	Broadford	1
Eyrecourt	1	Killaloe	33
Portumna	8	Mountshannon	1
Kilrickle	1	Scariff	5
District: Salthill	-	Tulla	2
Uachtarard	7	District: Ennistymon	-
Moycullen	2	Ballyvaughan	1
Carraroe	6	Corofin	1
Ros Muc	1	Ennistymon	25
Inverin	0	Inagh	1
Spiddle	3	Lahinch	2
Leitir Mor	1	Lisdoonvarna	1
Salthill	38	Miltown Malbay	3
Cill Ronain	3	TOTAL	308
District: Gort	-	Galway	-
Gort	20	District: Galway	-
Ardrahan	2	Athenry	5
Craughwell	2	Carndolla	1
Kinvara	3	Galway	210
Kilchreest	1	Kiltullagh	1
Peterswell	0	Lough George	4
Kilcolgan	1	Monivea	1
Shanaglish	1	Oranmore	35
TOTAL	342	District: Clifden	-
Roscommon/Galway East	-	Carna	2
District: Roscommon	-	Clifden	28
Roscommon	51	Lennaun	1
Athleague	2	Letterfrack	1
Knockcroghery	1	Maam	2

Beaufort	1	Coachford	2
Strokestown	2	Recess	1
Ballyforan	1	Roundstone	1
Creggs	1	District: Loughrea	-
Ballygar	3	Eyrecourt	1
District: Ballinasloe	-	Killimor	0
Ballinasloe	38	Kilrickle	1
Ahascragh	1	Loughrea	40
Kilconnel	1	New Inn	1
Kiltormer	1	Portumna	8
Menlough	1	Tynagh	1
Mountbellew	9	Woodford	1
Taughmaconnel	1	District: Salthill	-
Clonark	1	Carraroe	6
Moylough	1	Cill Ronain	3
District: Boyle	-	Inverin	1
Boyle	26	Leitir Mor	1
Ballyfarnan	3	Moycullen	2
Cootehall	1	Ros Muc	1
Elphin	3	Salthill	55
Frenchpark	2	Spiddle	3
Keadue	1	Uachtarard	6
Tulsk	2	District: Gort	-
District: Castlerea	-	Ardrahan	1
Castlerea	30	Craughwell	6
Ballaghadereen	6	Gort	31
Ballinlough	2	Kilchreest	1
Loughlynn	2	Kilcolgan	1
Ballintubber	1	Kinvara	1
Ballymoe	1	Peterswell	0
District: Tuam	-	Shanaglish	0
Tuam	42	District: Ballinasloe	-
Williamstown	1	Ahascragh	0
Milltown	2	Ballinasloe	46
Kilconly	1	Ballygar	1
Glenamaddy	3	Creggs	1
Dunmore	3	Kilconnel	1
Corofin	1	Kiltormer	0
Barnadearg	1	Menlough	0
TOTAL	249	Mountbellew	8
Mayo	-	Moylough	1
District: Castlebar	-	District: Tuam	-
Castlebar	56	Ballymoe	0
Ballyvary	1	Barnadearg	1
Ballyglass	2	Corofin	2

Questions - Written Answers

Beaufort	1	Coachford	2
Balla	1	Dunmore	6
Partry	2	Glenamaddy	1
Glenisland	1	Headford	5
Tourmakeady	1	Kilconly	0
Garda Info Services	-	Milltown	1
District: Ballina	-	Tuam	55
Ballina	38	Williamstown	1
Killala	2	TOTAL	595
Ballycastle	1	Mayo	-
Bonnicconlon	1	District: Castlebar	-
Crossmolina	4	Balla	2
Lahardane	1	Ballyglass	1
Enniscrone	3	Ballyvary	1
Easkey	3	Castlebar	76
District:Belmullet		Garda Info Services	0
Belmullet	16	Glenisland	0
Blacksod	2	Partry	2
Bellacorrick	1	Tourmakeady	1
Bangor Erris	3	District: Ballina	
Ballycroy	1	Ballina	49
Glenamoy	1	Ballycastle	1
District: Claremorris		Bonnicconlon	1
Claremorris	22	Crossmolina	4
Kilmaine	1	Killala	1
Ballindine	1	Lahardane	1
Knock	4	District:Belmullet	-
Ballinrobe	8	Ballycroy	1
Cong	1	Bangor Erris	2
Shrule	3	Bellacorrick	1
Hollymount	1	Belmullet	23
District: Swinford	-	Blacksod	0
Swinford	19	Glenamoy	1
Kiltimagh	4	District: Claremorris	-
Charlestown	4	Ballindine	1
Kilkelly	2	Ballinrobe	9
Ballyhaunis	9	Claremorris	36
Foxford	3	Cong	1
District:Westport	-	Hollymount	1
Westport	24	Kilmaine	0
Newport	2	Knock	1
Achill Sound	5	Shrule	1
Mulranny	1	District: Swinford	-
Louisburgh	2	Ballyhaunis	10
Keel	0	Charlestown	5

Beaufort	1	Coachford	2
TOTAL	257	Foxford	3
Northern Region.	-	Kilkelly	8
Sligo/Leitrim	-	Kiltimagh	2
District: Sligo	-	Swinford	26
Sligo	113	District: Westport	-
Collooney	4	Achill Sound	3
Skreen	2	Keel	1
Coolaney	2	Louisburgh	1
Cliffoney	2	Mulranny	1
Rosses Point	2	Newport	2
Grange	3	Westport	29
District: Ballymote	-	TOTAL	309
Ballymote	20	Northern Region.	-
Tubbercurry	5	Sligo/Leitrim	-
Gurteen	2	District: Sligo	-
Riverstown	2	Cliffoney	1
Aclare	1	Collooney	5
Bunnanadden	1	Coolaney	0
District: Carrick On Shannon	-	Grange	5
Carrick-On-Shannon	26	Rosses Point	2
Cloone	2	Skreen	1
Dromod	1	Sligo	150
Drumshambo	4	District: Ballymote	-
Keshcarrigan	1	Aclare	2
Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/2011
D.M.R.South Central	-	D.M.R.South Central	-
Mohill	5	Ballyfarnan	1
Roosky	3	Ballymote	29
District: Manorhamilton	-	Bunnanadden	1
Manorhamilton	25	Easkey	2
Kiltyclogher	2	Enniscrone	5
Drumkerrin	3	Gurteen	2
Kinlough	10	Riverstown	2
Glenfarne	1	Tubbercurry	6
Dromahair	3	District: Carrick On Shannon	-
Dowra	3	Ballinamore	6
Blacklion	13	Carrick-On-Shannon	45
TOTAL	261	Carrickallen	2
Donegal	-	Cloone	1
District: Letterkenny	-	Dromod	1

Questions - Written Answers

Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/2011
Letterkenny	92	Keshcarrigan	1
Carrigans	9	Mohill	6
Castlefin	5	District: Manorhamilton	-
Brocach	1	Dromahair	2
Newtowncunningham	3	Drumkerrin	3
Raphoe	7	Drumshambo	5
Lifford	17	Glenfarne	1
Ballybofey	23	Kiltyclogher	2
Convoy	4	Kinlough	4
District: Buncrana	-	Manorhamilton	20
Buncrana	37	TOTAL	313
Burnfoot	19	Donegal	-
Carndonagh	5	District: Letterkenny	-
Clonmanny	3	Ballybofey	24
Malin	3	Brocach	1
Culdaff	0	Carrigans	5
Moville	9	Castlefin	4
Muff	3	Convoy	3
District: Milford	-	Letterkenny	104
Milford	17	Lifford	17
Carrigart	3	Newtowncunningham	3
Kerrykeel	3	Raphoe	3
Kilmacrennan	2	District: Buncrana	-
Churchill	1	Buncrana	50
Dunfanaghy	2	Burnfoot	6
Craosloch	1	Carndonagh	4
Falcarragh	7	Clonmanny	2
Ramelton	4	Culdaff	0
Rathmullen	1	Malin	3
District: Glenties	-	Moville	7
Glenties	18	Muff	4
Annagry	2	District: Milford	-
Ardara	3	Carrigart	3
Bunbeag	7	Churchill	1
Burtonport	2	Craosloch	1
Clougher	1	Dunfanaghy	2
Doochary	1	Falcarragh	9
Dungloe	6	Kerrykeel	4
Carrick	2	Kilmacrennan	2
Gleann Cholmcille	2	Milford	27

Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/2011
District: Ballyshannon	-	Ramelton	2
Ballyshannon	34	Rathmullen	1
Ballintra	2	District: Glenties	-
Bundoran	14	Annagry	1
Donegal Town	34	Ardara	3
Pettigo	4	Bunbeag	15
Dunkineely	2	Burtonport	1
Na Cealla Beaga	6	Carrick	2
Mountcharles	3	Clougher	1
TOTAL	424	Doochary	0
Cavan/Monaghan	-	Dungloe	8
District: Monaghan	-	Gleann Cholmcille	1
Monaghan	101	Glenties	25
Clones	17	District: Ballyshannon	-
Newbliss	2	Ballintra	2
Clontibret	2	Ballyshannon	47
Scotstown	10	Bundoran	6
Emyvale	12	Donegal Town	33
Smithboro	1	Dunkineely	0
District: Carrickmacross	-	Mountcharles	1
Carrickmacross	39	Na Cealla Beaga	6
Ballybay	5	Pettigo	0
Castleblaney	28	TOTAL	444
Shantonagh	2	Cavan/Monaghan	-
Corrinshigagh	1	District: Monaghan	-
Rockcorry	1	Clones	7
District: Cavan	-	Clontibret	0
Cavan	55	Emyvale	4
Ballinagh	2	Monaghan	86
Arva	2	Newbliss	1
Stradone	2	Scotstown	3
Redhills	1	Smithboro	0
Kilnaleck	2	District: Carrickmacross	-
Finea	2	Ballybay	5
District: Baileboro	-	Carrickmacross	46
Baileboro	24	Castleblaney	24
Kingscourt	4	Corrinshigagh	1
Mullagh	2	Rockcorry	1
Shercock	2	Shantonagh	2
Tullyvin	0	District: Cavan	-

Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/01	Region/Division/ District	Strength 31/12/2011
Virginia	3	Arva	3
Cootehill	7	Ballinagh	2
Ballyjamesduff	3	Cavan	62
District: Ballyconnell	-	Kilnaleck	4
Ballyconnell	24	Redhills	1
Belturbet	2	Stradone	1
Swanlinbar	11	District: Baileboro	-
Killeshandra	2	Baileboro	40
Bawnboy	1	Ballyjamesduff	4
Ballinamore	6	Cootehill	9
Carrigallen	1	Kingscourt	6
TOTAL	379	Mullagh	2
-	-	Shercock	2
-	-	Tullyvin	0
-	-	Virginia	5
-	-	District: Ballyconnell	
-	-	Ballyconnell	28
-	-	Bawnboy	1
-	-	Belturbet	4
-	-	Blacklion	3
-	-	Dowra	1
-	-	Killeshandra	1
-	-	Swanlinbar	1
-	-	TOTAL	360

Deportation Orders

793. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide a breakdown by nationality of the almost 3,700 people who, accordingly to figures released by the Department of Justice, were refused leave to land and removed from the State in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47994/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my response to PQ No 518 of 21st February 2012, as follows, which outlines the overall removals from the State in 2011, including those referred to by the Deputy.

In 2011, the number of persons removed from the State on foot of Deportation Orders made under Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 was 280. These persons included those whose applications for asylum were refused as well as those who were in breach of the provisions of immigration legislation.

In addition during 2011, just under 3,700 refusals of entry into the State for one or more reason in respect of 2,768 persons were recorded by the Garda National Immigration Bureau at airports and other ports of entry to the State. The number of persons removed under this

category, excluding those who having been refused entry subsequently claimed asylum, together with other persons who were transferred under the Dublin Regulation to the EU member state in which they first applied for asylum and EU nationals who were returned to their countries of origin on foot of an EU Removal Order was 2,719.

In all cases, removals from the State, whether in respect of those who are removed on arrival at ports of entry or those already in the State, are conducted in accordance with the law. Removals are essentially operational matters for the Garda National Immigration Bureau who work closely with immigration officials of my Department in arranging the necessary travel documents and other papers required. In keeping with standard practice in other jurisdictions, some individuals are escorted to their country of origin or to a connecting hub. Chartered aircraft as well as scheduled commercial aircraft and ferries are used to effect removals.

The removal of illegal immigrants from the State is a necessary feature of the enforcement of immigration legislation with the purpose of upholding the integrity of the immigration system. In enforcing the law in this respect, Ireland is no different from other countries who also remove individuals who have no lawful right to remain within their territory.

The principal nationalities of persons refused leave to enter the State and subsequently removed were China, Brazil, Bolivia, South Africa, Albania and Nigeria.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

794. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the delay in processing an application submitted to the Garda Central Vetting Unit in July 2012 in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48005/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that a vetting application on behalf of the person concerned was received by the Garda Central Vetting Unit. The application was processed and returned to the registered organisation involved on 2 November 2012.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

795. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications currently held by the Garda Central Vetting Unit; the current processing times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48006/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda Authorities that there are currently 50,000 applications held by the Garda Central Vetting Unit. Over 270,000 applications have been processed so far this year. Over the past few years the numbers of cases has risen from 218,404 in 2008 to 315,100 in 2011. The expected out turn for 2012 is 350,000.

The current average processing time for vetting applications is 8 weeks. However, seasonal fluctuations and the necessity to seek additional information on particular applications can result in this processing time being exceeded on occasion.

I am very conscious of the need to keep this processing time to a minimum. I am confident that the current average processing time will be reduced over the coming months as a number of

measures to ensure improvements in the time it takes for the processing of vetting applications take effect. Most recently, there has been a redeployment of staff from another Government Department and the opening of a second vetting centre in Ennis, Co. Clare.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission

796. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on Garda operation Aughrim; the number of persons arrested and charged to date; the number of successful convictions obtained; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48020/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that Operation Aughrim commenced on 18 June, 2012. This initiative is designed to ensure a focused and consistent approach in targeting criminals involved in committing theft and robbery from the person in the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) with a particular focus on the city centre districts of Pearse Street and Store Street. The operation includes the monitoring of prolific criminals and I understand that some significant results have been achieved whereby such offenders have had multiple charges brought together and dealt with by a single Judge, resulting in increased sentences.

I am further informed that there have been 297 persons arrested and 854 charges have been proffered associated with Operation Aughrim. Full data on convictions to date is not available as the majority of these cases remain *sub-judice* or may have been taken into consideration with other charges which were proffered before the courts in advance of the commencement of Operation Aughrim.

Garda Transport Provision

797. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an Garda Síochána are required to use marked cars and not to use unmarked cars when deploying speed cameras; if such cars are required to be visible to oncoming traffic or may they be concealed; the other requirements that apply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48030/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that there is no legal requirement for members of An Garda Síochána to use marked vehicles when conducting speed enforcement, or that the vehicles be visible to on-coming traffic. As a matter of Garda policy, safety camera vans operated by the service provider, GoSafe, are fully marked. Garda safety vans are used both overtly and covertly. Similarly, speed enforcement may be carried out by Garda personnel when using marked and unmarked cars and marked motorcycles.

Crime Prevention

798. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to increase the roll out of the text alert scheme to rural areas in view of the fact that where it is operating, burglaries have reduced by 30%; the stage of his proposal for CCTV projects in the towns of Granard and Edgesworthstown, County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48081/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have requested the informa-

tion sought by the Deputy from the Garda authorities. I will be in contact with the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Restorative Justice

799. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding restorative justice in relation to community offenders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48097/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): My Department, through the Probation Service, provides funding to three restorative justice initiatives based in Tallaght, Nenagh, and Limerick. Further information is set out in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 5 on 24 October last, which is as follows.

The Probation Service, in partnership with community based organisations, is engaged in the promotion, development and delivery of restorative justice initiatives. Extending the range of restorative justice schemes is a strategic priority for the Probation Service.

As regards adult offenders, the Probation Service has expanded the Restorative Justice Service based in Tallaght to the Criminal Courts of Justice and the Courts in South County Dublin, while the Nenagh Community Reparation project has been extended to the Courts in North Tipperary. Both services are operated through community based organisations. This has been done following a 12 month pilot which the Probation Service commenced in June, 2011 to test a range of restorative interventions based on the recommendations contained in the report of the National Commission on Restorative Justice. A restorative justice project focussing on young offenders has also been developed in partnership with the voluntary and community sector in Limerick.

For my part, my focus is to encourage the use of, to the greatest extent possible, the menu of non-custodial options available to the courts. I believe the restorative justice concept has a place in that range of available options and it is my intention to build on the progress being made.

Tobacco Smuggling

800. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality in view of his public statement in the aftermath of the recent Crumlin shooting that the gangs responsible were likely to be involved in cigarette smuggling, if he intends to conduct a review with the Gardai on the measures they have in place for enforcement against this ongoing problem; if his attention been drawn to the fact that the Department of Health supports international developments in relation to plain or standardised packaging for tobacco products; if he will confirm whether he has already, or will in the future, enquire with the Gardai whether the introduction of plain or standardised packaging for cigarettes here could have a negative impact on the illicit cigarette trade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48112/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can advise the Deputy that the lead role in combating cigarette smuggling in this jurisdiction rests with the Customs Service, in the context of the investigation of revenue offences which occasion significant financial losses to the Exchequer. Revenue has adopted a comprehensive tobacco strategy which is published on Revenue's website *www.revenue.ie*. The strategy includes a number of programmes, which are designed to complement each other in targeting the supply and demand sides of the market for contraband tobacco in Ireland.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that An Garda Síochána provides ongoing support to the Revenue Commissioners in tackling this form of criminal activity and there continues to be close and effective liaison in this regard. As a feature of this, An Garda Síochána continues to proactively target groups and individuals engaged in organised criminal activities, which includes those engaged in smuggling cigarettes.

A Cross-Border Task Force, comprising of representatives from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, HM Revenue Customs, the Serious Organised Crime Agency (UK), An Garda Síochána and the Criminal Assets Bureau, which is chaired by the Revenue Commissioners is also in place to address this form of criminality. Given all of the above, I have no current plans to conduct a review with the Gardaí on the measures they have in place for enforcement in this area.

I can assure the Deputy that the issue of cigarette smuggling remains one of priority for our law enforcement agencies and that significant successes continue to be made in tackling this illegal trade. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that, in the period from January to October this year, a total of 91m cigarettes and almost 4,000 kgs of tobacco have been seized by Revenue. In addition, during that period there were over 100 convictions for smuggling or selling of illicit tobacco products.

With regard to the introduction of plain or standardised packaging for tobacco products I am advised by my colleague, the Minister for Health, that the Department of Health will continue to monitor recent international developments in this area which together with the forthcoming revision of the EU Tobacco Products Directive will inform future policy in this area.

Given that the introduction of such packaging internationally is still at a relatively recent stage it would be speculative at this point to consider any impact its introduction might have on the illegal trade in tobacco products. However, what I can say in this regard is that An Garda Síochána would welcome any appropriate initiative that would assist in further curtailing such activity.

Citizenship Applications

801. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will update Dáil Éireann regarding the citizenship application process; if he will advise the nature of systematic correspondence from his Department to applicants; his plans to improve the levels of communication with applicants while applications are being processed; his views on whether the current system in some instances is constrictive for applicants in that lack of information prevents applicants from travelling abroad because of potential summons at short notice to ceremonies for example; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48129/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The procedures employed to assess an application for naturalisation are set out on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, www.inis.gov.ie. Upon receipt, an initial examination of each application is carried out to determine if the statutory application is completed fully. Valid applications are examined to determine if the applicant meets the statutory residency criteria. Applicants with any shortfall in their residency are informed of this and will be able to reapply when they have the required residency. Those whose applications successfully pass the initial assessment stage are informed that their application has been initially assessed and has proceeded successfully to the second stage of processing and that their case will be submitted to the Minister for decision as soon as enquiries are complete and all required documentation has been compiled. Applicants are also given a general timescale for processing which currently is that less com-

plex cases which account for more than 70% of all applications will be decided upon within 6 months with a proportion of applications taking longer than this timeframe. If any further information or documentation is required from the applicant then this is requested in writing.

When I came into office in March, 2011, I was determined to tackle the backlog that had built up in the processing of applications for citizenship. To this end, a series of more streamlined measures have resulted in a major increase in the volume of applications processed with some 22,500 cases decided so far in 2012, almost three times the volume in 2010. The Deputy will appreciate that, bearing in mind the volumes involved and the importance of processing cases as quickly as possible, it is not possible to provide specific timeframes to each applicant. In any event this information will not be known until each application is examined in detail.

The Deputy will also be aware that alongside the improvements in processing, in June 2011, I introduced formal citizenship ceremonies for the first time since the foundation of the State. The ceremonies, which are being met with universal approval, are held at regular intervals. They allow candidates for citizenship make their declaration of fidelity to the Irish nation and loyalty to the State and receive their certificate of naturalisation in a meaningful and dignified manner which befits the importance and solemnity of the occasion. As many as 4,000 candidates receive their certificate of naturalisation on each ceremony day. In dealing with such large volumes, it is necessary to structure the process in such a way as to ensure that these large scale ceremony days run smoothly and efficiently. As much notice as possible is provided to candidates and those who cannot attend are facilitated at a future ceremony.

Finally, I think the Deputy will acknowledge that enormous strides have been made with dealing with citizenship applications since March 2011. The situation inherited by me upon being appointed was unacceptable and this has now been turned around to the extent that the new arrangements for granting citizenship have been universally welcomed. In the circumstances, I am somewhat surprised that a person who may have waited for a lengthy period to have his/her application processed would choose to travel outside the jurisdiction and not take up the request to attend a ceremony without good reason. As I indicated earlier, in any event, no person is denied citizenship by not being able to attend a ceremony; they are facilitated on the next available occasion.

Garda Transport Provision

802. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of marked and unmarked Garda vehicles that are fitted with automatic number plate recognition service; his plans to increase this number; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48182/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have requested the information sought by the Deputy from the Garda authorities. I will be in contact with the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Mobile Telephone Seizures

803. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of mobile phones seized at each prison here for the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48183/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The information requested by

the Deputy is set out in the table. Section 36 of the Prisons Act, 2007, which was brought into operation on 1 May, 2007, makes it an offence for prisoners to have unauthorised possession of or use of mobile telecommunication devices. Under the Act it is also an offence to supply such a device to a prisoner. The penalties for such an offence, on summary conviction, include a fine not exceeding €5,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or both, and on conviction on indictment, to a fine not exceeding €10,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or both. It is Irish Prison Service policy to report and hand over seizures of mobile phones to the Gardaí. Cell and area searches for contraband such as mobile phones take place in all prisons on a daily basis. These include random, targeted and intelligence led searches. These searches have been particularly effective and local intelligence indicates that the availability of mobile phones has decreased across the prison system. As the Deputy can see the number of mobile phones seized in prisons has reduced, year on year, from 2009 and given the figure for the year to date it is expected that the final figure for 2012 will show a further decrease. This is as a direct consequence of the security measures introduced, including a airport style scanners and x-ray machines, which are in operation at the entrances of all the relevant closed prisons.

Prison/Place of Detention	2009	2010	2011	2012 (23.9.12)
Arbour Hill	2	1	2	1
Castlerea	70	43	42	21
Cloverhill	41	16	20	27
Cork	27	13	30	9
Dóchas Centre	40	12	42	10
Limerick	309	133	100	108
Loughan House	78	155	104	48
Midlands	87	92	123	59
Mountjoy (Male)	904	742	420	226
Portlaoise	48	18	27	2
Shelton Abbey	103	88	77	51
St. Patrick's Institution	121	138	220	252
Training Unit	116	191	113	54
Wheatfield	228	76	48	17
Total	2,174	1,718	1,368	885

Departmental Staff Remuneration

804. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason non categorised personnel within his Department are paying a pension levy even though they have no pension; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48219/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed that my Department is not aware of any instance in which the pension related deduction is not properly applied. The provisions for pension related deductions from the remuneration of Public Servants are set out under Section 2 of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Bill, 2009 which states that such deductions apply to existing Public Servants with effect from 1 March 2009 and apply to those joining the Public Service subsequent to this date where they are: 1) a member of a public pension scheme, 2) entitled to a benefit under such a scheme, or 3) in receipt of a payment in lieu of membership of such a scheme. Generally speaking, the majority of employees in Government Departments fall under the above categories.

Proposed Legislation

805. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans, if any, to bring forward legislation dealing with sentencing and post-release supervision issues (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48243/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Under section 29 of the Sex Offenders Act 2001 a court can impose a post-release supervision order as part of a sentence. Indeed, when considering the sentence to be imposed on a sex offender, the court is obliged by section 28 of the Act to consider whether to include post-release supervision. The court is required to have regard to the need for such supervision, the need to protect the public from serious harm from the offender, the need to prevent the commission of further sexual offences by the offender, and the need to rehabilitate or further rehabilitate the offender. The aggregate of the sentence of imprisonment and the supervision period cannot exceed the duration of the maximum prison term for the particular offence. Also, the period of imprisonment cannot be less than the court would have imposed were it not in a position to order post-release supervision.

For the period of post-release supervision, the offender is required to comply with such conditions as are specified in the sentence for securing supervision by a probation officer. In addition, the court can include a condition prohibiting the offender from doing anything it considers necessary for the purpose of protecting the public. It can also impose a condition requiring the offender to receive psychological counselling or other appropriate treatment.

It is important to view provisions relating to post-release supervision together with other provisions in the Sex Offenders Act 2001. The legislation also introduced the “sex offenders’ register” and sex offender orders. Any person sentenced to more than 2 years imprisonment for a scheduled sexual offence is subject to indefinite notification requirements. Upon the application of the Garda Síochána, the Circuit Court can make a sex offender order at any time after an offender’s release from prison (or a sentence otherwise ceases to be in force) prohibiting him or her from doing certain things. A sex offender order can remain in force for 5 years or such longer period as the court may provide.

My Department has been conducting a wide-ranging review of the law on sexual offences. An examination of the Sex Offenders Act 2001, including a public consultation process, formed an integral part of that review. Arising from the review, I expect to bring legislative proposals to Government for approval shortly. These will include a number of measures to enhance risk assessment, notification requirements and the application of post-release supervision requirements.

Garda Reserve

806. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Questions No. 213 of 14 February 2012 and No. 154 of 11 October 2012, if he will reconcile the seemingly contradictory answers. [48304/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Members of the Garda Reserve receive a net allowance of €1,000 after deductions, to contribute towards expenses incurred, once they complete 208 hours of duty in a twelve month period. The Deputy will appreciate that I cannot comment on the criteria used in the assessment of income for the Department of Education and Skills Student Grants Scheme.

Educational Services for Prisoners

807. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners who undertook third level study in 2008 with the Open University and with the National college of Art and Design; the number of prisoners that have undertaken courses with these institutions in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48307/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that 151 prisoners undertook courses with the Open University in 2008. The corresponding number for 2012 is 103. In 2008 33 students undertook courses with the National College for Art and Design (NCAD). The arrangement with NCAD, following a value for money audit, was discontinued in 2011 and as such there are no prisoners currently undertaking courses with NCAD.

Illegal Moneylenders

808. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No.44503/12 of October 2012, the action he will take regarding the person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48315/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy will appreciate a number of the matters raised, principally those concerning the allocation of housing and social welfare payments, are not matters which fall under the remit of my Department. These are matters which would fall primarily to be considered by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and the Department of Social Protection.

With regard to the issue of illegal money lending it may be helpful if I briefly set out the measures currently in place governing money lending generally. The regulation of licensed money lending is a matter primarily for my colleague, the Minister for Finance and the Central Bank of Ireland is the Competent Authority in this jurisdiction with regard to licensed money lending activity. Legislative provisions relating to the regulation of money lending are contained in the Consumer Credit Act 1995 and unlicensed money lending is an offence under that Act. Persons who engage in money lending and who do not hold the necessary licence granted by the Central Bank are committing an offence under section 98 of the Act. Complaints concerning the operation of illegal money lenders may be made to An Garda Síochána who have power to bring prosecutions against unlicensed operators. A person who is found guilty of an offence under the Act is liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or both, or on conviction on indictment, to a fine not exceeding €100,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or both.

I have been assured by the Garda authorities that where offences under section 98 of the Consumer Credit Act 1995 are disclosed, and are reported to An Garda Síochána, the matter will be the subject of investigation under the direction of the local District Officer, with relevant expert assistance available from the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation.

I would therefore strongly encourage those who may have information concerning the operation of unlicensed money lenders to notify An Garda Síochána whom I can assure the Deputy will take all measures open to them to enforce the law in this area.

While I do appreciate the concerns expressed by the Deputy in relation to this particular case, insofar as such concerns relate to the operation of illegal money lending this is a matter which can be pursued by the Garda authorities as I have outlined above.

Residency Permits

809. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of non-EEA national aged between 16 and 18 years who are currently registered here; and if he will provide a breakdown of the types of residency stamps issued to them. [48328/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As of 2 November 2012, a total of 2,192 non-EEA nationals who have stated their age as being between 16 and 18 are on the register of non-nationals who have been granted a permission to be in the State. This register is maintained by an Garda Síochána pursuant to the provisions of section 9 of the Immigration Act, 2004.

The main categories of immigration stamps issued to the non-EEA nationals in question are Stamp 2 (Non-EEA national attending a full time course of study), Stamp 2A (Non-EEA national attending a course of study not recognised by the Department of Education and Skills), Stamp 3 (Non-EEA visitor; and Non-EEA dependant of employment permit holder), Stamp 4 (Non-EEA family member of EEA citizen; Non-EEA spouse of Irish citizen; Refugee; Non-EEA person granted family reunification under the Refugee Act 1996; Programme refugee; Non-EEA parent of Irish citizen child where parent was granted permission to remain in the State), and Stamp 4 (EU Family) which includes non-EEA family members of EU citizens who qualify for residency under EU Free Movement of Persons Regulations.

Cyber Security Policy

810. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the measures that are to be undertaken by the frontline officers of an Gardaí Síochána upon receipt of a complaint about alleged cyber bullying. [48355/12]

811. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will confirm that training has been provided to all of the frontline officers of an Gardaí Síochána on the measures they are to undertake upon receipt of a complaint regarding alleged cyber bullying. [48356/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 810 and 811 together.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that any complaint of alleged cyber-bullying is fully investigated by An Garda Síochána, utilising all relevant legislation including in particular Section 10 of the Non-fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997. I have asked the Garda Commissioner for further details in relation to training on this issue and I will write to the Deputy directly with any further information.

Garda Stations Refurbishment

812. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding improvement works to the cells in a Garda station (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48358/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The programme of refurbishment of Garda stations is based on accommodation priorities which are established by An Garda Síochána. The programme is advanced in close co-operation with the Office of Public Works,

which has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation. I am advised by the Garda authorities that plans for improvement works to the cells of the Garda station referred to by the Deputy are being developed. This project will be further progressed in the context of An Garda Síochána's identified accommodation priorities and in the light of available resources within the Vote for the Office of Public Works.

Private Security Authority Membership

813. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to reduce the cost of a PSA licence to make it more affordable for small business owners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48364/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that the Private Security Authority, an independent agency under the remit of my Department, is the regulatory body with responsibility for regulating and licensing the private security industry in the State. As the Deputy will appreciate, the provision of a regulatory environment understandably has cost implications for the industry but the public and the industry itself both benefit from regulation. I am informed by the Authority that the current fee, which is for a two year licence, was set by the Authority in 2005 and has not been increased since that time. I am advised that the Board of the Authority is, in fact, currently reviewing the licence fee structure and will consider the matter at its next meeting. The Deputy may wish to note that an instalment payment option to assist contractors with paying for their licence has already been introduced by the Authority.

Private Security Authority Membership

814. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons who paid for a PSA licence in the years 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48365/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that the Private Security Authority, an independent agency under the remit of my Department, is the regulatory body with responsibility for regulating and licensing the private security industry in the State. I am informed that the Authority issues two types of licence, both of which are valid for a period of two years. Details are as follows: Contractor Licences which are required by companies, partnerships and sole traders and Individual Licences which are required by all those working in the security sector within the State whether employed by a licensed contractor or directly by a business as in house security personnel.

The table sets out the number of valid applications received by the Authority for the years 2010, 2011 and to the end of October 2012.

Year	Contractor Applications	Individual Applications
2010	477	13,715
2011	316	12,179
2012 (to 31st Oct)	397	13,603

Registration of Title

815. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on

a situation relating to the charging of fees under right-of-way registration regulations as laid down by the new Land and Conveyancing Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48366/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have been informed by the Property Registration Authority that at present applications for registration of an easement (which is claimed to have been acquired by prescription that is appurtenant to registered lands) attract a fee of €25 under the “other registrations for which no fee is prescribed” category of the current Fees Order. Under the new Fees Order (Land Registration (Fees) Order 2012) which comes into operation on 1 December 2012, the fee will be €130.

Where the title to the “dominant tenement” (that is the applicant’s lands benefitting from the right) is unregistered, an application for first registration of the title to those lands must be made. The first registration fees are currently €85, rising to €500 under the new Fees Order. However, in appropriate cases, the title may be certified by a solicitor in Form 3 of the Schedule of Forms to the Land Registration Rules. If title can be and is certified in Form 3, the fee will be €130 under the new Fees Order. The first registration fee, where payable, would be additional to the fee for registration of the appurtenant right mentioned above.

The Property Registration Authority can only process cases where the right is uncontested. In contested cases, or any other case, applicants may apply to the Court to have the right established. If successful, the Court Order is then lodged for registration of the right. The fee for registration of the right established pursuant to an order of the Court is currently €25, rising to €40 in the new Fees Order.

What is set out above relates only to fees payable to the Property Registration Authority. The Authority cannot comment on fees and costs that would be charged by a solicitor.

Crime Prevention

816. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps the Gardaí are taking in an area (details supplied) in County Meath to reduce crime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48372/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the area referred to is in the Ashbourne Garda District. I am further informed that the area is subject to regular patrols by local uniformed personnel, augmented by uniformed and plain clothes units from the District headquarters in Ashbourne, together with the Divisional Traffic Unit and the Regional Support Unit as required.

Local Garda management closely monitors such patrols, and other operational strategies in place, in conjunction with crime trends and policing needs of the communities in these areas to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources to provide the best possible Garda service to the public. While the situation is being kept under review, Garda management is satisfied that a full and comprehensive policing service is being delivered to the communities in the areas concerned and that the current structures in place deliver an effective and efficient policing service.

The Deputy will be aware that the Garda Commissioner has put Operation Fiacla in place in order to address incidents of burglary, aggravated burglaries and related offences throughout the country. Operation Fiacla is intelligence driven and specific burglary initiatives have been implemented in each Garda Region to target suspect offenders. I am informed that as of 19 October, 2493 persons have been arrested and 1404 persons have been charged with burglary offences under Operation Fiacla.

An Garda Síochána also places great emphasis on the importance of the partnership between An Garda Síochána and the community in preventing and detecting crime, and maintaining a safe environment for everyone. An Garda Síochána continues to invest time and energy in these partnerships and relationships to the benefit of all.

In this regard, during September the Garda Commissioner launched the second national public awareness week this year under the 'Garda Supporting Safer Communities Campaign'. This important campaign highlights a range of key issues, in particular burglary prevention. The primary objective of this Garda Community Safety Campaign is to engage with, and raise awareness within communities of initiatives aimed at preventing crime, reducing the fear of crime and promoting community safety.

Naturalisation Applications

817. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason an application for naturalisation has not yet been decided in respect of a person (details supplied) ion Dublin 18; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48425/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy.

The application is currently being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. As the processing requirements and time taken to complete necessary checks vary from case to case, it is not possible to provide a specific date for determination of an individual application.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process. It is a statutory requirement that, inter alia, applicants for naturalisation be of good character. In some instances that can be established relatively quickly and in other cases completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time. I can, however, inform the Deputy that enormous progress has been made in dealing with the backlog and steps are being taken to process all outstanding applications as quickly as possible.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

818. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a vetting application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48429/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that a vetting application on behalf of the person concerned was received by the Garda Central Vetting Unit. The application is currently being processed and it is anticipated that a response will issue to the registered organisation involved in the coming week.

Garda Deployment

819. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there are any plans for an increase in Garda foot patrols in an area (details supplied) in County Meath due to the lack of a Garda station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48525/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy should be aware that the Commissioner is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources, including personnel, throughout the organisation and I have no direct function in the matter. This allocation of resources is constantly monitored in the context of crime trends, policing needs and other operational strategies in place on a District, Divisional and Regional level to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public.

However, the Commissioner informs me that in relation to Meath Garda Division, there are approximately 295 Gardaí assigned to the Division of which 46 are assigned to the Ashbourne Garda Station which patrols the Ratoath area. The Division is also supported by 33 Garda Reserves and 26 civilians. These resources are augmented, when appropriate, by Gardaí from national units such as the Garda National Drug Unit and the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

Northern Ireland Issues

820. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48549/12]

821. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 186 of 24 October 2012, if he will detail further the form of the north south cooperation under the auspices of his Department; and the way his Department is in contact with its northern counterpart. [48555/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 820 and 821 together.

As I stated to the Deputy in my reply to Question No. 186 of 24 October 2012, the work in my Department in relation to North-South co-operation, which arises primarily in the context of criminal justice co-operation, is carried out across a range of Divisions in my Department depending on the nature of the work involved. I am and my officials are frequently and closely engaged with our counterparts in Northern Ireland in respect of a wide range of matters relating to North-South criminal justice co-operation.

The Deputy will be aware that under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Co-operation on

Criminal Justice Matters I meet regularly with David Ford to discuss criminal justice matters of mutual interest or concern in the two jurisdictions; to consider the scope for and develop plans to achieve more effective co-operation and co-ordination on criminal justice matters between the two jurisdictions; to oversee and give direction to the work of the Working Group; to exchange information on other criminal justice initiatives taking place in both jurisdictions, and to approve and review progress against the annual work programmes on criminal justice co-operation.

The Agreement established a Working Group of senior officials comprising representatives of my Department, the Northern Ireland Department of Justice and the various criminal justice agencies from both jurisdictions. Its remit is to take forward current co-operation and to identify other areas in which co-operation on criminal justice matters could be enhanced or initiated. A number of project groups are taking forward co-operation initiatives in relation to forensic science, registered offenders, probation and rehabilitation, victim support, youth justice matters and social diversity.

In addition, the officials of my Department maintain close and ongoing contact with their counterparts in the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Department of Justice in regard to the security situation and the ongoing threat posed by republican paramilitarism.

Given that North-South co-operation is an integral and ongoing part of the work of a range of Divisions of my Department, it is not readily possible to disaggregate the relevant proportion of the working time of the officials involved.

Proposed Legislation

822. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the plans, if any, he has to outlaw the practice of cyber bullying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48566/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): “Cyberbullying” is the term used to describe bullying where it is carried out using the internet, mobile phones or other technological devices. The Deputy will appreciate that, in view of the volume of transactions using such devices as well as the global nature of communication by these means, the authorities would find it impossible to enforce a prohibition on the use of equipment for such purposes (assuming, of course, that a prohibition of such a kind was legally or constitutionally permissible). Nevertheless, bullying in any form may amount to an assault or harassment and may therefore be an offence under the Non Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997, as amended, or under the Post Office (Amendment) Act 1951, as amended. I therefore urge any one subjected to bullying of whatever variety to contact the Gardaí.

Assistance is available from a number of sources to help those affected by cyberbullying. The Safer Internet Ireland project is coordinated by the Office for Internet Safety in my Department. The body now called Technology in Education under the remit of the Professional Development service for Teachers (formerly known as the National Centre for Technology in Education) participates in the project. It operates www.webwise.ie which provides advice and information to parents and teachers.

The ISPCC and the National Parents Council (Primary) also participate. Both organisations offer assistance through their confidential telephone helplines on how to deal with cyberbullying. The Office for Internet Safety itself supplies very useful guides, including “A Parents Guide to Social Networking Sites” and “A Guide to Cyberbullying”.

Commercial Leases Database

823. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date on which the commercial leases database will be made available to the public by the Property Services Regulatory Authority. [48660/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Property Services Regulatory Authority has statutory responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of a Commercial Leases Database. The Authority is currently working on the development of the database and it is anticipated that it will be launched by the end of the first quarter of 2013.

State Pathology Laboratory

824. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the State Pathology Laboratory announced under the stimulus package; the various stages involved in this project; the timelines involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48711/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that this project, together with a range of other projects, is still under consideration. While I wish to proceed as quickly as possible with the projects that were previously announced, the process involved in public-private partnerships requires the detailed consideration of a complex range of factors including which projects might best be linked together for the purposes of tendering. Of necessity, this process takes time. I expect the precise position to become clearer in the coming months.

Court Accommodation Provision

825. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details of the refurbishment and extension works to be carried out on courthouses as announced under the stimulus package; the various stages of these project; the expected timelines for each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48712/12]

826. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details of the various new courthouses to be built as announced under the stimulus package; the various stages of this project; the expected timelines for each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48713/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 825 and 826 together.

In July, the Government announced an infrastructure stimulus package which includes seven courthouse projects. As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts, including the provision of accommodation for court sittings, is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that since July they have been in discussions with the Office of Public Works, the National Development Finance Agency and my Department in order to progress these projects.

I understand that a process is currently underway to determine the approach to the various

projects planned and the time scales for the projects will be dependent on that. The Courts Service has indicated that the time line for the delivery of the projects is under discussion and it is currently anticipated that projects could be delivered by 2016. Details of the projects planned are as follows:

Project	Current status
Wexford	A new courthouse is to be constructed on a Courts Service owned site.
Mullingar	There is to be a refurbishment and extension of the existing courthouse.
Waterford	There is to be a refurbishment and extension of the existing courthouse.
Limerick	A new criminal courthouse is to be constructed on a site adjacent to Limerick prison.
Cork	There is to be a refurbishment and extension of Anglesea Street Courthouse (Cork District Court) onto an adjacent OPW owned site.
Letterkenny	A new courthouse is to be built on a site acquired by the Courts Service.
Drogheda	A new courthouse is to be built on a Courts Service owned site.

Garda Districts

827. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details for the new Garda divisional headquarters announced under the stimulus package; the status and expected timelines for this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48714/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The provision of three new Garda Divisional Headquarters for the Dublin North, Galway and Wexford Divisions was included in the special Government stimulus package announced in July. It is intended that these projects will be delivered by means of a Public Private Partnership and discussions are taking place between the relevant agencies regarding the follow-up action to be undertaken in the light of the Government announcement. As the arrangements to be put in place for Public Private Partnerships are complex, it is not possible at this stage to indicate when the projects will be completed. However, I can assure the Deputy that they are being treated as a priority.

Garda Stations Closures

828. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will refrain from closing additional Garda stations in rural areas; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the elderly and those living alone are now living in constant fear and are feeling increasingly isolated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48736/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Any proposals for the closure of Garda stations must be contained in the annual Policing Plan prepared by Commissioner and submitted to the Minister for Justice. While the policing plan for 2013 has not yet been finalised, it will be laid before the House in due course. Until then it would be premature to speculate on what it might contain.

In preparing the policing plan, the Garda Commissioner reviews all aspects of the Garda Síochána's policing model, including the deployment of personnel, the utilisation of modern technologies and the operation of Garda Districts and Stations, in terms of resource allocation, the opening hours and possible closures. In addition, all Divisional Officers are asked to assess the level of activity in each Garda Station in their area. It must be stressed that the key objec-

tive of the review is to promote the more efficient and effective deployment of resources rather than secure modest cash savings so that as many Gardaí as possible are deployed on front line operational duty rather than based in Garda Stations.

In addition to this, the Garda Commissioner has introduced a range of measures aimed at tackling gangs involved in burglaries. These measures are encompassed in Operation Fiacla, which is particularly focused on identifying and targeting mobile gangs involved in burglaries around the country so as to disrupt their activities and bring them before the Courts. Specific burglary related initiatives are being implemented in each Garda Region in support of Operation Fiacla. This is a coordinated, intelligence led strategy designed to maximise organisational resources in order to proactively target prolific offenders. Under this operation, between February 2012 and October 2012, approximately 2,500 persons have been arrested and over 1,400 persons have been charged, reflecting the very substantial efforts being made to tackle this problem by the Gardaí.

Public Sector Staff Issues

829. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49076/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Two bodies under the aegis of my Department - an Garda Síochána and the Irish Prison Service (IPS) - operate rostering systems. Prisons must function on a 24/7 and therefore it is necessary to operate a rostering system. The IPS uses rostering to schedule an officer's basic working week over the periods outside normal working hours and is developing and implementing more efficient rosters. There are no plans to remove employees from the rostering system.

An Garda Síochána also provides a 24/7 service and members of An Garda Síochána including Garda reserves and some civilian staff in the organisation work on a roster. As the Deputy will be aware, a new roster system was introduced this year in An Garda Síochána which more closely matches the deployment of resources with policing demands while at the same time protecting the health and welfare of the members. Out of hours cover and on call arrangements which would not ordinarily be considered as employed on a roster basis are utilised across the Justice sector. Such arrangements will continue to be a feature in the areas where they apply.

Defence Forces Deployment

830. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Defence the position regarding an Army unit (details provided) in County Cork if it is possible to have the personnel involved in this unit re-assigned to other units within their Barracks rather than relocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47596/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The implementation of the reorganisation of the Defence Forces is currently underway and an accurate picture of the extent to which it will be necessary for personnel to move from their current geographic locations is not yet fully apparent. At this juncture there may be a requirement for a significant number of personnel based in Collins Barracks, Cork to be relocated rather than reassigned. As part of the implementation process, personnel have been given the opportunity to indicate their preferred options in relation to relocation and these will be taken into account in the implementation of the reorganisation plan. In addition, a review system has been put in place whereby personnel who

are unhappy with a proposed relocation can seek a review of a decision in this regard. While the maintenance of Defence Forces operational requirements must be prioritised within the reorganisation implementation process, within that context, all practical alternatives, including redeployment within an individual's existing location will be explored to minimise the requirement for geographic relocation.

Opportunities will also be given for personnel to retrain and re-skill so as to be able to fill vacancies in their current locations, and this is being incorporated into the Defence Forces Training directive for 2013. However, it must be accepted that there is no painless way to fundamentally reorganise the Defence Forces whilst maintaining essential military capabilities and, undoubtedly, it will be necessary to mandatorily move some personnel whose units are being disestablished or relocated and who cannot be accommodated in their current location. This is a difficult process for many serving members of the Defence Forces, officers and enlisted personnel, who are being required to make decisions under the current reorganisation which they would not otherwise make or in different times have had to consider. However, this is the reality of the public service today and of the reforms taking place across the public service.

Departmental Expenditure

831. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 641 19 July 2012, if he will provide details relating to professional fees paid by his Department. [47258/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Professional fees paid by my Department since March 2011 amount to €1,303,739. Details of the companies or persons providing a professional service to my Department since March 2011, and the amount invoiced by each, are set out in the tabular statement attached. These include professional services such as ICT, engineering, architecture, accounting and legal services. In addition to the professional services referred to above, my Department also engages the services of civilian medical practitioners to provide primary care for the Permanent Defence Force when medical officers are not available or where specialist medical expertise is required. Since March 2011, my Department has paid €6.5m to some 670 civilian medical service providers.

Company Name	Invoiced Total - €
A & L Goodbody	6,274.25
A J McCaul & Associates T/A McCauls	3,087.92
AQ Consulting	200.00
Arup Consulting Engineers	8,733.00
Baynes & Co Solrs	4,533.78
Bianconi Research Ltd T/A RITS	18,204.00
Callaghan Engineering	3,218.60
Cathal Crimmins Architect	37,135.79
Clarke & Assoc Consulting Eng. Ltd	3,241.24
Coll & Co Chartered Accountants	366.54
Cork Marriage Counselling Centre	1,105.00
Crean Salley Architects	94,794.52
Crowleys DFK	23,123.68
D L Martin Partners	8,288.50
Diarmuid Collins, B.L.	8,572.50

Company Name	Invoiced Total - €
Donnachadh O'Brien & Associates	16,536.00
Energy Services Ltd	100,559.23
Enovation Solutions	27,033.00
Fitzgibbon McGinley Architects Ltd	11,196.98
Fujitsu (Ireland) Ltd	640,147.37
Gavin Elliot Bl	550.00
Geraldine Biggs Bl	3,469.50
Hanley Pepper	1,485.35
Hardy Partnership	21,713.45
Heavey Kenny & Associates	22,141.75
HGL O'Connor & Company	22,112.64
HMD Architects Ltd	6,655.00
In2 Eng. Design Partnership	18,134.78
Jennings O'Donovan & Partners	1,512.50
John O'Donovan & Associates	5,730.08
M.J. Turley & Associates	5,270.76
Mackin Consultancy Ltd	190.00
Malachy Walsh & Partners	6,060.59
Mcardle McSweeney Associates	7,865.00
Mccarthy O'Hora Associates	5,677.32
Mcgahon Surveyors	1,638.34
Morgan Meenan Architects	14,925.99
Mulcahy McDonagh & Partners	4,541.86
Murphy Surveys Ltd	25,331.80
PPM Consultants Ltd	737.75
Ray Keane & Associates	1,633.50
Ray Motherway Bl	5,878.88
Real Estate Alliance Ltd	1,520.85
Roderick Maguire B.L.	1,833.00
RPS Consulting Engineers Ltd	240.00
Ryan Hanley Ltd	26,739.16
Synergy Engineering Ltd	9,196.00
Tim Wrafter Associates	3,630.00
Tricia Sheehy Skeffington Bl	6,631.50
V M R A Consulting Engineers	1,725.46
Van Dijk Architects	12,705.00
Viv Lavan Bl	2,544.00
Wilson Architects Ltd.	9,559.00
WYG Engineering (Ireland) Ltd	4,201.12
WYG Engineering (Ireland) Ltd	5,324.00
WYG Engineering (Ni) Ltd	14,610.75
WYG Environmental & Planning (Ireland) Ltd	3,670.54

Departmental Staff Rehiring

832. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Defence the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47291/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Since March 2011, my Department has engaged two retired public servants to act as civilian drivers to the Minister of State, Mr. Paul Kehoe T.D. These appointments are temporary, unestablished positions in the Civil Service on a fixed-term contract basis. The post of Civilian Driver attracts an annual salary of €32,965. My Department has also employed three retired public servants as civilian employees attached to military installations, in the positions of Storekeeper Clerk (2) and Craft Worker (1) since March 2011. The current salary scales for these posts are €21,776 - €30,314, and €31,351 - €33,169 respectively.

Defence Forces Operations

833. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Defence the number of times the bomb disposal team were called out to incidents in Dublin for the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48018/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Pursuant to their role in rendering aid to the civil power, the Defence Forces have a number of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams on call, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to respond to requests received from An Garda Síochána for assistance in dealing with a suspect device or for the removal of old ordnance. The number of times that EOD teams from the Defence Forces were called out in response to incidents in Dublin for the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012 is set out below.

EOD Callouts in the Dublin Area

Year	
2009	126
2010	85
2011	141
2012 to date	97

Defence Forces Pardons

834. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Defence the position regarding a pardon for World War II soldiers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48161/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The position is that the legislation to give effect to the Government decision in this matter is currently at an advanced stage of drafting. I expect that it will be published by the end of November.

Value for Money Reviews

835. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Defence the date on which the Value for Money Report of the Reserve Defence Forces will be published. [48190/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Value for Money Review of the Reserve Defence Force was completed and submitted to myself and the Secretary General of my Department last month. In advance of its publication, and in line with the guidelines and normal procedure for Value for Money Reviews, the responses to the recommendations are currently being developed. When this process is completed, the Review will be published on my Department's website. Whilst I do not have a specific date for its publication, I anticipate that this will take place in the near future.

Defence Forces Allowances

836. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Defence item 6.10 vote number 36 Defence 2011 refers to payment totalling €1,461,965 which was made to the Offices of the Revenue Commissioners in 2011 in settlement of the liability which arose in respect of the taxation of the Reserve Defence Forces Cadre daily allowance for the period January 2007 to February 2011; if he will explain the way a personal tax liability for each of those in receipt of this allowance was paid to the Revenue Commissioners from the Exchequer; if he will confirm the number of personnel involved, their rank and advise if they were in receipt of other taxable or un-taxable allowances for this period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48217/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Reserve Defence Force Cadre daily allowance was introduced many years ago to compensate members of the Permanent Defence Force who were attached to the Reserve Defence Force for expenses incurred in training reservists and ancillary administrative duties. Historically, due to the nature of the allowance, it was not regarded as being subject to tax or income levy. During the course of a routine Revenue audit, when the Deputy was Minister for Defence, the taxation status of the allowance was raised as a possible issue. Following technical assessment, the Revenue Commissioners determined that the allowance, as then paid, constituted a 'round sum' and was liable to taxation. The Revenue Commissioners determined the liability on the Department as employer for the years in question based on this 'round sum' determination and payment was made in settlement. The allowance was re-configured as a taxable allowance from 1st March 2011 and since that date any personal tax liability is met by the individual members of the PDF who are in receipt of the allowance.

The number and rank of personnel in receipt of the allowance during the years in question and the duration for which the allowance was held varied according to postings into and out of Reserve Units. The numbers and ranks for the years in question are shown in the table.

Number and rank of PDF Cadre attached to the RDF (includes Naval Service equivalents) in receipt of RDF allowance

Year	Numbers				Rank					
		Lt Colonel	Comdt	Captain	Lieut	Coy Sgt	CQMS	Sgt	Cpl	Private
2007	365	4	22	17	0	5	82	79	58	98
2008	366	7	22	9	0	6	81	91	56	94
2009	335	6	13	18	1	4	78	86	50	79
2010	325	4	18	23	1	1	70	84	49	75
2011 to end Feb	321	3	18	23	1	2	68	84	49	73

Some of the personnel would also have been in receipt of other taxable and un-taxable allowances during the period in question, depending on the nature of their duties and other factors. The Department has tax compliance procedures in place and as part of those procedures it is reviewing all non-taxable allowances in order to ensure that payments made to employees are fully tax compliant.

Air Accident Investigations

837. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Defence if he will report on the conclusions and recommendations on foot of an investigation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48380/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Air Accident Investigation Unit of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is carrying out an investigation following the heavy landing incident involving the Emergency Aeromedical Support (EAS) service helicopter which occurred on 19 June 2012. This investigation is ongoing.

Northern Ireland Issues

838. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48542/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): My Department is not involved in North/South engagement and therefore does not have a North/South Cooperation Unit.

Defence Forces Allowances

839. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Defence if he will justify the recent announcement to stop the payment of allowances to all new army personnel; his views on the fact that the removal of ten allowance schemes will impact negatively on already low army incomes and create a two tiered system among the rank and file of the defence forces. [48560/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy is aware the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform undertook a review of allowances and premium payments across the public sector and proposals were brought to Government for decision. Further to this, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform published the results of this review of allowances and the outcome of the Government decision on its website at www.per.gov.ie.

The types of allowances included for priority elimination include the Ration Allowance for Cadets and the Search & Rescue Allowance for which no payments were made in 2011 or 2012 to date; Entertainment Allowance and Principal Military Appointments Entertainment Allowance which are payable only to certain high ranking Officers; Housekeepers Allowance which is payable to Defence Forces Chaplains to employ a Housekeeper and NCO Account Holders payable to non commissioned Officers.

In the interests of bringing these savings to the paybill forward, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform wrote to my Department instructing management to immediately engage with staff interests with a view to securing their early agreement to the elimination of these Defence Forces allowances. This is currently the subject of discussions between management and the Representative Associations under the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme for the Defence Forces. The Deputy will appreciate that as discussions under this Scheme are confidential to the parties involved it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on this issue at this juncture.

Departmental Budgets

840. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the extent to which his Department has quantified savings accruing from budgetary, administrative or operational changes made in each of the past two years; the effect on budget on an ongoing basis in the future; if he can take any steps to address any negative impact; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48728/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Gross Provision for the Defence Vote (36) has reduced from €756m in 2010 to €727m in 2011 and €688m in 2012, representing a reduction of €68m over the two year period. These reductions followed on the significant reductions achieved over previous years on this Vote. Arising from the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure, the Government's decision to stabilise the strength of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) at 9,500 personnel has resulted in sustainable pay savings as reflected in the figures above. In addition, there were reductions in the number of Civilian Employees and Civil Servants employed.

I initiated a major re-organisation of the Defence Forces in order to maximise the operational capabilities of the PDF within the revised strength level. The organisational structures that were in place for a PDF strength of approximately 11,500 personnel were clearly outmoded and no longer fit for purpose. In July this year, I accepted the Chief of Staff and Secretary General's recommendation regarding new PDF structures and announced the details. Implementation of these revised organisational structures is ongoing.

Measures to reduce costs and deliver greater efficiencies over the past three years have also included a further rationalisation and consolidation of the Defence property portfolio. Regarding the recent closure of the four military barracks - Clonmel, Cavan, Mullingar and Castlebar - military personnel occupied on security and support functions within these installations have been released for operational duties leading to a manpower efficiency gain of around €5 million p.a. In addition, there are direct cash savings of approximately €1.3m per annum arising from utilities, maintenance and security duty allowances in the four barracks. Despite the reductions in funding, a key focus has been the prioritisation and maintenance of PDF operational capacity in order to ensure that the PDF retain the capacity to fulfil all roles assigned.

Defence Forces Operations

841. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied regarding the ability of the Defence Forces to provide the full scale of back up requirements to the civil authorities in the short and medium term; if he expects the full scale of emergency services to continue to develop with particular reference to activation and coordination of national emergency plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48729/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): My priority as Minister for Defence is to ensure that the operational capacity of the Defence Forces is maintained to the greatest extent possible. Whilst the Defence Forces are not a Principal Response Agency, as defined in the Framework for Major Emergency Management, they provide the fullest possible assistance to the appropriate Lead Department in the event of a natural disaster or severe weather emergency in its Aid to the Civil Authority (ATCA) role under the multi-agency Framework. Representation on the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, by both my Department and the Defence Forces, ensures the fullest coordination and cooperation in the event of an emergency. The Defence Forces are also represented on the eight Regional Working Groups that have been established under the Framework and, on an ongoing basis, designated members of the Defence Forces, based around the country, act as Liaison Officers to Local Authorities.

The various procedures that are in place, both nationally and locally, were seen to operate very effectively during the Winter of 2010 as the Defence Forces made all assets, resources and capabilities available to the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning and responded to all requests for assistance received from the civil authorities during the periods of severe weather that occurred that Winter.

Emergency planning in this country is structured around the ‘Lead Department’ principle, which means that the Department that is responsible for an activity in normal conditions will maintain that responsibility in an emergency. While there is no one national emergency response plan, there are robust processes in place for the inter-agency cooperation at the national, regional and local levels. In April 2011, the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning approved guidelines for the activation and coordination of a national-level emergency/crisis response. I am satisfied that the Defence Forces have the ability to fulfil all roles that are assigned to them by Government including provision of Aid to the Civil Authorities (ATCA) in any emergency situations that may arise.

Public Sector Staff Issues

842. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Defence the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49071/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Permanent Defence Force operates on a 24/7/365 basis, it is necessary to have a rostering system in place. In addition, a small number of civilian employees of my Department currently work on a roster basis to ensure that essential services can be provided outside of normal working hours. There are currently no plans in place to change the rostering system.

Public Sector Staff Retirements

843. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Defence the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49083/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Defence organisation comprises the Department of Defence, the Defence Forces and the agencies under the aegis of my Department; i.e. the Army Pensions Board and the Civil Defence Board. Records of past employment and related pension arrangements of staff recruited have not been captured in such a way as to provide a dedicated basis for compiling the information requested by the Deputy. Accordingly,

the specific information requested is not available.

Departmental Reports

844. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has considered the Report of the High Level Group on the jobs initiative for the Killybegs region; his plans he has to create jobs in the alternative industries identified in the report to lessen the economic dependence of the region on the highly seasonal seafood sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47597/12]

867. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the Report of the High Level Group on the Jobs Initiative for the Killybegs region presented to him in October of 2011; the number of jobs that have been created in the Killybegs region as a result of the initiative; the total amount of moneys invested in the region by Government agencies through grant aid or otherwise as a result of the recommendation of the report for the purpose of job creation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47605/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 844 and 867 together.

I am fully aware of the Report of the High Level Group which I established and I am anxious to see the potential for job creation in the Killybegs region identified in the Report materialise and I want to see the greatest possible number of the actions identified in the five Key Areas deliver on that potential. The overall aim of the initiative is to create 250 jobs in the Killybegs area by 2014. The five key areas identified for detailed consideration by the Group were:

- Promote Seafood Value Added Activity
- Enhance Ancillary Supports
- Develop Offshore Supports
- Promote Tourism and Marine Leisure and
- Promote Green Economy/Renewable Energy.

Since the outset it has been accepted that any progress is dependant upon an integrated collaborative approach between private and public sectors. Investments from both sides should deliver real jobs for Killybegs between now and 2014.

At this point I can only report in detail on progress in the seafood sector, for which I have direct responsibility. I have recently consulted with BIM on this matter and have been advised that significant additional landings of Norwegian Blue Whiting were attracted to Killybegs this year and were processed in local pelagic processing plants. This was made possible because of the landing facilities provided at Killybegs and the work done by the local processing industry, with BIM, to pioneer the processing of Blue Whiting for human consumption. Annual landings of Blue Whiting in Killybegs are currently estimated at approx. 80,000 tonnes per annum with an estimated value of approx. €41 M. I am confident that increased quotas for this species can be secured for 2013.

BIM has, in recent years, grant-aided equipment to facilitate the processing of this additional blue whiting. The position is that in 2011, seven Killybegs processing companies invested €4.9m in their operations. Of this amount, approved grant aid amounted to almost €1.2m. This year so far, six Killybegs processing companies have invested a total of €8.5m. Of this amount,

approved grant aid amounted to just over €1.5m. It is expected that this investment combined with the increase in throughput will directly result in 47 new jobs by the end of this year and will be of continuing benefit to Killybegs in future years. BIM is actively working with industry and processing equipment companies to develop new product formats which will increase the added value processing of this key stock. I am anticipating that these new product trials will be significantly advanced during 2013.

In addition to the welcome progress on the Blue Whiting fishery, work is ongoing on developing human consumption markets for the large quota of 58,866 tonnes of Boarfish which we have secured in recent years. This fishery holds very significant promise for the processing industry in Killybegs. During my trade mission to China earlier this year, trial shipments of this product were agreed between Irish processors and Chinese importers. I am pleased to report that, as a result of these trial shipments, repeat orders have been secured by Irish companies from the Chinese market. BIM, Bord Bia and the industry are this week developing further contacts in the Chinese markets at a trade fair in Dalian in China. I understand from BIM that they expect 1400 tonnes of Boarfish to be processed for human consumption during 2012. These orders will be delivered to both the Chinese and the African markets.

I am also aware that the group met earlier this week to further review progress across a range of other areas outside of the Seafood area, for which I have direct responsibility. I am awaiting an update from that meeting on how matters are progressing in relation to these other key areas.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

845. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when an area aid payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47224/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of the application concerned has recently been completed and payments under the Single Payment Scheme and Disadvantaged Areas Scheme will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

846. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47287/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): One Assistant Secretary General was re-engaged by my Department on a part-time contract basis. The cost from March 2011 to date is €127,708.96. A Principal Officer has been re-engaged for a limited period to work on specific matters related to the Irish Presidency of the EU. The cost from October 2012 to date is €1,392.12. One Superintending Senior Research Officer and one Senior Research Officer were engaged on a contract for services basis for a limited period. The cost to my Department to date is €15,969.90. These contracts have now expired. One Senior Research Officer is currently engaged on a contract for services basis for a limited period. His contract is due to expire on 1 March 2013. The cost to my Department to date is €21,708.60. Normal pension abatement rules have been applied in these cases.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

847. **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the disadvantaged area scheme will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47347/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): While the person named applied for derogation under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas scheme, the application was unsuccessful. The applicant was notified of this decision in writing on 16 October and advised of the right of appeal to the recently established independent DAS Appeals Committee.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

848. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in issuing the single farm payment to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; when payment will issue. [47353/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The application has been fully processed and payment issued on 25th October.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

849. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a payment is outstanding to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47379/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In order to comply with EU requirements, the 2011 Single Payment Scheme application of the person named was selected for a Ground Eligibility inspection. Arising from the findings of this inspection, it was necessary to reduce the payment due, to reflect a reduction in area, in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of the Schemes. The applicant was advised of this outcome and the reasons for it on 2nd May 2012. The applicant was also advised of the right to seek a review and also of the right to appeal the outcome of any such review, in due course, to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office. To date, no such request has been received.

As payments under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme had already issued, my Department initiated a process to recoup this overpayment, as required under EU regulations, and a letter issued to the applicant on 1st June 2012 informing him of the overpayment and how it could be repaid. As no repayment was made, the overpayment was subsequently recouped from other payments due to the applicant from the Department in September and October 2012. Where the outcome of any review/appeal process, should such be initiated, results in a change to the reduction/penalty originally applied, any monies owing will be refunded.

European Fisheries Fund

850. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the interaction he has had with the European Fisheries Fund; the amount of money returned by the State to the fund in each of the past five years; the work he is doing with the private sector to ensure that these funds are being drawn down and used; and if he will make a statement on

the matter. [47328/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland's programme of capital investment in the seafood sector, co-funded by the European Fisheries Fund (EFF), is set out in the Seafood Development Operational Programme 2007-2013, and was approved by the European Commission in 2009 in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 1198/2006 (EFF Regulation), the framework regulation for investments in the seafood sector. The Operational Programme (OP) seeks to implement the strategic investment priorities identified in the National Strategic Plan for the Fisheries Sector, prepared in accordance with article 15 of the above Regulation. Approximately €42 million is available to Ireland from the EFF for the period of the OP. This may extend up to 2015.

Given the modest level of co-funding available to Ireland and the broad range of investment priorities identified in the Strategic Plan, a complimentary programme funded solely by the Exchequer was launched in 2010. This Irish Seafood National Programme 2007-2013 provided public support to investments in seafood processing, aquaculture and certain other areas not covered by the OP. The OP provided co-funded support primarily for the 2008 fleet decommissioning scheme, but also covered marine environmental protection measures and coastal development in non-fisheries activities.

The EFF Regulation required member states to produce an independent interim evaluation of national OPs in 2011. This was submitted to the European Commission in June 2011. The Interim Evaluation was conducted by consultants Fitzpatrick Associates. The Evaluation noted the changed economic circumstances facing Ireland and the impacts this was likely to have on availability of Exchequer funding for measures included within the National Programme. It also noted that the measures included in the OP were not likely to be sufficient to draw down the full €42 million allocation from the EFF. The Evaluation recommended the amendment of the OP to include most of the measures previously included in the National Programme, to ensure availability of supports to these important areas of the seafood sector and to ensure full draw down of EFF funds. The recommendations were accepted and a revised OP was submitted to the European Commission in March 2012. This is currently being delivered through schemes operated by Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Bord Bia and Udaras na Gaeltachta.

No EFF funds are returned to the European Commission. Funds are transferred to Ireland annually based on claims submitted by my Department towards the end of each year. I am confident that the broad range of measures now included in the OP, the bulk of which are to the benefit of private operators within the industry, will be more than sufficient to ensure full draw down of all the available EFF funds.

Aquaculture Development

851. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the help he is offering to private sector companies who wish to farm fin fish here; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that global growth for farm fishing is 8% per annum but in Ireland it is shrinking; the role BIM is taking in this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47329/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am well aware of the great potential for growth in all types of aquaculture around our coast, including fin fish farming, and this is recognised in 'Food Harvest 2020'. In relation to aquaculture licensing, the sustainable development of the industry and the creation of long term employment from aquaculture into the future can only take place if there is full compliance with the range of EU

and national legislation that impact on this area. I am very conscious of the requirement to both ensure compliance with our obligations under EU law and to make progress on addressing the licensing backlog. In order to meet these objectives, my Department, in conjunction with the Marine Institute and NPWS is investing significant resources into completing the Appropriate Assessment process. I am confident that significant progress is being made which will facilitate determinations on a significant number of licence applications over the coming months. I also anticipate significant progress in relation to licence determinations in Non-Natura areas.

In addition, as part of a general reform of licensing procedures and processes my Department has comprehensively updated aquaculture licence templates to make them 'fit for purpose' to meet the challenges and opportunities facing the industry. Significant work has gone into devising this new updated suite of licences, creating a balanced set of rights and obligations for the industry suited to the current era.

Apart from the focus on progressing licence determinations in the bays, it is also intended to radically expand the production of Irish organic farmed salmon by creating new fish farming production areas in deeper waters. The placement of farms in deep waters will ensure that there is no impact on NATURA 2000 sites. BIM estimates that just one of these production areas could generate over 100 Million Euro in exports p.a. and create 350 direct jobs. A further 150 jobs will be created indirectly in the service sector, supplying fish feed, netting, transportation and other services.

BIM, working with the Marine Institute, is currently investigating suitable sites. An application for an aquaculture licence in respect of one of these sites in Galway Bay has been submitted to the Department by BIM. This application is currently being assessed in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act. I am confident that the steps I have outlined above together with the work being done by BIM and the Marine Institute will result in the sustainable development and significant expansion of this important industry.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

852. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on an application for their disadvantaged area aid payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47338/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of the application concerned has recently been completed and payments under the Single Payment Scheme and Disadvantaged Areas Scheme will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

853. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers awaiting the advance single farm payment on the 22 October 2012; the reason for the delay in processing these payments; the steps taken by him to resolve the issue speedily in view of the financial hardship caused to farmers as a result of the delay; when he expects the backlog to be cleared up; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47340/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In the case of the Single Farm Payment, the earliest payment date under the governing EU rules is 1 December. However, earlier this year, in recognition of the difficult financial situation faced by many

farmers, I successfully sought the approval of the Commissioner to have advance payments made as and from 16 October. Payment of the 50% to farmers under the Single Farm Payment Scheme started issuing on cases cleared for payment, as scheduled, on 16 October. Since that date, about 115,000 applicants have been paid some €579M. Currently, the number of farmers awaiting payment of the advance of the Single Farm Payment is 7,665 or 6.24% of applicants. Advance payments will continue to be made as cases are cleared, twice weekly, on an on-going basis. Balancing payments will commence as provided for under EU legislation from 1st December.

Pigmeat Sector

854. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in view of the fact that feed prices for the pig sector have risen by 23% in the past six months and on average prices have increased by 76% since 2010, if he will offer any support to ensure that the approximately 400 pig farmers that are left here will be able to stay in business; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47424/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The pig sector remains the third largest individual component of the agri-food sector, with production, prices and exports all growing significantly during 2011. I am aware of the concerns currently being expressed by the sector, particularly with regard to feed costs. High feed costs, most notably cereals and compound feed remain an issue. Pig producers are especially affected by the increase in cereal prices since June 2009, given that cereals account for 75% of feed. Contributory factors include weather events in the Black Sea region and the United States during recent years, currency fluctuations and general supply and demand factors including but not limited to, better diet and increased meat demand in emerging economies and the ongoing shift towards biofuels.

The price of pigmeat and, of course, feed is ultimately determined by demand and supply considerations. You will be aware that, due to Ireland's membership of the Single Market, unilateral actions or interventions to support individual sectors is not permitted. For my part however, I and my officials will continue to press the European Commission to make use of all the available market supports when circumstances require it, to ameliorate the worst effects of price volatility. Indeed the Aids to Private Storage Scheme introduced for pigmeat in 2011 played a significant role in putting a floor under pigmeat prices at that time. This, together with release of cereal stocks from intervention, improved the situation somewhat at that time.

From a National perspective, the '*Food Harvest 2020 Report*', which was published in July 2010, sets out the vision for the future of the food industry including the pig sector. The Report targets a 50% increase in the value of output by 2020. This is a target set by the industry for itself. I am personally chairing a High Level Group to ensure that the steps necessary to facilitate the development of the sector are taken. My Department and its agencies will, along with industry, play a central role in this regard. For example Teagasc, through its Moorepark pig research facility and the provision of FETAC courses in pig production and benchmarking pig herd performance, plays a critically important role in improving productive capacity at farm level. Teagasc have also circulated pig producers with a number of the options available to them to reduce feed costs and improve feed efficiency. This is particularly important given that feed is the largest single component of the overall cost of production.

While input costs have increased significantly in recent years, the returns available to producers have also risen sharply. This has helped ameliorate the situation to some extent. At the end of October, prices were almost 24/c per kilo ahead year on year, which equates to an

increase of more than 16%. Compared to the same week in 2010, per kilo prices have risen by over 40/c per kilo, or almost 31%. The forecast decline in the European sow population and consequent lower production and ongoing high demand for European pig meat internationally, should lead to even higher prices in the coming months.

New EU Animal Welfare rules set down new standards in relation to the housing of sows and these are due to come into force on 1 January 2013. A significant number of producers have undertaken the necessary work required in order to upgrade their facilities in order to comply with the new rules.

My Department is aware of the scale of the challenge facing pig farmers in respect of the new requirements. To this end, the Department introduced a Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS) for Sow Welfare in June 2010. Grant-aid is available at a rate of 40% to eligible producers with a maximum investment ceiling of €300,000, i.e. a maximum grant of €120,000. A total of €13 million has been provisionally allocated to this scheme under the rural development Programme. It follows two earlier schemes in 2005 and 2007 and payments of €6.2 million have already been made under these schemes. The provisions of the scheme were modified earlier this year to allow multiple applications from pig farmers with more than one sow house together with an increase in the ceiling to €500,000 for the first house and €300,000 for each of the next three.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that as many pig producers as possible would be in a position to comply with the new EU animal welfare rules, I have extended the closing date for applications to end-January 2013. All applications received during the period of this extension would now be included in a new final tranche for which a sum of €3 million has been made available. The final date for completion of work and the lodgment of payment claims is 30 September 2013. Applications from almost 120 producers, to the value of €13.86 million are currently being processed by officials in my Department. I can assure the Deputy that my Department and its agencies will continue to work closely with the industry to ensure that it can continue to develop and grow in accordance with the targets in the Food Harvest 2020 Report.

Forestry Sector

855. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has consulted with his UK equivalent on the spread of *Chalara Fraxinea* amongst trees in the UK; if he has measures in place to protect the Irish Forestry industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47419/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Department officials have been regularly in direct contact with their Northern Ireland counterparts on the issue of *Chalara fraxinea*, or ash dieback disease, with a view to putting measures in place to prevent the spread of this disease on the island. These contacts have led to the introduction of legislation to ban the import of ash plants from countries or parts of countries known to have the disease. This Statutory Instrument came into effect from the 26th October 2012 and was simultaneously introduced in Northern Ireland. Last week, I met with my Northern Counterpart Michelle O'Neill, MLA at a joint North South Ministerial Council where we shared information on actions taken in both jurisdictions in relation to *Chalara*. In addition, late last week Minister McEntee had a further meeting met with Minister O'Neill to discuss additional legislative measures in relation to wood imports in co-operation with the authorities in Northern Ireland. These legislative measures will be introduced on both sides of the border today.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

856. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding disadvantaged area payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47429/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person concerned is an applicant under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme. Currently, this applicant is one of a number, whose cases are impacted by a requirement of a minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare and who have applied for a derogation in this regard. Immediately a decision is reached on this application, the person concerned will be notified in writing. Should the decision be negative, a fully independent appeals procedure is available.

European Court of Justice Rulings

857. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department is on time in respect of the requirements of the negative judgement by the European Court of Justice; and if there is any likelihood that currently suspended European Court of justice fines will be imposed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47423/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are no rulings of Court of Justice of the European Union outstanding, for which my Department is the policy holder.

Forestry Grants

858. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No 171 on 27 September 2012, the position regarding this case and when payment will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47447/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): This file has been forwarded to the Forest Service District Inspector for a site inspection which is necessary following reconstitution of a failed area of the forestry plantation. The inspection is scheduled to take place in the week beginning 5th November 2012. Subject to the site passing the inspection, the 2nd instalment of the forestry grant will be processed for payment and forestry premium payments on the plantation will consequently resume. If the site fails the inspection further remedial works may be required by the applicant.

Aquaculture Licences Applications

859. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of aquaculture licences that were granted or renewed in Natura 2000 areas in Ireland between the introduction of the Natura 2000 sites and the negative judgement of the European Court of Justice in 2007 against Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47448/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The EU Habitats Directive placed an obligation on Member States of the EU to establish the Natura 2000

network. The network is made up of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) established under the EU Birds Directive, and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), established under the Habitats Directive itself. Ireland's contribution to the Natura 2000 network was created under the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 (S.I. 94 of 1997 as amended by S.I. 233 of 1998 and S.I. 378 of 2005). These regulations transposed the EU Directives into Irish national law. The designation of individual 'Natura' sites has taken place on a rolling basis since establishment. Since then aquaculture licence determinations in the order of 550 were made up to December 2007 (the date of the European Court of Justice ruling referred to by the Deputy). This figure refers to all determinations made in relation to sites located both inside and outside designated 'Natura' areas, having regard to the rolling nature of the designations.

Aquaculture Development

860. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding Kenmare Bay (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47450/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As indicated in my previous reply to the Deputy the European Court of Justice declared in case C418/04 that, by failing to take all the measures necessary to comply with Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43 (Habitats Directive) in respect of authorisation of aquaculture programmes, Ireland had failed to fulfil its obligations under that Directive. In the negotiations to address the judgment a process was agreed with the European Commission which would lead to full compliance by Ireland with the relevant EU Directives. This process includes the following steps:

- a detailed data collection in 91 Bays/Estuaries
- detailed analysis of raw data collected
- setting of Conservation Objectives by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in respect of each site
- carrying out Appropriate Assessments of each licence application/fishery plan against the detailed Conservation Objectives set, and
- determination of Licences/Fisheries on the basis of the Appropriate Assessment and other relevant factors.

My Department has been working closely with the Marine Institute, BIM, and NPWS to achieve full compliance through a multi-annual work programme. A key factor of this Work Programme is the identification of prioritised bays based on the number of aquaculture sites, the ready availability of scientific data and other factors. The prioritised list of bays is kept under continuous review by my Department so as to facilitate the use of scientific and other resources on a flexible basis across the full range of bays, if deemed necessary. This approach is consistent with the maintenance of a prioritised list which, as previously indicated to the Deputy, includes Kenmare Bay.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

861. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a breakdown of the number of farmers who will receive less than €5,000 and €9,999; between €10,000 and €19,999; between €20,000 and €29,999; between €30,000 and

€39,999; between €40,000 and €49,999; between €50,000 and €59,999; between €60,000 and €69,999; between €70,000 and €79,000; between €80,000 and €89,999; between €90,000 and €99,999; and over €100,000; if his Department's proposals on the reform of the single farm payment were to be accepted. [47459/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information is being compiled at the present and will be forwarded to the Deputy directly.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

862. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when disadvantaged area scheme payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47467/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of the application concerned has recently been completed and payments under the Single Payment Scheme and Disadvantaged Areas Scheme will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Single Payment Scheme Appeals

863. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on their appeal for single farm payment 2009, 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47547/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I can confirm that a decision has been reached in the above case and a letter has been issued to the person named.

Departmental Staff Training

864. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department train persons dealing with farmers on the way to handle the situation of they are presented with a person who is suffering from reading difficulties or dyslexia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47567/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is required, under EU legislation governing the Single Payment Scheme, to provide for an advisory system for farmers on land and farm management, known as the Farm Advisory System (FAS). The advisory system must cover the Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) associated with the cross-compliance regime. In this regard, my Department is currently in the process of providing training for both existing and new FAS advisors on cross compliance, including any updates to regulatory requirements. As this training deals specifically with the requirements of the cross compliance regime, as such, it does not lend itself to including training on issues arising from reading difficulties or dyslexia.

Nonetheless, my Department actively provides assistance in this area in that it has responded to the concerns of farmers with dyslexia by publishing the terms and conditions document for the 2012 Single Payments Scheme in larger print. An audio version of the terms and condi-

tions document has also been made available on CD. These can be found on the Department's website or can be posted on request. The Department's website also has the "BrowseAloud" facility to read web pages aloud for people with literacy and visual impairments.

Department officials are also available in all regions to provide assistance to applicants who have questions or concerns on any scheme operated by the Department. The 2012 terms and conditions document provides details of telephone numbers and other contact details. On a more general level, my Department has two access officers and an inquiry officer in accordance with section 26(2) of the Disability Act 2005. Access officers are a point of contact for people with disabilities wishing to access Department services.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

865. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when disadvantaged area scheme payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47569/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Area Scheme was received from the person named on the 20th April 2012. In order to comply with EU requirements, this application was one of a number which was selected for inspection. The outcome of the inspection process was that over-claims in excess of 20% were confirmed (area reduced from 23.63ha to 16.04ha). As the total of the over claims are greater than 20% of the area claimed, application of the relevant penalty provisions results in no payment being due under the Single Payment Scheme or under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme in this year. The applicant was informed of these findings on 18 October and of the right to seek a review of this decision within 14 days. To date no review has been sought.

Single Payment Scheme Applications

866. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will approve an application for single farm payment in respect of a person (Details Supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47595/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the single payment scheme/disadvantaged areas scheme was received from the person named on the 26 April 2012. In order to comply with EU requirements, the application was one of a number which was selected for inspection and therefore payment could not be made pending the outcome of this process. The inspection and related processes have been completed and an advance payment under the 2012 single payment scheme issued on the 1st of November 2012. The balancing payment will be made in December 2012.

Question No. 867 answered with Question No. 844.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

868. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive their disadvantaged farm payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47616/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person concerned is an applicant under the 2012 single payment and disadvantaged area schemes. In order to meet EU requirements, the application concerned was one of a number which was selected for inspection. As this process had not been completed, it has not, as yet, been possible to finalise the processing of this application. As soon as the inspection and related processes are completed, the application concerned will be progressed.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Eligibility

869. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will include working horses in calculations for the disadvantaged area scheme.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47629/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The budgeted expenditure under the 2012 disadvantaged areas scheme was reduced from €220 million to €190 million and, in order to achieve the €30 million saving in expenditure, it was necessary to introduce changes to the scheme eligibility criteria for 2012. This was achieved by making technical adjustments to the scheme criteria to ensure that the aid payment is focused on farmers, whose farming enterprises are situated exclusively in less favoured areas and who are making a significant contribution to achieving the objectives of the scheme.

In order to better focus limited resources, it was decided that, in general, horses would no longer be eligible for the stocking density calculation. However, equine breeding enterprises continue to be eligible on the basis of the contribution they make to the local economy.

Furthermore, provision was made for consideration, on a case by case basis, of cases deemed to represent force majeure/exceptional circumstances; all those who are shown not to have achieved the qualifying stocking density for 2011 have been written to and offered the opportunity to outline any circumstance which restricted the activity in 2011.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

870. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment of the disadvantaged area scheme will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47691/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of the application concerned has recently been completed and payments under the single payment scheme and disadvantaged areas scheme will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

871. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will expedite an application for single farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath which is being held up due to the digitalisation process notwithstanding that this persons lands and maps were digitalised in 2011 which led to this payment being made in 2011; the reason more moneys are now being expnded in a redigitalisation process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47733/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the single payment scheme/disadvantaged areas scheme was received from the person named on 14 May 2012. In order to comply with EU requirements, the application was one of a number which was selected for inspection and therefore payment could not be made pending the outcome of this process. As in the majority of inspected cases, amendments have had to be made to the relevant maps in order to ensure that the land parcel identification system, used for making payments to farmers, is kept up-to-date. These inspection and related processes have been completed and an advance payment under the 2012 Single Payment Scheme issued on 25 October 2012. The balancing payment will be made in December 2012.

Agriculture Schemes Appeals

872. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a cross compliance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo. [47737/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A request for an appeal of a Cross Compliance penalty, recorded at an inspection on 15 August 2011, was received from the person named on 17 October 2012. The Agriculture Appeals Office are currently in the process of arranging an oral hearing on the matter and will be in contact with the person named in due course.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

873. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision on a derogation scheme will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47728/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person concerned is an applicant under the 2012 disadvantaged areas scheme. Currently, this applicant is one of a number, whose cases are impacted by a requirement of a minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare and who have applied for a derogation in this regard. Immediately a decision is reached on this application, the person concerned will be notified in writing. Should the decision be negative, a fully independent appeals procedure is available.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

874. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment in respect of the disadvantaged area scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47751/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The applicant in question declared nine commonage land parcels on his 2012 single payment scheme/disadvantaged area scheme application. The issues involved in this case are complex and, therefore, it has been necessary for my Department to undertake a full review. The applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome of this review.

Grant Aid

875. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been taken regarding a funding application by a voluntary organisation (details supplied) in County Mayo; if not, when may it be expected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47794/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application for *ex gratia* funding has been received from the organisation in question. Provision of ex-gratia assistance this year is subject to the availability of funds and the application will be considered in this context and having regard to competing claims for financial assistance submitted by other animal welfare bodies.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

876. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Galway has not received their disadvantaged area payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47797/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of the application concerned has recently been completed and payments under the single payment scheme and disadvantaged areas scheme will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Single Payment Scheme Applications

877. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in processing a single farm payment for 2011 in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; the steps being taken to resolve this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47711/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has no record of the original application in question having been submitted online or in hard copy. However the person named submitted an appeal against the late submission of the 2011 application and this has been accepted on the grounds of force majeure. Payment will issue to the nominated bank account of the person named in the coming days.

Animal Welfare Issues

878. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to amend the law to make it illegal for circuses to hold performing animals in captivity and use them as part of their performance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47836/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Welfare issues relating to circus animals currently come under the scope of the Protection of Animals Acts 1911 and 1965. This legislation is being repealed under the Animal Health and Welfare Bill which I have brought forward. The new Bill strengthens legislation relating to the obligations placed upon animal keepers and owners in terms of food, housing and general care. With regard to animals performing in circuses, I do not intend to interfere with legitimate recreational and sporting events, including the use of animals in circuses, provided they are carried out in a proper manner and no unnecessary suffering of the animals is involved.

Food Safety Standards Regulation

879. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a licence is required to produce and sell a product (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47842/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) under the aegis the Minister for Health has overall responsibility for the enforcement of food safety in Ireland. It carries out this remit through service contracts with my Department and other agencies including the Health Service Executive (HSE), Local Authority Veterinary Service and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority.

If a farm uses its harvest or part of its harvest (e.g. apples) to produce fruit juice at its premises, such farm exceeds the level of primary production. The activity of producing fruit juice is an activity after primary production and it is therefore subject to the appropriate food safety requirements laid down in Regulation (EC) No 852/2004. Accordingly, the producer/retailer concerned should contact his/her local environmental health officer with a view to registering this enterprise.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Conditions

880. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if farmers in special areas of conservation designated lands have any priority in accessing the agri-environmental options scheme; if so, the weighting that SAC status is given in assessing applicants; in view of the restrictions placed on farm activities in SAC designated lands and the high degree of investment that farmers had to make to comply with REP scheme criteria in the past, if he will consider giving a higher priority to those farmers who farm SAC lands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47860/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The priorities for selecting applications for AEOS 3 are set out in the scheme terms and conditions. Privately owned Natura land where applicants have a minimum of 0.5 hectares of utilisable agricultural area of either special protection areas or special areas of conservation are ranked first in order of priority. In the event that the number of applicants in this category exceeds the funding available priority will be given to those with the largest utilisable agricultural Natura area.

Priority is then given to commonage Natura land where applicants have a minimum of 0.5 hectares of utilisable agricultural commonage area. Similarly, in the event that the number of applicants in this category exceeds the funding available priority will be given to those with the largest utilisable agricultural commonage Natura area.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

881. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in issuing area aid and single farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47871/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of the application concerned has recently been completed and payments under the single payment scheme and disadvantaged areas scheme will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Common Fisheries Policy Reform

882. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the recent provisional deal to reshape the common fisheries policy and the aim to reform the eradication of discards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47854/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Discarding is a global problem and a complex one, where unwanted catches are returned to the sea as a result of a number of factors including quota restrictions, high grading, minimum landing sizes, and market conditions.

Ireland has been to the forefront in the drive to reduce and eliminate discards for many years and have taken a number of initiatives to this aim. I launched an Irish “discard” atlas last year, which is a detailed compendium of discards by the Irish Fleet on a stock by stock and area by area basis. The atlas, compiled and produced by the Marine Institute and Bord Iascaigh Mhara with the support of Irish Industry, outlines a range of potential measures to help reduce discarding. This was the first publication of its kind and places Ireland firmly to the fore in the debate on eliminating discards.

Finding practical and implementable solutions to the wasteful practice of discarding fish is a major priority issue for me. It is all the more poignant as it is a major principle of the new reform of the CFP. Since taking up office as Marine Minister, I have worked tirelessly to influence and drive a change in policy which will lead to an end to discarding.

I am conscious that any solution must be practical for fishermen and with that in mind I have worked closely with Commissioner Damanaki, my fellow Fisheries Ministers and members of the European Parliament in addition to consulting with our industry at home to ensure that proposals in the Common Fishery Policy to tackle discards would be workable and take account of the practical realities that would face fishermen at sea.

At the Council of Fisheries Ministers in June this year, I helped broker a general agreement among fisheries Ministers on the way forward for the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy including innovate measures to tackle the discard problem.

Discarding was the most contentious element of those discussions and threatened to block the Council’s efforts to reach agreement. A compromise approach which I tabled for consideration setting down a definitive timetable for the elimination of discards on a phased basis, offered a practical and progressive solution on the issue which was accepted by fellow Ministers. We are awaiting the EU Parliament’s position on the reform, including in relation to its approach to dealing with discards.

I will prioritise securing final agreement between the EU Fisheries Council and the Parliament on the CFP during the Irish Presidency during the first half of 2013.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

883. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in issuing area aid and single farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47872/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of the application concerned has recently been completed and payments under the single payment scheme and disadvantaged areas scheme will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of

the person named.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Payments

884. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total cost of the suckler cow welfare scheme since its inception; if payment rates will be maintained in 2013 in view of a ring fenced commitment of funding to the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47905/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The total amount paid to participants in the suckler welfare scheme to date amounts to almost €135 million. This scheme is a five-year scheme for beef animals born during the period, which commenced on 1 January 2008 and will end on 31 December 2012. The primary objectives of the scheme was to improve welfare standards in the sector and to assist in the establishment of a breeding database from which suckler farmers could identify the best breeding stock for their particular requirements. The scheme is fully funded by the Exchequer and a recent value for money audit has concluded that the scheme had met its objectives. Payments will continue to be made on 2012 born calves and those born in earlier years at current rates as they become eligible for payment. Any decision in relation to the future will be considered during the forthcoming budgetary process.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Application Numbers

885. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers on a county basis in receipt of payments under the suckler cow welfare scheme; the total payment made on a county basis under the scheme in 2011 and to date in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47906/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The table below sets out the numbers of herds, animals and amounts paid by County under the suckler welfare scheme since 1 January 2011.

COUNTY	HERDS PAID	TOTAL ANIMALS PAID	TOTAL AMOUNT PAID - €
CARLOW	2,199	18,696	755,152
CAVAN	6,026	44,820	1,806,208
CLARE	9,495	73,050	2,947,842
CORK	8,426	69,653	2,808,574
DONEGAL	6,452	40,542	1,635,104
DUBLIN	268	2,606	104,780
GALWAY	14,705	105,341	4,247,559
KERRY	6,352	42,197	1,702,347
KILDARE	1,652	16,026	647,397
KILKENNY	3,854	39,945	1,610,539
LAOIS	4,014	36,404	1,470,897
LEITRIM	4,708	26,447	1,063,301
LIMERICK	3,584	29,833	1,202,134
LONGFORD	3,467	26,856	1,082,024

COUNTY	HERDS PAID	TOTAL ANIMALS PAID	TOTAL AMOUNT PAID - €
LOUTH	1,204	10,357	418,307
MAYO	11,190	72,075	2,901,755
MEATH	3,081	30,970	1,250,222
MONAGHAN	3,884	28,744	1,157,048
OFFALY	3,615	33,018	1,332,939
ROSCOMMON	7,422	52,080	2,094,299
SLIGO	4,467	28,832	1,162,229
TIPPERARY	6,863	69,890	2,822,768
WATERFORD	2,329	26,433	1,066,294
WESTMEATH	3,785	35,639	1,438,016
WEXFORD	3,798	35,290	1,425,208
WICKLOW	2,470	21,454	865,563
Totals	129,310	1,017,198	41,018,509

Services for People with Disabilities

886. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the services that are in place in County Carlow in his Department to deal with persons who suffer from dyslexia and who need advice, guidance and assistance regarding the various farm schemes and assistance with completing application forms for farm payments and farm compliance procedures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47920/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Customers of my Department who suffer from dyslexia can obtain assistance on any Department scheme by phoning any of the dedicated phone lines provided in Department publications and on the main Department website. The website has the “BrowseAloud” facility to read web pages aloud for people with literacy and visual impairments. My Department also has access officers and an enquiry officer to provide assistance to any customer with disabilities, as required by Section 26(2) of the Disability Act. The Terms and Conditions of the 2012 single payment scheme have been published in larger print to assist applicants. My Department will also ensure that, where practicable, future publications and information documents comply with the guidelines of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland to make information accessible for people with dyslexia

Agrifood Sector Issues

887. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he has received submissions from the Irish Farmers Association and other farming organisations outlining the challenges and the future developmental needs of the agri food sector; the extent to which expects to be in a position to respond in a positive way to such submissions whether by way of the common agricultural policy or otherwise; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47924/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I receive submissions on a regular basis from the farming organisations and also from other stakeholders involved in the development of the agri-food sector and I very much value the input received.

In relation to the CAP reform process, at the commencement of the negotiations, a consulta-

tive committee was established comprising all of the main stakeholders. This committee meets on a regular basis, most recently last week, and the views and submissions have proved very useful in informing our policy formulation.

Animal Welfare Issues

888. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he has succeeded in ensuring that adequate time and financial resources have been made available to pig producers attempting to comply with animal welfare legislation by 1 January next; if any assessment has been done to determine the extent to which producers have been able to meet the emerging requirements whether in respect of time or resources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47925/12]

889. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he has managed to convey to the banking sector the urgent financial requirements in terms of expenditure by pig producers in order to comply with animal welfare legislation; if he is satisfied that the necessary compliance measures are likely to be completed by 1 January next; if any interim measures are contemplated in the event of any failure to meet the deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47926/12]

890. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which his Department has been in touch with the various planning authorities with a view to facilitating early processing of planning applications associated with animal welfare requirements and without the imposition of punitive levies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47927/12]

893. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he continues to monitor the development and future growth prospects of the pig meat industry; the areas in respect of which he anticipates particular or specific opportunities to arise while controlling costs insofar as is possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47931/12]

933. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the problem of escalating costs in the pig and poultry sectors; if he will identify any particular steps he may take to address this issue; if the specific issues driving up costs in the sectors have been identified; if he expects to be in a position to offer any particular alleviation measures in the short to medium term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48529/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 888 to 890, inclusive, 893 and 933 together.

The pig sector remains the third largest individual component of the agri-food sector, with production, prices and exports all growing significantly during 2011. The industry faces a number of challenges in the short and medium term and my Department will continue to assist the sector to resolve these issues. New EU animal welfare rules set down new standards in relation to the housing of sows and these are due to come into force on 1 January 2013. A significant number of producers have undertaken the necessary work required in order to upgrade their facilities in order to comply with the new rules.

My Department is aware of the scale of the challenge facing pig farmers in respect of the new requirements. To this end, the Department introduced a targeted agricultural modernisation scheme for sow welfare in June 2010. Grant-aid is available at a rate of 40% to eligible produc-

ers with a maximum investment ceiling of €300,000, i.e. a maximum grant of €120,000. A total of €13 million has been provisionally allocated to this scheme under the rural development programme. It follows two earlier schemes in 2005 and 2007 and payments of €6.2 million have already been made under these schemes.

The provisions of the scheme were modified earlier this year to allow multiple applications from pig farmers with more than one sow house together with an increase in the ceiling to €500,000 for the first house and €300,000 for each of the next three.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that as many pig producers as possible would be in a position to comply with the new EU animal welfare rules, I have extended the closing date for applications to end-January 2013. All applications received during the period of this extension would now be included in a new final tranche for which a sum of €3 million has been made available. The final date for completion of work and the lodgment of payment claims is 30 September 2013.

Applications from almost 120 producers, to the value of €13.86 million are currently being processed in my Department.

While planning issues are a matter for local authorities, my Department has made them aware of the deadline for compliance with the sow housing regulations.

I and my Department are in regular contact with farm bodies, various national banks and the Irish Banking Federation concerning the availability of credit to farmers, including those in the pig sector, who are under financial pressure. I am aware that, like many other sectors, farmers are finding it difficult to get credit due to the strict assessments introduced as a result of the global financial crisis and that pig farmers have particular issues regarding high feed costs. The banks do provide information online, via the Irish Banking Federation, as to the type of information that they require when making a decision on a loan request in the agriculture sector. However, farmers who are not satisfied with the service provided by their banks can ask for an internal review by the relevant bank and if they are still not satisfied can apply to the Credit Review Office to have their case reviewed. Despite concerns, a relatively small number of cases from the agri-food sector have come before the Credit Review Office.

Over the last year I understand that some of the banks have been involved in organising information sessions and conferences to explain the credit facilities available in the sector and just recently one of the pillar banks announced its intention to expand its lending activity in the agri-sector. Nonetheless, I will continue to meet with relevant parties, including the Irish Banking Federation, on a regular basis to discuss all credit-related issues.

My Department has been in regular contact with all pig producers to keep them apprised of the requirements and ascertain their intentions and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

I am aware of the concerns currently being expressed by both the pig and poultry sectors, particularly with regard to feed costs. High feed costs, most notably cereals and compound feed remain an issue. Pig producers are especially affected by the increase in cereal prices since June 2009, given that cereals account for 75% of feed.

Contributory factors include weather events in the Black Sea region and the United States during recent years, currency fluctuations and general supply and demand factors including but not limited to, better diet and increased meat demand in emerging economies and the ongoing shift towards biofuels.

The supply side has been adversely affected by drought in the US during the summer which

led to a 27% decline in the forecast corn harvest. This came after spring drought in South America and has been followed by a reduced harvest in the Ukraine after a poor summer. Indeed, the Ukraine announced a ban on wheat exports last week but has since modified this stance somewhat.

Given that Ireland imports much of the feed used in both the pigmeat and poultry sectors, the impact of price increases in these commodities is acute. Domestically a number of initiatives have been explored and developed. For example Teagasc, through its Moorepark pig research facility and the provision of FETAC courses in pig production and benchmarking pig herd performance, plays a critically important role in improving productive capacity at farm level. Teagasc have also circulated pig producers with a number of the options available to them to reduce feed costs and improve feed efficiency.

The price of pigmeat and, of course, feed is ultimately determined by demand and supply considerations. You will be aware that, due to Ireland's membership of the Single Market, unilateral actions or interventions to support individual sectors is not permitted. For my part however, I and my officials will continue to press the European Commission to make use of all the available market supports when circumstances require it, to ameliorate the worst effects of price volatility.

Pigmeat remains the most consumed meat worldwide and I consider that the substantial trade surplus in pigmeat in Ireland and the measures being taken to improve efficiency and market access leave us well placed to avail of developing opportunities in international markets.

In so far as international trade in Irish pigmeat is concerned, my Department has been extremely active in developing relationships in new and expanding markets in order to build the kind of confidence in Irish production and control systems that provide a platform for long term trading relationships in the future.

And of course Bord Bia continues, through its promotional activities, and through the pigmeat quality assurance scheme, to consolidate the position of Irish pigmeat on the domestic market and to expand its presence on EU and third country markets.

While input costs have increased significantly in recent years, the returns available to producers have also risen sharply. This has helped ameliorate the situation to some extent. At the end of October, prices were almost 24/c per kilo ahead year on year, which equates to an increase of more than 16%. Compared to the same week in 2010, per kilo prices have risen by over 40/c per kilo, or almost 31%. The forecast decline in the European sow population and consequent lower production and ongoing high demand for European pig meat internationally, should lead to even higher returns in the coming months.

Dairy Sector

891. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his expectations in terms of the future development of the dairy sector post-quota; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47929/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland strongly supported the abolition of milk quotas from 2015 as they were widely regarded by both the Irish dairy sector and market analysts as a brake on the potential of the sector to respond positively to opportunities in the market. I expect that the Irish dairy sector will fully exploit this potential following the abolition of milk quotas on 1 April 2015.

In the medium term, this means achieving the target of a 50 per cent increase in milk production by 2020, as set out by industry stakeholders in the Food Harvest 2020 report. While this target is ambitious, it is one I believe that it can be achieved through a focused and determined implementation of the report's recommendations for the dairy sector.

At farm level this will require improvements in on-farm competitiveness through, for example, animal health and genetic improvement programmes, as well as increased efficiency through education and technology transfer. My Department is playing its part in this regard through its continued support for ICBF and Animal Health Ireland, and through the Dairy Efficiency Programme which has provided a financial stimulus for participants in dairy discussion groups.

A processing sector with optimal capacity and maximum efficiency is also required, and in this regard, the capital investment plans of a number of the major players are already well advanced. There also needs to be a continued focus on commercially relevant R&D and marketing activities, and these aspects are being advanced through the activities of Teagasc and Bord Bia, in collaboration with the sector, with critical financial support from my Department.

In this regard plans for the development of a dairy sustainability and quality programme to exploit the already strong quality and sustainability credentials of the Irish dairy sector are well advanced. Bord Bia's Origin Green Programme, which will involve industry players in signing up to achieving concrete sustainability targets will further develop the image of Ireland as a source of high quality food, including dairy produce.

With more than three quarters of Irish dairy production exported and with growth in global populations forecast to stimulate strong levels of demand for dairy products, I am working with the industry to raise the profile of both the Irish dairy sector, and the Irish agri-food sector generally in countries such as the US, in emerging markets in the Far East and North Africa and elsewhere.

There will of course be challenges, and increased input cost and price volatility will mean that operators at farm and processing level will have to optimise their cost base, and develop mechanisms to protect income, perhaps through medium or long term supply contracts, or through other hedging mechanisms. The industry in Ireland has a history of resilience and innovation and I am confident that it is well placed to meet these challenges.

Bearing all of this in mind, I expect that the prospects and opportunities for the Irish dairy sector will expand significantly in the years following the abolition of milk quotas.

Beef Industry Issues

892. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his future expectations for the development of the beef industry with particular reference to maintaining Ireland's share of the international market and retaining a competitive edge; if he anticipates new market prospects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47930/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am confident that the beef sector has a positive future, based on expanding global demand, and that the ambitious targets which it set for itself in Food Harvest 2020 can be met.

Notwithstanding the ongoing consolidation of the public finances, my Department and the agencies under its remit continue to provide an array of financial and infrastructural supports to underpin production and employment in the beef sector. Apart from the promotional work

of Bord Bia, these include initiatives such as the Beef Technology Adoption Programme, the retention of the suckler cow scheme in 2012 and the advisory work of Teagasc especially in connection with the expanded BETTER beef farm programme. I also chair the high level implementation group set up to monitor progress on the 2020 strategy and take appropriate action to assist the agri-food sector to deliver the growth in output value envisaged for the various commodities including beef.

While the great majority of our beef exports are destined for other EU member states, it is always beneficial to have a wide range of market outlets available for our high-quality beef products and my Department is working actively – in collaboration with the industry, Bord Bia and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – to secure access to more third country outlets for Irish beef. As a result of these efforts, Ireland has reached agreements over recent years with the authorities in Israel, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Egypt and Singapore which allow for the export of Irish beef.

I have also been assiduous in developing links and nurturing relationships in new and expanding markets in order to build confidence in Irish production and control systems which will provide a platform for long-term trading relationships in the future. As part of that effort, I headed trade missions earlier this year to China and the USA, during which I raised the subject of access for Irish beef with my ministerial counterparts. The Deputy will be aware that the issue of access for Irish beef to both of these markets are priorities for me.

Other targeted markets for Irish beef access include Japan, Korea and the North African and Middle East regions. My Department is engaging actively with the authorities in these countries in order to secure access for beef products. There is a strong demand for beef globally and my Department remains focused, in consultation with the industry, on ensuring that Irish exporters are able to fully exploit the opportunities that flow from favourable market conditions.

Exploiting the strong sustainability credentials of the grass-fed Irish beef sector will be a key element in the strategy to develop international markets for Irish beef. In this context, the 32,000 members of the Bord Bia Beef Quality Assurance (QA) Scheme are committed to actively measuring and reducing their carbon emissions. This is the only QA programme in the world that has an environmental element operating on a national basis. It is my belief that this important development will give Irish beef exports a genuine competitive advantage in securing premium product status in fiercely competitive foreign markets. Improved product offerings backed by appropriate marketing are the best route to greater market returns and increased viability across the supply chain for all stakeholders – particularly producers.

In addition, the leading Irish beef processing companies have also embraced the concept of sustainability under Origin Green. This is a comprehensive national sustainability development programme, the first of its kind in the world, designed by Bord Bia to assist Ireland become known as the optimum source of sustainably produced food and drink. Industry recruitment commenced in June 2012 and to date 79 companies, accounting for over 50% of Irish food and drink exports, have signed up to the programme. Central to the Origin Green concept is a sustainability charter that will commit Ireland's agri-food industry, including beef processors, to engage directly and robustly with the challenges of sustainable production: reducing energy inputs, minimizing their overall carbon footprint and lessening their impact on the environment.

Question No. 893 answered with Question No. 888.

Sheepmeat Sector

894. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he continues to monitor the development and future growth prospects of the lamb industry; the areas in respect of which he anticipates particular or specific opportunities to arise while controlling costs insofar as is possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47932/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am committed to supporting the sheep industry, which makes a valuable contribution to the overall agri-food sector. In this regard I very much welcome the fact that the declining trend in numbers in our national flock has been reversed and that our sheep numbers are now increasing. This reflects a growing sense of confidence amongst our sheep farmers in terms of rebuilding breeding stock numbers which will ultimately lead to an increase in through-put. So far this year through-put has increased by over 182,000 compared to last year. However I am aware that market conditions for Irish sheepmeat, particularly for light lambs, are proving more difficult than in 2012 mainly because of the recession in Spain and Portugal. As with other agricultural sectors the market performance of the sheep sector, is a function of supply and demand. The long-term future of the sector will depend on its ability to satisfy the market and in order to do this well it must focus on competitiveness, innovation and the demands of the consumer.

The Food Harvest 2020 strategy includes specific recommendations for the sheep sector. It envisages that over the coming years, demand for sheepmeat on the European market will outstrip production levels, which could provide opportunities for exporting countries such as Ireland. This should provide the potential for better returns, provided the industry can continue the market and product diversification which has been evident in recent years. At producer level there is likely to be improved price prospects, provided an increased focus on production, efficiency and product quality is evident. Based on a renewed commercial focus by the sheep sector, building consumption on the domestic market and through the implementation of the recommendations of Food Harvest 2020, the industry has targeted a growth in output value of 20% by 2020.

The recommendations of the report focus on farm competitiveness and the processing sector. On the farm side, they emphasise the importance of continuing to apply on-farm efficiencies and new technologies, breed improvement and the production of a quality product. On the processing side, the focus is on efficiencies, innovation and improved product range.

There has been significant public investment in the sheep sector in recent years. Key supports included €7 million from the 2009 single farm payment national reserve under the uplands sheep payment scheme and €54 million for the three-year grassland sheep scheme which commenced in 2010. The sheep fencing/mobile handling equipment scheme, one of five targeted agricultural modernisation schemes, TAMS, which was re-opened to applications last December, will enable many farmers in the sheep sector to complete the necessary investment works in order to maintain competitiveness and introduce increased efficiencies on their farm and so secure the future of their enterprises. Teagasc has also allocated almost €1.5 million for sheep research for 2012. In addition, Bord Bia will also spend over €1.1 million this year on a promotional strategy for the Irish sheep sector which addresses the issue of safeguarding the future of the sector in the following ways:

All of the supports I have outlined have provided a significant incentive to farmers to maintain their production levels, which is vital for the future of a viable sheep industry in Ireland.

On a positive note, sheepmeat exports to international markets almost doubled to 600 tonnes during the course of 2011. This generates a great confidence boost for Irish exporters. While almost 99% of our lamb exports are to the EU, it is always beneficial to have a wide range of

outlets available and to this end my Department, together with Bord Bia and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade continues to work to secure access to more third country outlets for Irish lamb. I announced the opening of the Singaporean and South African markets to Irish lamb over the summer. There is strong demand for all meats globally at present and my Department and I remain committed in our efforts to ensure that the Irish sheep sector is able to take full advantage of all of the opportunities that will arise as a result of this demand.

Severe Weather Events

895. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he has quantified the impact of inclement weather conditions on the agri-food producing sector; if he envisages any particular intervention directly or through the aegis of the EU which might be beneficial to the sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47933/12]

896. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he has studied the impact of poor weather conditions on the agri-food sector; if any particular intervention seems possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47934/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 895 and 896 together.

This year has indeed been a very difficult one for the farming sector as a result of inclement weather. The very wet weather during the summer months resulted in reduced grass growth and a reduction in yield and quality across a variety of crops including cereals, potatoes and vegetables. In many cases, housing of stock has taken place during the summer with the feeding of forage earmarked for the winter period. There was also a significant reduction in the volume of winter feed saved on many farms with farmers also increasing the feeding of additional concentrates.

With regard to the cereal sector, yield and quality of crops and wheat in particular were significantly reduced compared to previous years. Prices remained strong throughout the harvest period, however, helping to offset some of the potential losses to growers.

Poor ground conditions in late September and on into October has also hindered autumn sowing. There will still be an opportunity next spring to make up some of this shortfall through increased sowings of spring wheat and spring barley if weather is good and grower sentiment remains positive. Supplies of winter wheat seed are well below average because the quality of the seed crop was seriously affected. My Department succeeded in obtaining a derogation from the EU Commission to allow seed of a lower germination capacity to be planted. This derogation together with the lower planting levels has alleviated problems with seed supplies this autumn.

Unfortunately the EU Commission does not provide funding to compensate for losses that arise due to the adverse weather conditions experienced this summer and due to the financial crisis the Irish Exchequer is not in a position to assist either. The European Union Solidarity Fund is aimed primarily at providing funding to member states in the event of a natural disaster.

In order to ease the financial pressures on farmers as a result of the bad weather, I sought and received EU approval for the advance payment of the 2012 single payment scheme. A total of €538 million issued last month under the single farm payment to almost 88% of all applicants, when taken with the €173 million which has issued since 26 September 2012 in respect

of the 2012 disadvantaged areas scheme, represents a significant financial boost for both the individual farmers who will receive these payments and also the wider rural economy. My aim continues to be to maximise payments to farmers at the earliest possible date, subject to the necessary requirements of the schemes being met.

In addition, following contact with my colleague Deputy Phil Hogan, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, an extension was granted to spread chemical and organic fertilisers to 30 September and 31 October 2012 respectively. This was aimed at alleviating some of the difficulties arising from housing of livestock over the summer and to allow extended autumn grazing of grass and a positive impact on the fodder shortage.

While the extended period eased the overall situation regarding the management of slurry, difficulties still persisted for farms located on heavier soils, due to animals being housed earlier and for long periods. In response to this, Minister Hogan announced on 26 October 2012 a number of further measures to alleviate the difficulties experienced by farmers. These can be summarised as follows:

Minister Hogan also announced an exemption, subject to certain conditions, from establishing green cover for a limited number of tillage farmers who had either ploughed or sprayed with a non selective herbicide and, due to the bad weather, were not able to sow a crop that they had planned to do.

Dairy Sector

897. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the markets currently showing great potential for growth at EU or worldwide level for Irish dairy products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47935/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Irish exports in the agrifood sector have performed strongly in recent years, and I believe that it is well positioned to take advantage of future increases in demand arising from increasing global population. The Food Harvest 2020 report sets out the strategic vision for the agri-food and fishing sector. From a dairying perspective, the ending of milk quotas in 2015 represents an exceptional opportunity to increase milk output, and Food Harvest 2020 has targeted a 50% increase in milk production in the period to 2020. This target is ambitious but I also believe it is realistic, because the dairy sector has the capability to expand at producer and at processor level.

In that context, the dairy expansion activation group established to identify specific actions needed to deliver on the Food Harvest 2020 targets, has produced a road map setting out 55 actions required to achieve the 50% increase in milk production. Key areas for action include the identification of markets, the improvement of efficiency at processing level and improving production efficiency at farm level. While many of these actions will be taken at commercial level, my Department and its agencies are working with industry to provide a framework to support the necessary development, and I am personally chairing the high level implementation committee, in order to monitor progress and take appropriate action to support the successful implementation of Food Harvest 2020.

Ireland has access to markets worldwide for dairy products and exports some 85% of our dairy production to over eighty countries, with more than two thirds of that going to the EU. It is clear that markets will have to be found for the increased production envisaged in Food Harvest 2020. I have been very active in developing relationships in new and expanding markets in order to build the kind of confidence in Irish production and control systems that provide a

platform for long-term trading relationships in the future. As part of that effort I have headed trade missions to China, the US and Algeria to further develop these important relationships. In China I met my ministerial counterparts in the Agriculture and Quarantine Ministries to help raise the profile of the Irish agri-food industry, including the dairy sector. I will continue to work with industry to raise the profile of the Irish dairy sector, and the Irish agrifood sector generally, in emerging markets in the Far East, North Africa and elsewhere.

Fishing Industry Development

898. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total number of jobs generated by the fishing industry here at all levels; the extent to which this might be increased or expanded in the forthcoming year in view of the on-going economic situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47936/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Both Food Harvest 2020 and Action Plan for Jobs 2012 recognise that most of the potential for increased employment in the seafood sector is in the areas of processing and aquaculture. Food Harvest 2020 aims to increase employment in the seafood sector as a whole, from the present approximately 11,000 to 14,000 by 2020.

I am advised by Bord Iascaigh Mhara that some 2,870 people are presently employed in the seafood processing industry. Arising specifically from an investment of €15.5 million by 21 seafood processing companies in 2012, with €3.2 million in financial assistance under the seafood processing scheme operated by BIM, 142 additional jobs and increased sales of value added seafood products of nearly €44 million are expected to be created by 2015. That is a significant level of investment by any standards, and together with previous investment of €7 million by 21 companies in 2011 and €2.7 by eight companies in 2010, with the support of the seafood processing scheme, is setting a clear path to achievement of the potential of the seafood sector to create sustainable employment in peripheral coastal communities.

In relation to aquaculture, it is intended to radically expand the production of Irish organic farmed salmon by creating new fish farming production areas in deeper waters. The placement of farms in deep waters will ensure that there is no impact on Natura 2000 sites. BIM estimates that just one of these production areas could generate over 100 Million Euro in exports p.a. and create 350 direct jobs. A further 150 jobs will be created indirectly in the service sector, supplying fish feed, netting, transportation and other services.

BIM, working with the Marine Institute, is currently investigating suitable sites. An application for an aquaculture licence in respect of one of these sites in Galway Bay has been submitted to the Department by BIM. This application is currently being assessed in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act.

Food Labelling

899. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of breaches of food-labelling in respect of traceability and other standard that have been identified in each of the past four years to date; the action, if any, taken thereafter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47937/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Food Safety Authority of Ireland, FSAI, under the aegis the Minister for Health has overall respon-

sibility for the enforcement of food safety in Ireland. This includes the enforcement of food labelling regulations. It carries out this remit through service contracts with my Department and other agencies including the Health Service Executive, HSE, Local Authorities, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, SFPA, and National Standards Authority of Ireland, NSAI.

The FSAI has advised my Department that the number of inspections where non compliance with labelling legislation were found are as follows:

Year	
2008	3,437 (13.19%)
2009	11,231 (16.33%)
2010	9,919 (14.04%)
2011	9,499 (15.98%)

The majority of these were minor and remedial action was taken. During that period there were eight prosecutions which included breaches in labelling legislation.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

900. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an area aid appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47939/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): While the person named applied for derogation under the 2012 disadvantaged areas scheme, the application was unsuccessful. The applicant was notified of this decision in writing and advised of the right of appeal to the recently established independent DAS appeals committee.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

901. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person (details supplied) in County Cork has yet to receive his disadvantaged area payment for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47945/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the single payment scheme/disadvantaged areas scheme was received from the person named on 10 May 2012. In order to comply with EU requirements, the application was one of a number which was selected for inspection and therefore payment could not be made pending the outcome of this process.

The inspection has been completed and the application is now being processed with a view to issuing any payment due as soon as possible.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

902. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will be paid their disadvantaged and single farm payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47970/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of the application of the person named has recently been completed and therefore payments under the 2012 single payment and disadvantaged areas scheme will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Live Exports

903. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to amend the law to prohibit the live export of animals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47971/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The export of animals is regulated at EU level. As regards animal welfare, the EU has had rules governing animal welfare during transport since 1977 while the EU rules on animal health are in place since the 1960's. These rules aim to eliminate technical barriers to trade in live animals and to allow market organisations to operate smoothly, while ensuring a satisfactory level of welfare protection for the animals concerned and a satisfactory level of control in relation to the health risks associated with the movement of animals.

Coillte Teoranta Lands

904. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the up to date position regarding free access to Coillte lands and parkways and adjacent carparks; if access adjacent to carparks is standardised in relation to barriers and costs; if there are plans to make car parking at all sites free to the public in view of the upcoming Gathering 2013 events such as an event (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47974/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Coillte Teoranta was established as a private commercial company under the Forestry Act, 1988 and day-to-day operational matters, such as those mentioned by the Deputy, are the responsibility of the company.

The matter has, however, been raised with Coillte who advise that, in line with their recreation policy, the public are welcome to access all areas on foot and designated forests and trails for cycling, free of charge. Organised events and other activities are facilitated by a permit system available to the public online. There are nominal fees charged for most permits with commercial activities paying a higher tariff.

The company further advise that it also manages 11 forest parks and collect a fee for access by vehicle to the car-parks at 9 of these forest parks. This fee is used to maintain substantial recreational infrastructure at these parks including trails, toilets, playground equipment, map-boards and picnic and barbecue areas. Every forest park traditionally charged a fee for access by car at peak times during summer and bank holidays and fee collection is now facilitated by access barriers. Coillte do not charge a car-parking fee at any of its other 150 car-parking and recreation sites across the country. In relation to events held at the forest parks, volunteer, scouting and school groups are facilitated by waiving any permit fees for their activities. Where a car-parking fee is payable for vehicle access, groups are encouraged to car-pool and use group transport for larger events.

Coillte has advised that it is participating in, and indeed organising, events for The Gather-

ing 2013 and will facilitate many other groups organising events on its lands for this initiative. For suitable events for the forest parks where a car-parking fee is normally charged, car-parking charges may be waived.

In relation to the event mentioned, I have been advised by Coillte that this is a matter for local and district management to decide as to whether it meets the criteria for the waiver of the charges.

Sugar Industry

905. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the balance of payments due to beet contractors from the beet fund allocation in his Department will be allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47996/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As part of the reform of the EU sugar regime in 2006, a temporary restructuring scheme was introduced with the aim of reducing EU sugar production in order to comply with WTO and other international obligations. The scheme provided an incentive for sugar processors to renounce sugar quota and dismantle the associated sugar processing plant and it provided compensation for affected stakeholders. Greencore, the sole Irish sugar processor and holder of the Irish sugar quota, decided to avail of this scheme and accordingly the company renounced the quota and dismantled the last remaining sugar factory at Mallow in compliance with the conditions of the scheme. This was a commercial decision taken by the Company having regard to the deteriorating market situation.

The total compensation package negotiated in November 2005 in the context of the reform of the EU sugar regime, as modified in 2007, was worth €353 million to Ireland, made up of €200 million to beet growers, €6 million to machinery contractors and €127 million to Greencore plc. The beet growers' share was made up of restructuring aid of €53 million, diversification aid of €44 million and €123 million via the single farm payment. All elements of the restructuring scheme have now been implemented, not just within Ireland but across the EU.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

906. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding disadvantaged payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Sligo. [48035/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of the application concerned has recently been completed and payments under the Single Payment Scheme and Disadvantaged Areas Scheme will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Sheepmeat Sector

907. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason he has brought in a regulation that a person purchasing lamb for export has to hold them for twenty one days before exporting them; if his attention has been drawn to concerns that this will delay sales of lamb that are now being purchased for Ramadan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48070/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Trade in sheep is governed by Council Directive 91/68/EEC, as amended, on animal health conditions governing intra-Community trade in ovine and caprine animals. This legislation requires *inter alia* that Member States ensure that ovine animals for slaughter are not dispatched to another Member State unless such animals have been continuously resident on the holding of origin for at least 21 days.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

908. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 200 of 25 October 2012, when a decision on the disadvantaged area scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48095/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): While the person named applied for derogation under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas scheme, the application was unsuccessful. The applicant was notified of this decision in writing and advised of the right of appeal to the recently established independent DAS Appeals Committee. The applicant has availed of this right of appeal and, accordingly, the case will now be considered by the DAS Appeals Committee.

Beef Industry Issues

909. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to enhance and develop the beef industry in lieu of the attractiveness of dairy farming; the steps he is taking to preserve and protect the beef market here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48098/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): There is a symbiotic relationship between primary production in the beef and dairy sectors. The removal of milk quotas will lead to increased production from the dairy herd post 2015. Maximising the value of increased beef from the dairy herd following the abolition of quotas presents an opportunity for the industry that can be of considerable benefit to both producers and processors. Current initiatives involving both Teagasc and the industry have an important role to play in this regard.

Nonetheless, specialist beef producers will continue to provide the vital raw material for high-quality Irish beef and my Department and the agencies under its remit have continued to provide an array of financial and infrastructural supports to underpin production in this sector. These include initiatives such as the Beef Technology Adoption Programme, which is designed to equip beef farmers with the knowledge to improve efficiency at farm level and the advisory work of Teagasc, especially in connection with an expanded BETTER Beef Farm Programme, which provides a best practice model for suckler farmers. Other supports include the retention of the Suckler Cow Scheme in 2012 and the provision of funding to support the work of ICBF in improving genetic quality in the beef herd.

These measures are underpinned by the efforts of Bord Bia to promote and market Irish beef on EU and international markets. Exploiting the strong sustainability credentials of the grass-fed Irish beef sector will be a key element in the strategy to develop international markets for Irish beef. In this context, the 32,000 members of the Bord Bia Beef Quality Assurance (QA) Scheme are committed to actively measuring and reducing their carbon emissions. This is the

only QA programme in the world that has an environmental element operating on a national basis. It is my belief that this important development will give Irish beef exports a genuine competitive advantage in securing premium product status in fiercely competitive foreign markets. To remain competitive in the marketplace, especially in the markets of the major retailers, it is essential that we can continue to substantiate claims of high-quality, sustainable production.

Bord Bia has made considerable progress in developing a Brand Ireland concept, supported by its Origin Green initiative. This ongoing voluntary programme will enable Irish food business operators, including those in the beef sector, to sign up to measurable sustainability targets in a range of areas in a manner which supports the already strong green image of the Irish agri-food sector in the marketplace.

Ireland exports around 93% of its beef production with the vast bulk of it destined for other EU member states. Nevertheless, it is always beneficial to have a wide range of alternative market outlets available for our high-quality beef products and my Department is working actively – in collaboration with the industry, Bord Bia and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – to secure access to more third country markets for Irish beef. As a result of these efforts, Ireland has reached agreements over recent years with the authorities in Israel, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Egypt and Singapore which allow for the export of Irish beef.

I have also been assiduous in developing links and nurturing relationships in new and expanding markets in order to build confidence in Irish production and control systems which will provide a platform for long-term trading relationships in the future. As part of that effort, I headed trade missions earlier this year to China and the USA, during which I raised the subject of access for Irish beef with my ministerial counterparts. The Deputy will be aware that the issue of access for Irish beef to both of these markets are priorities for me.

Other targeted markets for Irish beef access include Japan, Korea and those in North African and Middle East regions. My Department is engaging actively with the authorities in these countries in order to secure access for beef products. There is a strong demand for beef globally and my Department remains focused, in consultation with the industry, on ensuring that Irish exporters are able to fully exploit the opportunities that flow from favourable market conditions.

On the back of strong beef prices, the income of Irish cattle farms increased by 48% in 2011. Despite the considerable improvement in income, there are still large numbers of small, low-income cattle farms that continue to be highly dependent on direct payments. In the course of the forthcoming Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) negotiations, I am determined to secure the best possible outcome for Irish farmers, including beef farmers. A number of options will be available in relation to farm support measures under the revised CAP and I will ensure that livestock farmers will continue to benefit from these income supports in the future.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Applications

910. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will issue on a heritage grant under the REP scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48134/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Traditional Farm Building Scheme was introduced as a supplementary measure under REPS 4 in 2008. Its objective is to ensure that a number of traditional farm buildings, which contribute to the visual landscape and are of historical and architectural value, will be maintained into the future. The Heritage Council administer the Traditional Farm Building Scheme on behalf of

my Department.

The closing date for the 2012-2013 scheme was 26th October 2012. A budget of €700,000 is available for the scheme year 2013, and a maximum grant of €18,000 will be payable to successful applications.

Applications received prior to the closing date, including the application of the person named, are currently being examined.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

911. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision on derogation on a disadvantaged area scheme application has been made in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48135/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person concerned is an applicant under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme. Currently, this applicant is one of a number, whose cases are impacted by a requirement of a minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare and who have applied for a derogation in this regard. Immediately a decision is reached on this application, the person concerned will be notified in writing. Should the decision be negative, a fully independent appeals procedure is available.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

912. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on an appeal on derogation on a disadvantaged area scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48136/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): While the person named applied for derogation under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas scheme, the application was unsuccessful. The applicant was notified of this decision in writing and advised of the right of appeal to the recently established independent DAS Appeals Committee.

Afforestation Programme

913. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of landowners in County Kildare who are in receipt of an annual forestry premium payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48203/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payment of premiums under the Afforestation Schemes was made to 216 landowners in respect of 269 sites in Co. Kildare in 2011, the latest complete year for which statistics are available.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

914. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

the position regarding an application for the area based payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; when payment will issue.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48221/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 2 April 2012. However, payment has not yet issued as, at this stage, the holding of the person named has not yet satisfied the Scheme minimum stocking density requirements, which have been notified to all Scheme applicants. Immediately the holding concerned is confirmed as having met these requirements, the case will be further processed with a view to payment at the earliest possible date thereafter.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

915. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a farm payment appeal in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48226/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): While the person named applied for derogation under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas scheme, the application was unsuccessful. The applicant was notified of this decision in writing and advised of the right of appeal to the recently established independent DAS Appeals Committee.

Fisheries Offences

916. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent of the direct economic cost to fishermen of the mandatory statutory forfeiture of catch and gear for fisheries offences in the years 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. [48231/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act, 2006, operational issues concerning sea fisheries control are a matter for the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA). I have asked the SFPA to respond directly to the question.

Fisheries Offences

917. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the average level of fines for fisheries offences here in the years 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. [48232/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act, 2006, operational issues concerning sea fisheries control are a matter for the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA). I have asked the SFPA to respond directly to the question.

Fisheries Offences

918. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the maximum fines for a fisheries' offence here issued in the years 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. [48233/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act, 2006, operational issues concerning sea fisheries control are a matter for the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA). I have asked the SFPA to respond directly to the question.

Grassland Sheep Scheme Payments

919. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payments of subsidies to sheep farmers who farm the Lyre mountains, County Waterford will be paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48237/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I can confirm that payments under the 2012 Grassland Sheep Scheme are due to commence issuing in early December.

Veterinary Inspection Service Remit

920. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the way in which further efficiencies and cost savings can be achieved in his Department; his plans to privatise the veterinary inspections of livestock exports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48292/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department has made significant progress on the implementation of its 'Action Plan' under the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement and will continue to seek further efficiencies and cost savings.

Private veterinary practitioners are already widely used by my Department, particularly in post mortem inspections in meat factories and disease eradication schemes. Any proposal to increase the role of private veterinary practitioners in respect of functions currently carried out by veterinarians employed full time by the Department has to be considered in the context that the Department has sufficient staff to fulfil its existing obligations.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

921. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on an appeal on a application for derogation of a disadvantage area scheme application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48297/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): While the person named applied for derogation under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas scheme, the application was unsuccessful. The applicant was notified of this decision in writing and advised of the right of appeal to the recently established independent DAS Appeals Committee.

Single Payment Scheme Eligibility

922. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his view on the need to extend the period of time for the cutting of rushes, to enable farmers to comply with rushes control criteria for their single farm payment, following their inability to access their land due to water logging and the inclement weather; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48319/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In order to be eligible to claim, in the context of the Single Payment Scheme, an applicant must ensure that all agricultural land claimed upon is maintained in good agricultural and environmental condition.

Farmers can keep grassland in good agricultural and environmental condition by conducting an agricultural activity on it such as grazing, harvesting forage crops, or by topping. Grasslands continue to be eligible where it is evident that the stocking rate used by the applicant on the land is sufficient to keep rushes under control and avoid their proliferation. In such situations, there may not be a necessity to cut.

With the exception of certain designated lands, there are no restrictions on when a farmer may cut rushes. He/she is therefore free to cut rushes at any time throughout the year once conditions are suitable. In terms of the conduct of inspections, my Department makes appropriate allowances for the effect of prevailing weather conditions in individual cases.

European Council Meetings

923. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will be discussing Ireland's position on the future common agricultural policy at the next EU Council meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44244/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have not yet received a final agenda for this month's meeting of the EU Council of Agriculture Ministers but I would expect that the future of the Common Agricultural Policy will feature as the main item on the agenda.

As you know there are two separate and parallel negotiating processes in play on this dossier. Certain elements of CAP reform, largely related to funding, are being dealt with as part of the negotiations on the multiannual financial framework for the EU budget. These elements will be decided by Heads of State and Government and a special meeting of the European Council has been convened for 22/23 November for this purpose.

In parallel, the Agriculture Council is now scheduled to meet on 28/29 November and the intention of the Cyprus Presidency is to seek what is known as a "partial general approach" (essentially the position of the Council) on the CAP reform regulations.

For my part, as we enter a crucial stage of the negotiations, my priority remains to achieve the best possible outcome for Ireland, focusing on four key areas. These are:

- delivering a well-resourced CAP,
- retaining Ireland's share of CAP funds,
- maximising payment model flexibility for Member States, and
- as much simplification as possible for the farmer and the administration, subject to proper financial and operational controls.

Single Payment Scheme Applications

924. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an outstanding single farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48341/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of the application of the person named has recently been completed and payment will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Single Payment Scheme Appeals

925. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will reconsider the case of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath in respect of a penalty decision which resulted from a mistake in relation to documentation, which has since been rectified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48344/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A request for review of a Cross Compliance penalty under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme, relating to the failure to submit records of feed and fertiliser as required under the European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations (S.I. No. 101 of 2009), was received from the person named on 8th August 2012.

The applicant was advised on 19th September 2012 of the outcome of this review, which was to uphold the original decision. The applicant was also advised of the right to appeal the outcome of the review to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within 3 months of the date of the review letter. To date, no such appeal has been received.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

926. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will be paid their 2012 disadvantaged area based payment and their single farm payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48360/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): There is no record in my Department of the person named having lodged an application under the 2012 Single Payment/Disadvantaged Area Scheme.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

927. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding farm payments in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48386/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The application from the person named included a commonage parcel that has been over claimed. As this matter is being investigated, this application cannot be processed to finality until this issue is resolved.

Farm Safety

928. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in view of the recent tragedies involving farmers agitating slurry his views on whether he will send out a helpful informative leaflet about the dangers of toxic gases from slurry and how serious the consequences can be if a person is unaware of the dangers involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48397/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is very strongly committed to promoting Farm Safety in collaboration with the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), the organisation with primary responsibility for securing health and safety at work, particularly from an enforcement point of view. The Department has taken a number of steps over the past year in tandem with some of the other State and industry organisations to both raise awareness of the problem and educate farmers and their families on the dangers of working in this industry.

One such measure taken by my Department was the inclusion of a Farm Safety message with the Single Payment application packs, which were distributed in March of this year to over 130,000 farmers. This was a joint initiative between my Department, the Health and Safety Authority and the Farm Safety Partnership Committee and led to each of those farmers receiving an individual reminder of the importance of farming safely, and the potentially fatal consequences of not doing so.

The HSA produced an excellent DVD earlier this year containing testimonials from 6 individual farmers who provide an emotional telling of their experiences on farm which led to either fatalities or serious injury. This DVD has been widely circulated and is included in all training courses undertaken by my Department.

Teagasc and the HSA distributed a leaflet entitled “Safe Slurry handling” at the ploughing championships in September which details the safe operating procedures for the agitation of slurry and details the dangers of slurry gas.

My Department, in conjunction with Teagasc, had a joint article in the Irish Farmers Journal of 3rd November 2012 about the requirements for inspection of slatted units and the safety issues around this. The Department’s specification for bovine livestock units and reinforced tanks (S.123) gives detailed advice in relation to the safe agitation of slurry, and safe design of tanks.

There is no single action or organisation that can solve this difficult problem that impacts so horrendously, on so many lives, each year. Since taking office, I have continuously strived to increase awareness of safety issues among farmers which I believe is the key to changing the way we all think about farm safety on Irish farms. We must all work together with the single goal of preventing farm accidents and therefore saving lives and minimising serious injuries.

Fisheries Offences

929. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he intends to move forward with a new Sea Fisheries Bill to replace the criminal sanctions system for minor fisheries offences with an administrative sanction system;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48433/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Programme for Government committed to replacing the criminal sanctions system for minor fisheries offences with administrative sanction system to bring Ireland into line with other European jurisdictions.

I sought the advice of the Attorney General on the matter. The Attorney General has responded with a detailed advice on the issue which I am currently examining. The advice highlights the difficulties in relation to the Constitution and in relation to the laws of the European Community relevant to the question of implementing a system of administrative sanctions for fisheries.

There are many significant differences between the legal systems in Ireland and that of other EU Member States. Ireland's constitutional and legal position provides certain basic rights which must be respected within our system of justice.

Furthermore, European Union legislation requires that penalties for fisheries offences must be "*effective, proportionate and dissuasive*". That is, they must act as a deterrent and they must also ensure that there is no benefit gained by infringing the rules.

Given the nature of the penalties involved, there is a general requirement under the Constitution that alleged breaches of fisheries control regulations must be tried in a court of law. I am continuing to actively examine the issue in the context of the Attorney General's advice in relation to the Programme for Government commitment.

Harbours and Piers Funding

930. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a sand bank has built up at the entrance to Mullaghmore Harbour, County Sligo, creating a hazard for boat users; if he has received an application from Sligo County Council for grant assistance to implement a scheme to remove the sand bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48444/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine(Deputy Simon Coveney): Mullaghmore Harbour is owned by Sligo County Council and responsibility for its repair and maintenance rests with the Local Authority in the first instance.

My Department provides funding for the development and repair of Local Authority owned harbours, piers and slipways as part of the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme.

On the 8th December 2011, all coastal Local Authorities were requested to submit, in order of priority, a list of projects for consideration for funding under the 2012 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme. Sligo County Council did not submit an application for funding of works at Mullaghmore harbour at that time.

Any application submitted by Sligo County Council in respect of Mullaghmore Harbour under the Capital Programme in future years will be given consideration based on Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

Agriculture Schemes Administration

931. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a farm is sold with its entitlements 113 acres sold with 47 entitlements, 83 acres of this is planted and the remaining 28 acres is sold to a third party; if the entire entitlements will be consolidated on to the portion that was sold and be claimed on the 28 acres, if he will clarify; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48513/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Farmers who satisfy certain conditions are eligible to apply to have their entitlements consolidated. The reduction in the number of hectares must have arisen because of one or more of the following circumstances: the acquisition of land by a public authority under a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for non-agriculture; lands leased in/ rented in during all or part of the reference period (2000-2002) where the lease /rental agreement has expired or will expire and the land parcels in question are no longer available.

However, a farmer who acquires entitlements and land by way of purchase/lease is not eligible to consolidate the purchased/leased entitlements.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

932. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive their single farm payment and disadvantaged area payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48521/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person concerned is an applicant under the 2012 Single Payment and Disadvantaged Area Schemes.

To meet EU requirements, the application concerned was one of a number which was selected for inspection. As this process has not been completed, it has not, as yet, been possible to finalise the processing of this application. As soon as the inspection and related processes are completed, the application concerned will be progressed. *Question No. 933 answered with Question No. 888.*

Legislative Programme

934. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he expects the Animal Health and Welfare Bill 2012 to be passed by Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48532/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): This is a matter for the Dáil which has a wide variety of important business before it. I would however be hopeful that the Bill passes at the earliest possible date and will do what I can to ensure its speedy passage.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Applications

935. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for delay in processing an application for the agri-environment option scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal. [48536/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from the 1 November 2010.

Under the EU Regulations governing the scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. During these checks a query

arose in relation to the claimed Natura area on one of the parcels. This issue has been successfully resolved and final checks are now being carried out on the application with a view to issuing payment shortly.

Northern Ireland Issues

936. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48538/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am and my officials are directly involved in ongoing and frequent North-South engagement up to and including the highest levels. This involves having extensive contact between officials in my Department and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland and interested parties in the food, agriculture and fishing sectors in both jurisdictions. This work is undertaken in the context of actively pursuing our priorities for advancing co-operation through the structures of the North-South Ministerial Council, most recently at the agriculture sectoral meeting of the Council which took place last Wednesday, 31 October in Armagh. Both Departments continue to enjoy excellent co-operation in the development of an All-Island Animal Health Strategy for control of animal movements and the prevention, containment and eradication of epizootic diseases in Ireland; the development of an All-Island Plant Health and Research Strategy including co-operation between both jurisdictions in relation to plant protection products and liaison on issues arising at WTO, EU enlargement and the mid-term review of the CAP.

There is also co-operation in other areas of common interest as specific matters arise, the most recent being issues relating to farm safety and the outbreak of the Chalara Fraxinea disease commonly known ash dieback. The engagement involves many officials in the Department.

Northern Ireland Issues

937. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 218 of 24 October 2012, the way the corporate affairs division of his Department coordinates north south matters; the proportion of time each grade allocates to North South matters in view of the fact that agriculture is a designated area of cooperation under the Good Friday Agreement. [48556/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): There is a North South coordinator at Assistant Principal level working in Corporate Affairs Division. The role of this AP is, among other things, to develop common areas of co-operation between my Department and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland and to identify possible new areas of cooperation. The work is carried out through contact with other Departments and the North-South Joint Secretariat. There is also ongoing contact with other Divisions within my Department that are closely involved in North-South co-operation.

The AP reports to a Principal Officer and is assisted by a Higher Executive Officer and Clerical Officer. The amount of time spent on this work varies depending on the issues that

arise during the year.

Horse and Greyhound Fund

938. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the horse and greyhound fund continues to receive a subvention from the Exchequer; and the amount of that subvention in 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012. [48600/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The horse racing and greyhound racing industry are important indigenous Irish industries making an important contribution to the economic and social fabric of our country. It has been estimated these industries together support in excess of 27,300 jobs and contribute approximately €1.4 billion in economic output annually. A recent study on the Horse Racing Industry commissioned by my Department and undertaken by Indecon Economic Consultants, "*A review of certain aspects of the Irish Horse Racing Industry*", considered *inter alia* the funding and management of the industry in Ireland. The report confirms the importance and potential of the Irish Horse Racing Industry and affirms that with appropriate policies and structures in place the sector can contribute significantly to the economic and social development of the country and to the expansion of employment.

The Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund (the Fund) was established under section 12(1) of the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act 2001 (the Act) for the purpose of giving support to the horse and greyhound racing industries. State funding provided through the fund is pivotal to the survival of the horse and greyhound racing industries.

Amounts paid into the fund are approved by both Houses of the Oireachtas in accordance with the provisions of Section 12 of the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act, 2001

When the Horse and Greyhound Fund was established in 2001 it was expected that it would be fully financed from the revenue from excise duty on off-course betting. However the reduction in the rate of excise duty charged on off-course betting (5% down to 1%) combined with an increase in on-line and remote betting (which are currently outside the tax net) has led to a severe decline in the revenue from duty on off-course betting. Revenue from excise duty on off-course betting has declined from €68 million in 2001 to approximately €27 million in 2011.

The Deputy will be aware that the Minister for Finance has published the Betting (Amendment) Bill 2012 which, when enacted, will ensure that all bookmakers taking bets from Ireland will pay betting duty on those bets in the same way that betting shops currently do. Betting Exchanges will also be subject to tax under the new arrangements but the calculation of the tax will differ from that applying to bookmakers.

The Indecon report, referred to above, made recommendations aimed at securing the viability and sustainability of the horse racing industry so that it can make the maximum contribution to the economy. The report's recommendations covering such areas as the funding of the industry, the structure, size and nomination process of the Board of Horse Racing Ireland (HRI), the opportunities for streamlining the functions of HRI the Racing Regulatory Authorities (Irish Turf Club/Irish National Hunt Steeplechase Committee) and strategies to optimise the marketing and competitiveness of the sector are at present being addressed.

Details of the amounts allocated to the Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund are presented in the Table below.

The Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund

Year	Amount paid in to H&G Fund	Betting duty receipts	Exchequer top-up
-	in year	in preceding year	-
-	€m	€m	€m
2009	68.128	36.700	31.428
2010	59.264	31.000	28.264
2011	57.290	31.000	26.290
2012	56.290	27.051	29.239

Departmental Agencies Expenditure

939. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of senior individuals whether board members or executives provided with credit cards in agencies under his aegis; and in particular with reference to Teagasc and An Bord Bia, the number of credit cards issued to him and his officials. [48618/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department does not issue credit cards to board members or executives of the State bodies under the aegis of my Department.

In relation to the issue of credit cards by the State bodies themselves, that would be an operational matter for the State Bodies concerned.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

940. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when disadvantaged area scheme payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48622/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of the application concerned has recently been completed and payments under the Single Payment Scheme and Disadvantaged Areas Scheme will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

941. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the 2012 disadvantaged area scheme, the single farm payment and the agri-environment option scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48639/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person concerned is an applicant under the 2012 Single Payment and Disadvantaged Area Schemes.

In order to meet EU requirements, the application concerned was one of a number which was selected for inspection. As this process has not been completed, it has not, as yet, been possible to finalise the processing of this application. As soon as the inspection and related processes are completed, the application concerned will be progressed.

The person named was also approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1 September 2011 and has received full payment totalling

€1,333.32 in respect of 2011.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme, a comprehensive administrative check of all applications, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. This process is well advanced in respect of payment for the 2012 scheme year. Payment will issue at the earliest opportunity once all validations and checks have been successfully completed.

Beef Industry Issues

942. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if any enquiries have been made into the reason beef producers here receive a lower price for their product than their colleagues in the UK; if he can suggest any measures to alleviate the problem; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48718/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The price paid for products in the marketplace is a function of a number of market forces and the negotiation of commercial contracts is essentially a matter for the contracting parties. Returns to beef producers in individual EU markets reflect not only the local supply / demand balance but also overall trading conditions within the internal market and trade flows to third countries. Buoyant European cattle prices in 2011 and 2012 are attributable to a supply deficit throughout the EU and to strong global demand. In fact, Irish cattle prices have exceeded the EU average level for most of the year to date, with the Irish price for the benchmark grade only dipping below the EU producer price in August when countries such as Germany and Italy experienced supply shortfalls which had the effect of driving up prices substantially in those markets.

Trade with the UK is impacted by fluctuations in the euro/sterling exchange rate and the extent of Britain's import requirement which is forecast to increase in the short run consequent on a continuing decline in domestic beef production. With consumption expected to remain stable and a continuing reduction in the size of national cattle herd, British beef imports are predicted to grow from 381,000 tonnes in 2011 to 417,000 tonnes in 2013.

A number of factors have been identified to account for the differential between Irish and UK cattle prices. These include a British consumer preference for indigenous beef product. In any analysis of comparative prices, it must also be recognised that UK cattle prices are currently among the highest in the EU. Moreover, a price differential makes Irish beef products competitive in the UK market such that Ireland supplies the bulk of the UK's import demand, notwithstanding additional logistical and processing costs incurred in shipping to that market. When comparing Irish and UK cattle prices, it should be noted too that there is a significant exchange rate effect making the current UK price for a particular grade appear even higher compared to a year ago.

In the longer term, the industry aims to maximise returns for Irish beef through its repositioning and differentiation strategy that focuses on the key attributes of Irish beef: environmentally sustainable, grass-based production systems, full traceability, Quality-Assurance at all stages and superior eating quality.

In the meantime, my Department and its agencies will continue to support the sector through its efforts to open new markets for Irish beef and to ease the import conditions in markets that are already open. These efforts have yielded a number of positive results in countries such as South Africa, Tunisia, Russia, UAE, Singapore and Egypt over the past year or so.

In this context, you will also be aware that market access for beef was the focus of my visits

earlier this year to China and the USA and that my Department is proactively engaged with a range of third countries in an ongoing effort to secure and expand market access. My Department will prioritise international market access for both beef and live animals.

I can also assure you that my Department will continue to facilitate live exports which have a dual function in stimulating cattle price competition and serving a real market demand. In this context, both the Libyan and Lebanese markets have recently been opened for live cattle from Ireland. In the case of Libya, my Department is working closely with the relevant veterinary authorities to increase the age limit from 24 months to 30 months. The Lebanese market is open for fattening and slaughter cattle and for breeding cattle under 36 months of age. The Egyptian market is also open for fattening cattle under 20 months and to slaughter cattle under 30 months. The resumption of trade with these countries will depend on commercial factors and the availability of suitable transport options.

Public Sector Staff Issues

943. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49067/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Some 32 staff of my Department engaged in information technology and border/port inspection duties are employed on a roster basis. My Department has no plans to remove these employees from their roster systems.

Public Sector Staff Issues

944. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49080/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): One Senior Research Officer has been re-engaged on a contract for services basis which is due to expire on 1 March 2013.

An Assistant Secretary General and a Principal Officer have also been re-engaged on a contract basis until the end of June 2013.

Departmental Expenditure

945. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No 684 of 19 July 2012, if she will provide details relating to professional fees paid by her Department. [47257/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The information sought by the Deputy will be provided this week.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

946. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the names of each staff member within her Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case [47289/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has not rehired any staff since March 2011.

Missing Children

947. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will commit to continue and long-term funding for the 116 000 missing child hotline number; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47644/12]

948. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will issue a copy of the MOU by the project group in relation to the 116 000 missing children hotline number; the date on which she will issue same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47645/12]

949. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if he will outline the process by which the 116 000 missing children hotline will be introduced; if he will outline the advertising and awareness raising campaign that will be undertaken; if it will be introduced on a phased basis and the detail of same; if funding will be dependent on numbers of calls received; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47646/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 947 to 949, inclusive, together.

The Universal Service Directive requires Member States to “make every effort to ensure that citizens have access to a service operating a hotline to report cases of missing children. The hotline shall be available on the number 116 000.” The same Directive also requires Member States to “ensure that citizens are adequately informed of the existence and use of services provided under the 116 numbering range, in particular through initiatives specifically targeting persons travelling between Member States.”

The Hotline service will operate on two levels: the reporting of a missing child to the relevant authorities, the gardaí, and the provision of emotional support to parents of missing children.

Under EU telecoms rules agreed in 2009, the 116000 number is reserved in all EU member states for a missing children hotline. My Department established and is leading a cross-sectoral Project Team, including representatives of my own Department, the Department of Justice and Equality, ComReg and An Garda Síochána, to advance this matter. Following cross departmental consultation and an examination of the issues involved by the Project Team, ComReg, which has responsibility for the allocation of this number in Ireland, has now allocated the number to the ISPCC. The ISPCC has been successful in securing EU Daphne funding to support the establishment of the line.

The operation of the Hotline is now a matter for the ISPCC, who have made a successful application for funding to the European Commission. The ISPCC also submitted applications for funding to my Department to cover 1) set up costs in 2012 and 2) running costs for the Hotline for 2013. The application for 2012 has been approved and the application for running costs for 2013 and subsequent years will be considered in the context of the annual budget estimates process and in the context of the service needs.

Officials from my Department are liaising with the ISPCC in relation to the establishment of the 116000 hotline. This includes finalising Memoranda of Understanding between the ISPCC and key partners, namely my Department, the HSE and An Garda Síochána. Draft Memoranda are under consideration at present.

It is important to note that the 116000 number is not an emergency number. Emergency calls should always be directed to the 999/112 number in the first instance, where the relevant emergency responses, including the recently launched Garda Missing Children Amber Alert mechanism, may be activated. The establishment of the 116000 line will, however, be of valuable support and assistance to families of missing children and to missing children themselves.

In the interim the ISPCC has developed, with the Garda Síochána, an interim response that is currently heard if one rings the 116000 number. The number advises callers to report a missing child to An Garda Síochána and if it is a child calling for assistance to contact the ISPCC.

It is essential that the Hotline service is operated in accordance with all best practice standards. To fulfil this, the ISPCC has advised that a phased implementation will be necessary. It envisages that the number will become operational in December 2012 from 22:00-16:00 7 days a week and will be operating on a 24 hour basis by February 2013. This will be considered a 'pilot' phase. This will give the ISPCC the time to complete the necessary training, develop and implement formal relationships with statutory authorities, overcome technical troubleshooting and prepare a 116 000 service launch and awareness campaign.

It is intended that an official launch will take place on 25 May 2013, which is International Missing Children Day. The service launch bears particular importance as it is crucial that the public understand this is a support service rather than an emergency service. The service launch will comprise of a media and event launch, face to face outreaches by ISPCC service staff and promotional materials.

Children in Care

950. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will clarify when the findings of the investigation following abscondences from Gleann Alainn Special Care Unit in October 2011 will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47653/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The HSE has advised that this report is currently subject to detailed internal considerations with relevant staff to ensure learning is maximised and further action is taken as appropriate. The report will be published in early 2013.

The HSE also advised that there was an immediate management review and a series of changes including appointment of a new Unit Manager; reduction in capacity at the unit; a detailed programme of management intervention and support; and an external review of the incident was commissioned.

Child Care Services Provision

951. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views and opinions regarding the standards that child-minders should have in relation to formal qualifications; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that 6,500 child-minders have completed

the quality awareness programme training course since it was launched in 2004; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that this training course is a ten hour introductory course only; her views in relation to this matter; her plans in relation to the formal regulation of training and standards; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47764/12]

952. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs under the Childcare Act 1991, there are three exemption categories for carer's of pre-school children which are a relative of the child, anybody who is caring only for a child from one family in addition to their own children and anybody caring for three or fewer pre-school children of different families and she is aware that these exemptions cover the majority of paid child-minders, if she will outline to Dáil Éireann if she is satisfied with this situation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47765/12]

953. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs she will agree that children in a home-based care and education setting should receive the same protection and support as all children who may attend centred based care and education settings; her plans to regulate or to insist that child-minders have a minimum standard of qualification before they are allowed provide such a service. [47768/12]

954. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs has her attention has been drawn to the fact that there are 50,000 young children who are cared for by child-minders every day and most of their 19,000 child-minders are not regulated and are without supervision and support; if she will outline to Dáil Éireann her plans to regulate the child-minding profession; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47769/12]

955. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a large proportion of child-minders work outside the formal economy and, while working outside the formal economy, they are exempt from inspection by the State in relation to regulations; her views on this matter; and the plans she has to rectify it. [47770/12]

956. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views in relation to the regulating of the childcare profession and her views in relation to unacceptable practice that child-minders are exempt from inspection, child protection training and even Garda vetting; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47771/12]

957. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that there are 257 notified child-minders in Ireland compared to the estimated thousands who are not registered; if she has any plans to introduce a regulation and inspection framework for child-minders; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47772/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 951 to 957, inclusive, together.

My Department has begun work on Ireland's first early years strategy. I have received Government approval for the approach I am taking in developing to this strategy as an innovative and dynamic blueprint for the future development of Ireland's early years sector aimed at providing a coherent approach to seeking to improve the lives of children from birth to age six.

One of the priority issues of policy which I have identified for consideration in the preparation of the new strategy is the development of the child minding sector as a fully-integrated component of early childhood care and education, in particular for under-one age group. As part of this, issues relating to regulation and inspection of child minding will be considered.

At present pre-school services are regulated under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No.2) Regulations 2006, as provided for under Part VII of the Child Care Act 1991.

Services providing care for children who have not yet commenced primary school are required to notify their service to the pre-school inspectorate of the Health Service Executive (HSE) and are subject to inspection and report by the Inspectorate on a regular basis. Services covered by the regulations include full-time, part-time and sessional services as well as childminders taking care of more than three pre-school children from different families in the childminder's home.

The national guidelines for childminders, compiled by the National Childcare Coordinating Committee which oversees the development of an integrated childcare infrastructure throughout the country, provide guidance to childminders on good practice, and assist them to decide whether they are subject to the regulations, as well as providing other useful information on the role of the childminder in the provision of childcare services. In that context, city and county childcare committees encourage childminders to voluntarily notify themselves to their local committee and in 2011 there were over 1200 services notified in this way. Work to encourage voluntary notification and the active involvement of childminders in training and information activities will continue.

As is the case with all regulatory requirements, the child care regulations set the minimum standards which services are legally required to comply with. However, my Department is proactive in monitoring, promoting and developing the highest standards of care and education throughout the sector, including the regulatory environment, given the important role which these services play in this crucial phase of children's lives.

The Children First national guidance for the protection and welfare of children, which I published in 2011, provides clarity and guidance for individuals and organisations in identifying and responding appropriately to child abuse and neglect. It also sets out what organisations that care for or work with children should do to ensure they are safe whilst in the care of the organisation. The Government has committed, as a priority, to the introduction of legislation to underpin Children First.

The Deputy will be aware that I published the heads of the Children First Bill in April 2012. The purpose of the Bill is to ensure that organisations and professionals who work with children have a statutory responsibility to report reasonable concerns about the abuse or neglect of children in their care to the HSE child and family services.

I asked the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children to consider the heads of the Children First Bill and make recommendations. I received their comprehensive report in July and I thank the committee for its work on this matter. My Department is currently considering the broad range of submissions to, and recommendations of the committee, including those submissions pertaining to the issue of childminders, and I hope to be in a position to publish the Bill in the coming months.

Inter-Country Adoptions

958. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide an update on progress regarding the possibility of entering into a bilateral adoption agreement with Ethiopia; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47838/12]

966. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding the Ethiopian adoption issue and plans for the future of same. [48345/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 958 and 966 together.

Ethiopia is not a signatory of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. In these circumstances, future adoptions from Ethiopia would require a bilateral agreement between Ireland and Ethiopia. The negotiation of bilateral agreements on intercountry adoption with states who have not ratified the Hague Convention is governed by Section 73 of the Adoption Act 2010 which states that “the Authority, with the prior consent of the Minister, may enter into discussions with any non-contracting state concerning the possibility of the Government entering into a bilateral agreement with that State.”

The Adoption Authority delegation visit to Ethiopia in April of this year was an initial part of the Authority’s deliberations on the feasibility and suitability of entering into discussions with Ethiopia on a bilateral adoption agreement. The Authority is awaiting legal advice and will contact me once it has received this advice and completed its consideration of the matter. Once I have received the Authority’s assessment I can then fully consider the appropriate next steps in this regard.

Inter-Country Adoptions

959. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide an update on progress made regarding the possibility of entering into a bilateral adoption agreement with Russia; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47839/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Adoptions from Russia, effected under the transitional arrangements provided for in the Adoption Act 2010, are ongoing and are currently being examined, and recognised, by the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI). Under the provisions of the legislation, such adoptions may take place up to the end of October 2013.

As regards adoptions thereafter, Russia has not ratified the Hague Convention; therefore, future adoptions from Russia, beyond those provided for under the transitional arrangements, may only be possible under a bilateral agreement. The negotiation of bilateral agreements on intercountry adoption with states who have not ratified the Hague Convention is governed by Section 73 of the Adoption Act 2010. Any bilateral arrangements which might be entered into would be required by law to meet the minimum standards set out in the Hague Convention.

It is the role of the Adoption Authority to make an assessment of whether the intercountry adoption legislation and practices in a non-contracting state, in this case Russia, are in compliance with both Irish legislation and the principles of the Hague Convention. As part of this assessment the Adoption Authority has reviewed a draft bilateral agreement presented to it during previous discussions with its Russian counterparts and has provided me with an initial assessment in this regard. I have asked the Adoption Authority to have further exploratory talks with the Russian authorities focussing on areas of concern in order that the Authority may progress its assessment of the situation and provide a definitive recommendation to me on the feasibility of formally opening discussion with the Russian Federation under Section 73 of the Adoption Act 2010. The Adoption Authority, through the Irish Embassy in Moscow, have sought to meet the Russian authorities in this regard. The Russian authorities have indicated that they are not in a position to facilitate such a meeting until the first quarter of 2013. The Adoption Authority is following-up to secure an appropriate date.

Further information on intercountry adoption from Russia can be found on the Adoption Authority website (www.aai.gov.ie).

Children in Care

960. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No 224 of 22 February 2012, when the figures for 2011 will be available and the details of same. [47958/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the HSE that there were 2,248 admissions to care in 2011. Of these admissions 354 related to children who were aged under 2 years. Of all admissions to care in 2011, 62% were based on a voluntary agreement between the parent/guardian and the HSE. Data on the principal reason for admission of all children to care is collated under a number of categories - abuse, child problems and family problems. Over 85% of non-voluntary admissions to care in 2011 were due to abuse, neglect and serious family problems.

Youth Services

961. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason for withdrawing funding from a project (details supplied) in Dublin 11; her plans, if any, to ensure that the work of this valuable service is continued; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47988/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department supports the delivery of a range of youth work programmes and services for all young people, including those from disadvantaged communities, by the voluntary youth sector. In particular, the Youth Affairs Unit provides targeted supports to disadvantaged, marginalised and at risk young people through the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2 and Local Drugs Task Force Projects.

Funding of €56.806m has been provided to my Department to support the provision of youth services in 2012. Some 477 projects and youth services throughout the country receive support under the schemes. The annual funding allocations for youth projects are determined by my Department and the funding is administered, on behalf of my Department, by a number of grant administering agencies that includes the City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB) of the CDVEC.

The Active Parenting Project /Service operated by the Fingal Centre in Finglas is in receipt of funding under the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (Round 1). The 2012 allocation is €36,071.

My Department has been advised that the CDYSB, in anticipation of reductions in the funding allocations next year, has been holding a series of meetings with the projects within its area. CDYSB met with the Fingal Centre in recent weeks. While I understand that the CDYSB would be recommending funding for the Active Parenting Project/Service be discontinued from 2013. I wish to advise that no decisions have been made by my Department in relation to the 2013 funding allocations for youth services throughout the country nor in relation to the funding allocations to be provided for individual projects.

My Department is working on the funding allocation for youth services in 2013. Having regard to the substantial savings requirements identified in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure my Department is seeking to ensure that, in the determination process for the allocations, the front line youth services, particularly those for the most vulnerable young people are protected as far as possible from the impact of any necessary reductions in funding.

Children's Rights Referendum

962. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in the context of the forthcoming referendum on Children's Rights, if she will outline her commitment to providing sufficient resources to ensure the imprescriptible rights of the child including health and education and the individualised nature of children's needs are met for children with disabilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48071/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The purpose of the proposed Constitutional Amendment is to recognise children in their own right within the Constitution and to acknowledge that each child enjoys rights and deserves certain protections from the State by virtue of the fact that, as a child, they are vulnerable. The Referendum will not address all wider issues that impact on children.

This Referendum is the fundamental backdrop to the wider Programme for Change for Children being pursued by the Government. These reforms focus on intervention to ensure the safety and welfare of children and to ensure that child protection services can respond proportionately to all child protection concerns.

Central to the Programme for Change for Children is the plan to take child protection services out of the HSE and establish a new dedicated Child and Family Support Agency. This Agency will be fully operational in 2013 and will mean a move to a situation where child and family welfare will be the sole focus of a single dedicated agency, overseen by a single dedicated government Department.

The report of the Taskforce, which I set up to advise on how to best organise services for children in this country, was published in July of this year. This Taskforce report maps out an executive agenda for the development of services so that we can do the very best for parents, children and families. Ahead of establishment of the new Agency, an additional €21 million in funding has been made available to the HSE Child & Family Services in 2012. This reflects the priority attached by Government to the reform of child welfare and protection services.

Since February 2011, there has been an increase of 69 whole time equivalents (wte) and 86 individual child and family social workers and an increase in the proportion of children with an allocated social worker.

The question of resource allocation in the areas of health and education are matters for my colleagues the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education and Skills. During the summer Minister of State Kathleen Lynch published the Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services. This Review recommended a significant restructuring of the current disability services programme towards a model of person-centred individually chosen supports to enhance the quality of life and well-being of both children and adults with disabilities. This Government is committed to the protection of frontline services for pupils with special educational needs, in order to ensure that every child in the State, regardless of ability, can access education and to ensure that the individual requirements of pupils with special educational needs can continue to be met.

Overall, the matter of resources for services to children will be considered by the Government in the context of the overall budgetary arrangements for 2013. While it is not open to me, in that context, to pre-empt decisions to be made by Government, I would point out that the Government continues to invest very significantly in services for children across a range of areas. The Government will continue this approach, to the greatest possible extent, in dealing with the serious financial challenges facing the country overall.

Proposed Legislation

963. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding the drafting and publication of the Child and Family Support Agency Bill; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48078/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am firmly committed to the transformation of Ireland's child protection and welfare services, and to the establishment of a new Child and Family Support Agency. The new Agency and the wider transformation of children's services represents one of the largest, and most ambitious, areas of public sector of reform embarked upon by this Government.

The necessary legislation is being prepared by my Department as a priority. It is anticipated that the Bill will be published and enacted in the course of this session. It is my intention that the Child and Family Support Agency will assume statutory responsibility for services for children and families in January 2013.

Adoption Legislation

964. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will respond to a query (details supplied) regarding adoption; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48126/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): In tandem with the Children Referendum I have published the General Scheme of the Adoption (Amendment) Bill 2012, which the Government plans to bring before the Oireachtas on the passing of this Referendum. This Bill sets out in detail how it is proposed to address issues in relation to adoption which would arise in relation to the proposed amendment to the Constitution. It is proposed that the Adoption (Amendment) Bill will allow for the adoption of children of marriage.

Early Childhood Education

965. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to extend the early childhood care and education scheme in terms of the hours provided and for an additional year in view of the evidence of the clear benefits of the scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48133/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme was introduced in January 2010 and provides a free pre-school year to all eligible children in the year before commencing primary school. In line with the Programme for Government, my Department has made a significant commitment to maintaining the universal free pre-school year. About 65,000 children, that is approximately 95% of children in the year before school, are availing of the free pre-school provision at this

time.

In 2011, the ECCE programme cost approximately €163 million. Additional funding has been made available for 2012 when the cost of the programme is expected to rise to €175 million to cater for changing demographics and provide for the increased number of children in the relevant age cohort.

I am aware of the need to further develop the early childhood care and education sector. However, any development that involved further provision of pre-school would require considerable additional funding and given the financial constraints under which the Government is currently operating it is not possible to provide for any enhancements to the programme at this time. I am also very conscious that work is continuing on improvement of quality within the pre-school year. All of the available evidence indicates that the quality of the provision is key to good outcomes for children. I would therefore hope to invest further in quality before expanding the programme.

Future developments relating to early years care and education will, of course, be considered during preparation of the new National Early Years Strategy 2012.

Question No. 966 answered with Question No. 958.

Northern Ireland Issues

967. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement her Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation units; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48540/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I refer the Deputy to my response to his last question on this issue (PQ 46612/12). In this reply, I confirmed that while there is no dedicated North South Co-operation Unit in my Department, officials engage with their counter-parts in Northern Ireland on issues of mutual concern and importance and as part of their day-to-day responsibilities. As such, it is not possible to state categorically the frequency of North South engagements; the number of whole-time equivalents assigned to North South matters; the amount of time each grade spends on these matters; or the address the Deputy's question relating to vacancies.

Examples of some of the important work approached on a collaborative basis between my officials and their counter parts in Northern Ireland are:

- the establishment of the North South Child Protection Hub, (a dedicated on-line child protection resource);
- the development of an "Inter-Jurisdictional Protocol for the Transfer of Child Care cases between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland";
- a review of vetting and barring arrangements in both jurisdictions;
- the development of a joint communication strategy to promote awareness of child wel-

fare and protection;

- promoting internet safety in the area of child welfare and protection;
- promoting North-South Education and Training Standards in Youth Work; and
- promoting Youth Exchange Programmes (e.g. 'Causeway')

In addition, the Irish Youth Justice Service in my Department is involved in a North-South Process which is led by the Department of Justice and Equality under the auspices of the St. Andrews Agreement. The Youth Justice Project Advisory Group is one of six strands in this process. It aims to guide and support co-operation in the youth justice area on both sides of the border; to provide a forum for the active exchange of information, ideas and expertise between participating bodies on matters including restorative justice and tackling re-offending; and the examination and identification of the areas where joint working could take place. The North-South Youth Justice Project Advisory Group meets twice a year and reports to the North-South High Level Senior Officials Group.

Public Sector Staff Issues

968. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49069/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Certain grades of care staff are employed on a roster basis in the Children Detention School and due to the nature of the work involved, there are no plans to remove them from that system.

Public Sector Staff Retirements

969. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49082/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I understand that the Deputy is referring to public servants who retired during the period 1 January 2010 to the 29 February 2012. I can only answer this question in relation to my own Department and agencies that fall under its remit. In that respect, I understand that the National Educational Welfare Board has recently appointed one member of staff as interim Chief Executive Officer on a short term fixed contract who retired from the Department of Education & Skills during the period specified by the Deputy.

I can confirm that no other such persons have been rehired by my Department, the Ombudsman for Children's Office, the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Family Support Agency or the Children Detention Schools.

Services for People with Disabilities

970. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health if she will review the withdrawal of a blind allowance with a view to reinstating this payment in respect of a person (details sup-

plied) in County Cork. [47454/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Help Service Provision

971. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Health if the model of the home help services of Northern Ireland has been examined by his Department in view of the recent report composed by researchers from Trinity College Dublin and Queen's University Belfast; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48107/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Report entitled *Towards the Development of a Predictive Model of Long-Term Care Demand for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland* was launched on 25 October last.

The Report is a welcome contribution on how we might meet the changing requirements of older people across all of Ireland in future years. The various issues raised in the report, including Home Help services in various countries, are broadly familiar to the Department of Health. The Report is at present being given detailed consideration in the Department in the context of on-going development of policies and services for older people, as agreed under the *Programme for National Recovery 2011-2016*.

Disabled Drivers Grants

972. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Health the reason motorised transport grants are being held up due to delays with Department of Social Protection officials carrying out financial assessments in relation to the grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48621/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): With regard to the question raised by the Deputy for today and further to the Deputy's previous question of 20th September 2012, I have requested a report from the Health Service Executive on the matter and I will reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Vaccination Programme

973. **Deputy Anne Ferris** asked the Minister for Health the progress that has been made in putting a package of supports in place for those sufferers of unique narcolepsy disorder; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48822/12]

1162. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in presenting a paper on the supports to be made available to children who developed narcolepsy as a consequence of the State sponsored vaccination programme involving pandemrix as had been promised to parent representatives of those affected, the position regarding the paper and a date when he expects to bring it to Dail Eireann. [48441/12]

1163. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health when he will bring a memorandum outlining the package of supports being put in place for those who have acquired

narcolepsy and associated conditions due to inoculation with pandemrix; when it will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48442/12]

1169. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health when he will put in place a package of supports to meet the needs of children, adolescents and young adults affected by Narcolepsy after vaccination with Pandemrix; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48590/12]

1180. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health when he plans to present the paper outlining the package of supports being put in place for those affected by Narcolepsy associated with the vaccine Pandemrix; the reason for the delay in the presentation of the paper prior to the Dáil summer recess, again in September 2012 and then once again this October; when will he re-establish communication with SOUND; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48655/12]

Minister for Health(Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 973, 1162, 1163, 1169 and 1180 together.

My Department is working closely with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Education and Skills to address the needs of those affected by narcolepsy following pandemic vaccination.

The HSE provides a range of services and supports to those affected including access to rapid diagnosis, clear treatment pathways, temporary medical cards and reimbursement of expenses incurred. Multidisciplinary assessments which allow for the appropriate individualised health and educational supports to be put in place have commenced. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) is also engaging with the HSE and with the individual schools and parents of children concerned to identify and provide educational supports for the children and adolescents affected.

My Department is considering all other possible supports which may need to be put in place for those affected. Any such supports require my approval and the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. My officials are currently engaged in discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on this issue. I would like to assure the Deputy that this matter continues to be a priority for my Department.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

974. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Health if he will respond to the concerns expressed regarding the fair deal scheme in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47211/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): When the Nursing Homes Support Scheme commenced in October 2009, a commitment was made that it would be reviewed after three years. The reason for allowing this period to elapse is to ensure that trends and statistics will be available in order to inform the work.

A public consultation process to inform the review concluded in mid-July. The issues raised by the Deputy in the details supplied portion of the question were submitted during the course of the consultation process. The Department will be publishing a summary report of the submissions received. Thereafter, the Department will be seeking tenders through the public procurement process for the carrying out of the review.

The Terms of Reference for the review of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme are:

Taking account of Government policy, demographic trends and the fiscal situation -

As the Scheme is statutory based, the implementation of any recommendations arising from the review may require significant amendments to the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act, 2009.

A considerable amount of preparatory work for the review has already been completed. It will progress within the constraints of available staff and other priorities. At this stage I envisage that the review will be completed in 2013.

Hospital Services

975. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a date for an urgent operation for a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47220/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Cancer Research

976. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Health the amounts of funding provided through the Health Research Board for research on brain tumour incidence, causes and treatment in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively; his plans for further investment into brain tumour research; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47246/12]

977. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Health the amounts of funding provided through the Health Research Board for research on cancer incidence, causes and treatment in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47247/12]

978. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Health the amounts of funding provided through the All Ireland Cooperative Oncology Research Group for research on brain tumour incidence, causes and treatment in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively; his plans for further investment into brain tumour research; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47248/12]

979. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Health the amounts of funding provided through the All Ireland Cooperative Oncology Research Group for research on cancer incidence, causes and treatment in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47249/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 976 to 979, inclusive, together.

Health research is funded from a number of Government Departments and agencies including the Department of Health. The Health Research Board (HRB) is a statutory body under the aegis of the Department of Health and is the lead agency in Ireland supporting and funding health research. It provides funding for and conducts research linked to national health priorities. The aim of this research is to improve people's health, build health research capacity and make a significant contribution to Ireland's knowledge economy. All research projects submit-

ted to the HRB are subjected to a rigorous international peer review process.

Funding provided through the HRB for research on cancer incidence, causes and treatment and research on brain tumour incidence, causes and treatment for the years 2009, 2010 and 2011 is set out in the following table (figures provided by the HRB). These figures include funding provided by the HRB to the All Ireland Cooperative Oncology Research Group (ICORG).

-	2009	2010	2011
Cancer Research	-	-	-
-	(000)	(000)	(000)
HRB Research funding on cancer incidence, causes and treatment (including ICORG funding)	€9,432	€7,709	€9,233
ICORG funding on cancer incidence , causes and treatment	€4,204	€3,432	€4,850
Total	€9,432	€7,709	€9,233
Brain Research			
HRB Research funding on brain tumour incidence, causes and treatment (including ICORG funding)	-	€93	€185
ICORG funding on brain tumour incidence, causes and treatment	-	€5	-
Total		€93	€185

According to the HRB the level of research activity into the incidence, causes and treatment of brain tumours is very low in Ireland relative to other research areas and cancer types (e.g. breast cancer). The relatively small proportion of studies in brain cancer is a consequence of various factors, such as a small patient population, the number of available specialist clinicians who are active in clinical research, and a generally low number of experimental treatments coming through the pipeline for brain cancer both in a local and global context. The figures concerning research on brain tumours relates to those studies where the study is wholly or predominantly focusing on brain tumours. It is entirely possible that some of the projects highlighted in the broader 'cancer' category may involve, in some way, a portion of research activity that relates to brain tumours.

In May 2013, during the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Ireland will co-host, with the European Commission (DG Research and Innovation), a conference on the future of brain research in Europe.

Hospital Waiting Lists

980. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health when an appointment for a M.R.I. scan will be granted in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47250/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Staff

981. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health when a Consultant Rheumatolo-

gist will be appointed to Mayo General Hospital; if the required support services will be provided at Mayo General Hospital to coincide with the appointment; if his attention been drawn to the fact that County Mayo is currently devoid of a consultant service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47251/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Care Services

982. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health if he will welcome any initiative by the partnership sector under the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government; if he will consider the setting up of local based home care courses for dependents who have to care for patients discharged from acute hospitals around the country [47263/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Compensation Awards

983. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason he has reneged on the promise he made to Positive Action while in opposition to look at the classification of women infected with Hepatitis C to allow them to claim compensation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47286/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I have been in contact with Positive Action in relation to this matter and I am satisfied that the present legislation is fair and reasonable and I have no plans to amend it. However, I will, of course, review any new information which becomes available in relation to this matter.

Section 4 of the Hepatitis C Compensation Tribunal Act (No.34 of 1997), as amended, sets out the categories of persons who can make a claim before the Compensation Tribunal. This Act was amended in 2006 by the Hepatitis C Compensation Tribunal (Amendment) Act, 2006 (No. 22 of 2006) to provide a clear definition for “diagnosed positive for Hepatitis C”.

While I am sympathetic to the small number of women in question who have tested negative for Hepatitis C, it is estimated that up to 16,000 women in Ireland were exposed to potentially infectious batches of Anti-D. Approximately 1,000 of these women were infected with Hepatitis C and were therefore eligible to apply to the Tribunal for compensation. However, extending eligibility to those who have tested negative for Hepatitis C would have significant implications for the compensation scheme overall.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

984. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47296/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department has rehired four retired members of staff since July 2012 in line with a Government Decision on the arrangements for

dealing with our forthcoming EU Presidency requirements. These staff members were rehired on a temporary basis to allow us to fulfil our responsibilities in the context of Ireland's forthcoming Presidency of the EU. These are staff members with experience and expertise that is of particular value to the running of our Presidency and their re-employment is very specifically related to that Presidency. It will accordingly terminate as soon as our Presidency tasks have been discharged.

For ease of reference I have attached the information requested by the Deputy in tabular format.

Grade	Length of Contract	Salary Payscale
1 Principal Officer (50% of full time)	13 months	€40,025
1 Assistant Principal (50% of full time)	13 months	€30,983
1 Assistant Principal (50% of full time)	13 months	€30,983
1 Assistant Principal (70% of full time)	10 months	€43,376

The pensions of these staff are subject to pension abatement rules.

Mental Health Services Provision

985. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Health the process involved in placing a person (details supplied) in Dublin 14 in residential care or sheltered accommodation at the request of their parents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47345/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter the question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Patient Transport Provision

986. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the waiting list for taxi drivers trying to get on the Health Service Executive list for HSE transportation; the time it takes to process an application in each of the HSE areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47352/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Patient Transport Provision

987. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the amount the Health Service Executive will spend on taxi services for patients in County Donegal for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47349/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

988. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the way that he envisages the budget of an organisation (details supplied) in Dublin 13 after Budget 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47350/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Pending completion of the national estimates, budgetary and service planning process for 2013 it is not possible to predict the service levels to be provided next year.

Patient Transport Provision

989. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will fund a bus service for patients in County Donegal who require treatment in Dublin hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47351/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Drug Treatment Programmes Availability

990. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to ensure that Coolmine therapeutic community will be able to stay open and continue to help young mothers with addiction issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47373/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): In line with the National Drugs Strategy, the Government is committed to continuing support for initiatives to tackle the drug problem, including programmes to help young parents overcome addiction. Coolmine Therapeutic Community (CTC) receives funding from my Department and the HSE to provide a range of services, including a specific residential programme targeting women, many of whom are mothers.

CTC has recently submitted an application to my Department under the National Lottery Fund Programme for additional funding for two full time creche workers for the women's residential centre. This is currently under consideration.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

991. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the cost to the Exchequer of reducing accident and emergency arrival charges by €10 [47383/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Acute Hospitals collected €12.8m for Emergency Department Charges in 2011. A reduction in the €100 charge by €10 would equate to €1.28m.

General Practitioner Services

992. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if he has explored the option of standardising general practitioner charges across the State, for example, capping the charge at €40; and if such standardisation would have a cost to the Exchequer. [47384/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Consultation fees charged by General Practitioners (GPs) to private patients, and to General Medical Services (GMS) patients outside the terms of the GMS contract, are a matter of private contract between the clinicians and the patients. While the Minister for Health has no role in relation to such fees, it is expected that clinicians would have regard to the overall economic situation in setting their fees.

The Medical Council's Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners states that the fees charged should be appropriate to the service provided and that patients should be informed of the likely costs before the consultation and treatment.

The Programme for Government provides for significant strengthening of primary care services to deliver universal primary care with the removal of cost as a barrier to access for patients. This commitment will be achieved on a phased basis within the term of this Government.

Legislation to allow the Minister for Health to make regulations to extend access to General Practitioner (GP) services without fees to persons with prescribed illnesses is currently being drafted by the Attorney General's office and will be published shortly. Implementation dates and application details will be announced in due course.

Departmental Reports

993. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when he will publish the mortality report on acute hospitals; the reason the publication of this report has been delayed over the last 14 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47375/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Chief Medical Officer of my Department is finalising a report examining the potential of hospital discharge data in measuring the quality of health care. This includes the measure of recorded 30 day in-hospital mortality rates following heart attack. It is expected that the report will be finalised and published in the near future.

Health Services Provision

994. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a breakdown in each PCCC area of the number of children in each age category who are awaiting a child developmental check; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47376/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Procedures

995. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the options available to patients who previously would have been able to access treatment under the national treatment purchase fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47377/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In July 2011, I announced changes to the remit of the NTPF - namely that it would move from working to largely outsource treatments for those waiting longest, to working with hospitals in a performance improvement capacity to improve access to scheduled care. The NTPF has been aligned with the Special Delivery Unit

(SDU) and is now targeting waiting lists strategically and incentivising hospitals to manage their waiting times proactively. The NTPF capability is a core part of the SDU's performance improvement role in holding public hospitals to account.

The target for 2012, as set in the Health Service Executive (HSE) Service Plan 2012, is that no adult shall be waiting more than 9 months for an elective procedure. At the start of 2012 there were a total of 53,513 people who had to be treated by the 30 September 2012 to ensure that nobody was waiting more than 9 months for surgery. As of the 30 September 2012, 51,637 (96%) had been treated.

Should any 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 and hospital involved.

Hospital Waiting Lists

996. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there is currently a four year waiting list to see a consultant with regard to possible tonsillectomy at Waterford Hospital and the action he will take in regarding same. [47393/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Departmental Funding

997. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that the budget of Prosper Fingal is protected in next years overall departmental budget. [47394/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Pending completion of the national estimates, budgetary and service planning process for 2013 it is not possible to predict the service levels to be provided next year.

Medical Card Reviews

998. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if an examination of medical card holders is being carried out to ensure that it takes account of medical card holders who have emigrated; if he will explain the process if any, and the savings that will be made from the cancellation of cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47336/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Persons that are issued a medical card have a legal obligation under the Health Act 1970 to inform the HSE when they may no longer be entitled to hold a medical card. One requirement for the medical card is that the person is ordinarily resident in the State. Where a medical card is invalidated by the holder's circumstances, but the card holder has not informed the HSE, the State continues to make unnecessary capitation payments to General Practitioners under the General Medical Services' Scheme.

As part of its control strategy, the HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) identified in the region of 120,000 card holders where there had been no activity recently. PCRS is carrying out a review to look at a subset of cards that have been inactive for a period of 24

months or longer. It has asked the cardholder to confirm that he or she continues to be ordinarily resident in Ireland. The results are awaited

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

999. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of accident and emergency admissions that are drink related or due to the abuse of alcohol and the estimated cost of this to the health system. [47405/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Appointments Administration

1000. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of outpatients not turning up for scheduled outpatient appointments and not giving any notice; the estimated cost of this to the health service; if penalties financial or otherwise for a person not cancelling an outpatient appointment are being considered by the Government. [47406/12]

1004. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health in view of the large number of patients who miss appointments in our acute hospital services, if he will consider introducing an e-mail and text messaging service in hospital outpatient departments; if he will provide any costings in relation to any proposals he is considering regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47431/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1000 and 1004 together.

Table 1 sets out a yearly sum of patients who missed scheduled appointments (did not attend) from 2008 to 2010, along with those who attended and total number of appointments booked (supplied by the HSE Business Intelligence Unit). The DNA rate is calculated by taking the number of missed appointments (DNAs) as a percentage of the total number of attendances and missed appointments combined. While hospitals returned activity, including DNA data across 2011, this data was not compiled / processed by BIU due to the roll out of the Outpatient Data Quality Programme.

Table 1. Outpatients - Attendances and DNAs 2008, 2009, 2010

Year	No of New Attendances	No of Return Attendances	No of Appointments Missed (DNA)	No of Return Appointments Missed (DNA)	All Appointments Booked	DNA as a % of all appointments booked
2008	860,910	2,428,007	142,404	414,295	3,845,616	14.5
2009	930,014	2,489,691	161,862	428,702	4,010,269	14.7
2010	999,978	2,583,312	168,067	429,051	4,180,408	14.3

RAW DATA SOURCE: HSE BIU

While acute hospitals currently have in place a variety of DNA (did not attend) policies, a standardised approach is now being developed as part of a national Outpatient Performance Im-

provement Programme. This Programme, developed by the Special Delivery Unit (SDU) will be implemented nationally over the period 2012 to 2015 to improve the provision of outpatient services. The Programme will address the management of DNAs as well as a range of other issues.

If a patient finds they cannot attend the appointment they have been given I would appeal to all such patients to inform the clinic concerned as soon as they know they cannot attend.

Community Care Provision

1001. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health in view of the fact that a psychiatric unit (details supplied) in County Kerry is proposed for closure by the Health Service Executive, if he will provide an assurance that the existing residents will be able to continue to live in their community with the full support that they are entitled to from the HSE; the assurances that can be given for service users of the future who would be likely to require some form of residential assistance in the years ahead; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47425/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter the question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Cancer Screening Programme

1002. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that enough funding is in place in 2013 and the years ahead to keep bowel cancer screening operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47427/12]

1003. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if bowel cancer screening will be available to all persons aged between 55 and 74; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47428/12]

1150. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when it is intended to commence the bowel screening programme; the hospitals approved to provide colonoscopies on foot of the initial screening; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48381/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1002, 1003 and 1150 together.

Plans for the implementation of a national colorectal screening programme are at an advanced stage within the HSE-National Cancer Screening Service (NCSS) and the programme will be introduced on a phased basis shortly. Live testing of the programme is now underway to ensure that all systems and processes operate effectively.

When fully implemented the programme will offer free screening to men and women aged 55-74 every two years. As 50% of cancers within this age group are found in people aged 60-69 the programme will begin with this latter age cohort (a population of approximately 500,000). It is anticipated that the first round will take up to three years to complete. Over time the phasing of the programme will allow development of colonoscopy capacity to cater for the full 55-74 year age population.

Fifteen candidate colonoscopy units have been identified around the country to support the screening programme. Each candidate unit has responsibility to take a number of actions to

become a screening colonoscopy unit which include achieving or be well on the pathway to achieving NHS JAG accreditation, demonstrating capability of meeting the needs of the screening programme in accordance with its Quality Assurance Standards and maintaining service requirements for symptomatic patients within national targets.

The candidate colonoscopy units are:

Cavan General Hospital;

Connolly Hospital, Dublin;

Kerry General Hospital, Tralee;

Letterkenny General Hospital;

Louth County Hospital, Dundalk;

Mayo General Hospital, Castlebar;

Mercy University Hospital, Cork;

Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore;

Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Ennis;

Sligo General Hospital;

South Tipperary General Hospital, Clonmel;

St James's Hospital, Dublin;

St Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin;

The Adelaide and Meath Hospital Dublin incorporating the National Children's Hospital, Tallaght;

Wexford General Hospital.

The process of approving the colonoscopy units is underway, and a key objective is to ensure that the screening programme does not interfere with the symptomatic colonoscopy services in these hospitals. The NCSS is confident that there will be adequate capacity to provide this important part of the programme.

I regard the colorectal screening programme as a national priority. I am pleased that it will shortly commence, and I am committed to supporting it as it develops.

Question No. 1004 answered with Question No. 1000.

Medical Card Applications

1005. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an application for a medical card renewal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork [47452/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Departmental Bodies Reports

1006. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline the membership for the Implementation Group on Generic Substitution; if he will also outline the organisations involved within this working group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47446/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012 was published on the 13th of July 2012. The Bill completed its passage through the Seanad on Wednesday, the 19th of September, and is currently continuing its passage through the Dáil.

An Implementation Group on Generic Substitution and Reference Pricing has been established and it held its inaugural meeting on the 9th of August 2012. The Group is to meet with stakeholders in the near future.

The Group consists of officials from my Department as well as representatives from the Health Service Executive and the Irish Medicines Board.

Medical Card Applications

1007. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an application for a medical card renewal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork [47453/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Provision

1008. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding respite care in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork [47455/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Appeals

1009. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health if he will arrange to have an appeal for a medical card heard in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork [47456/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Card Applications

1010. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card renewal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork [47458/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service

matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Ambulance Service Provision

1011. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Arklow ambulance and hospital services that carry wheelchairs to St. Vincent's and Loughlinstown Hospital have stopped running and the action he will take regarding same [47392/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Services Provision

1012. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) in County Cork is finding it difficult to have their consultant complete an E112 form for them to have treatment in Poland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47466/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Card Eligibility

1013. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider the allocation of a discretionary medical card to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47388/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Provision

1014. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health if transport will be provided to meet the needs of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47390/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications

1015. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 232 of 10 October 2012, the reason for the delay in the approval of ankle and foot orthotics in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; if he will ensure that this application is processed promptly; and when the child is likely to get approval in order that their splints may be ordered [47543/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Departmental Funding

1016. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will not cut the funding in respect of an organisation (details supplied) [47544/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Pending completion of the national estimates, budgetary and service planning process for 2013 it is not possible to predict the service levels to be provided next year.

Medicinal Products Supply

1017. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that the recommendation of the Joint Department of Health/Health Service Executive Working Group proposed Model for reference Pricing and Generic Substitution report is followed so that all anti epileptic drugs be excluded from generic substitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47598/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill, the Irish Medicines Board has statutory responsibility for establishing and publishing a list of interchangeable medicinal products in respect of which it is satisfied that all the medicinal products which fall into a group of interchangeable medicinal products are, for prescription purposes, interchangeable with each other. It is important to point out that generic medicines must meet exactly the same standards of quality and safety and have the same effect as the originator medicine. All of the generic medicines on the Irish market are required to be properly licensed and meet the requirements of the Irish Medicines Board. To further enhance the patient safety aspect of generic substitution, Section 13 of the Bill gives a prescriber the option of indicating on a prescription that a branded interchangeable medicinal product should, for clinical reasons, not be substituted.

The Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012 was published on the 13th of July 2012. The Bill completed its passage through the Seanad on Wednesday, the 19th of September, and is currently continuing its passage through the Dáil. An Implementation Group on Generic Substitution and Reference Pricing has been established and it held its inaugural meeting on the 9th of August 2012. The Group is to meet with stakeholders, including the Irish Epilepsy Association, in the near future.

Health Services Provision

1018. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health if he will arrange for urgent surgical intervention in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47599/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications

1019. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he will respond to a query regarding the recycling of crutches; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47601/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Applications

1020. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health if he will approve a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47607/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Insurance Claims

1021. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the amount owed in total by health insurers in hospitals here since 2009; and his views on the global figure and the amount that each hospital is owed on an individual basis; the steps he is taking to recoup these fees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47624/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The amount of money outstanding in private insurance income at the 31st July 2012 is €216m, of which €125m is due to statutory hospitals and €91m to voluntary hospitals.

It is acknowledged that the public hospital system has unacceptably long delays in relation to income collection and a number of measures are being progressed in order to address this. The HSE is continuing a drive to reduce the time taken to submit claims to private health insurance companies. A key element in this drive includes the implementation of an electronic claims management system in its hospitals which has commenced with six hospitals already live. This system will address the deficiencies of the paper based process and will also ensure that standardised work practices are implemented across hospitals. In the meantime, the Department has agreed, in principle, a system of improved cash-flow and accelerated payment with private health insurers. This will provide a once-off cash flow benefit in 2012 in the order of €125m.

Hospital Services

1022. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a list of hospitals operated or funded by the Health Service Executive who have service level agreements in place with third party commercial entities to undertake the collection of cord blood; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47625/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to her.

Home Help Service Provision

1023. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of home help hours withdrawn from the system for elderly persons since the beginning of this year. [47628/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Services Expenditure

1024. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the amount he expects to spend on medicines in 2012; if the Health Service Executive has sufficient budgetary resources to meet this cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47680/12]

1025. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health in view of the recent agreement with the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association, if he expects the State's total medicines bill for 2013, to be lower than that for 2012; the extent to which it will be lower if this is the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47681/12]

1026. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the amount he expects to be spent on newly authorised medicines in 2012; if he will name these medicines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47682/12]

1027. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the amount that the State's spending on newly authorised medicines is estimated to be for each of the next three years of the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association Agreement; the person charged with compiling this estimate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47683/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1024 to 1027, inclusive, together.

The HSE estimates that expenditure in 2012 on drugs and non-drug items (dressings, etc.) under the GMS and community drug schemes, including mark ups and dispensing fees will be approximately €1.7 billion. In addition, about €300m will be spent on drugs and medicines used in public hospitals. The HSE estimates that the cost of new drugs in 2012 will be approximately €15 million. Examples include the cancer drug, ipilimumab, and the hepatitis C drugs, boceprevir and teleprevir. The cost of new drugs between 2013 and 2015 is estimated to be approximately €70 million per annum. It is estimated that the recent agreement with the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA) will generate gross savings of up to €116m in 2013. However, the net savings will be affected by the cost of new drugs and by any significant increase in the volume of drugs consumed under the community drugs schemes.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

1028. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the mechanism by which reference pricing for medicines will be delivered; the person who set the reference price; the model that will be used; the date on which it will take effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47684/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health (Pric-

ing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012 provides for the introduction of a system of generic substitution and reference pricing. Generic substitution allows pharmacists to substitute a cheaper generic equivalent, at the patient's request, when a more expensive product has been prescribed. Reference pricing involves setting a common reimbursement amount for selected groups of medicines, which will be done by the HSE. Only the reference price is reimbursed by the State. Eligible patients can avoid out-of-pocket payments by opting for a generic medicine at or below the reference price.

Reference pricing coupled with generic substitution provides patients with an incentive to opt for the cheapest available product, but does not impose any unavoidable additional costs on patients. As more medicines come off patent, the introduction of generic substitution and reference pricing will ensure that both taxpayers and patients will benefit from increased competition in the pharmaceutical market.

Savings will be achieved by limiting reimbursement to the reference price, allowing patients to opt for less expensive versions of the prescribed medicine, and promoting price competition between the manufacturers of interchangeable medicines.

Hospital Services

1029. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the steps he proposes to take to address concerns (details supplied) in respect of Kerry General Hospital where as a result of cuts up to 500 surgical operations were cancelled over the summer period and a further 300 cancellations are planned between now and the end of the year; if he will reassure the County Kerry public that this hospital will not be downgraded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47669/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Over the last two to three years, despite a reduction in budget, the HSE have made considerable gains in relation to service provision at Kerry General Hospital. The hospital will retain the level of services required to provide services in its 24 hour Emergency Department (ED), into the future. The newly opened ED and the two recently appointed ED consultants are testament to this achievement along with the upskilling and development of nursing posts to the role of advanced nurse practitioner. The new ED provides the environment to deliver a range of services in an appropriate environment for both those attending as well as the staff who provide the service.

Allied to that, there has been an expansion in consultant physician numbers in the hospital in conjunction with the impending opening of the new Acute Medical Assessment Unit and the associated relocation of cardiology services to new facilities within the hospital. Tralee Community Nursing Unit was recently opened and this enabled the transfer of long stay care services from the acute hospital to more appropriate facilities, a move greatly welcomed by the community. There has also been an expansion in consultant surgeon numbers. These are just some of the positive developments that have taken place and are not the mark of a hospital with a doubt as to its future.

Surgical services in Kerry General Hospital are currently delivering well in excess of the funded level of provision. Hospital management, in conjunction with the consultant surgeons, put measures in place to control the position or it would otherwise have placed the hospital in further financial difficulty. Prudent management is required to ensure appropriate measures are in place to provide service to the funded level and not beyond. In this regard it is also important to be clear that at no stage has there been a reduction imposed or considered in relation to emergency surgery in the hospital.

All clinical targets such as in-patient and day procedure activity have to be adhered to and where there are areas of activity over the service plan targets control measures are put in place to bring activity into line with the hospital service plan. For example in Kerry General Hospital sixty theatre lists were removed over the summer period to control activity levels in line with resource and this will be extended as necessary. This has culminated in a necessary planned reduction of theatre usage over the coming months.

It is acknowledged that there are significant challenges in delivering services in the current economic environment. As with all public hospitals, there is an increasing demand for services at Kerry General Hospital. Despite the high level of flexibility shown by the staff to maintain and improve the level and quality of service, the task is a constant and significant challenge. The management team at Kerry General Hospital are aware of these issues and are constantly working to resolve them.

The delivery of safe services has remained the priority across the Kerry Area in 2012 and the cooperation and flexibility of staff across the services, in line with the requirements of the Public Service Agreement, has yielded significant success.

The Regional Service Plan 2012 set out an ambitious programme of reorganisation of services given the position that there would be a reduction in staffing and available funding. The evidence as outlined for the Kerry Area shows that significant progress has been made in the majority of the targets as set out in the plan. The hospital in particular is working with the requirements of the clinical programmes in acute medicine, surgery and emergency medicine, to be as efficient as possible in the face of the demand for the services, and will continue to do so to the year end.

With regard to consultant positions in the hospital, vacancies are being processed through the Public Appointments Service in order to replace staff who have retired. Replacement positions in the areas of radiology, anaesthetics, and orthopaedic surgery are currently being processed in this manner. Two replacement positions in paediatrics have recently been filled.

Finally, there should be no concern with regard to the future of Kerry General Hospital as a level three hospital, and the above outline of developments show that the hospital remains of significant importance in the network of acute services in the South area.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1030. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will issue a date for a hip operation in Tullamore Hospital, County Offaly, in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath [47670/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Patient Transport Provision

1031. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding hospital transport in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47695/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Drugs

1032. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card holder paying the difference in cost between a generic drug and a branded drug and for pharmacies to accept the payment for the difference in cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47732/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012 provides for the introduction of a system of generic substitution and reference pricing. Generic substitution allows pharmacists to substitute a cheaper generic equivalent, at the patient's request, when a more expensive product has been prescribed. Reference pricing involves setting a common reimbursement amount for selected groups of medicines, which will be done by the HSE. Only the reference price is reimbursed by the State. Eligible patients can avoid out-of-pocket payments by opting for a generic medicine at or below the reference price.

Reference pricing coupled with generic substitution provides patients with an incentive to opt for the cheapest available product, but does not impose any unavoidable additional costs on patients.

Medical Card Appeals

1033. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the decision to refuse a medical card in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47756/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Cross-Border Co-operation

1034. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline the areas in which hospitals north and south will cooperate with each other; the potential services which will be operated on a cross border basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47759/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The North-South Feasibility Study, finalised in 2009, examined the potential for joint co-operation in health across an extensive range of health and social care services. It set out 10 priority recommendations and many of these are already being taken forward. Areas of ongoing collaboration include - child protection, cancer research, health promotion, suicide prevention, radiotherapy services, paediatric congenital cardiac surgery and a range of initiatives under the Interreg IVA funding initiative. The Study was published on the websites of the Irish Department of Health and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland last December.

At a departmental level co-operation between the two jurisdictions is active and ongoing. "Transforming Your Care: a Review of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland." also recommends co-operation on a number of key issues. My officials are liaising with their counterparts in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland on how to progress these issues.

A good example of North South cooperation is the development of new radiotherapy facili-

ties at Altnagelvin Hospital, where it is expected that services will commence in 2016. The Unit will provide more locally accessible and timely services and improve patient travelling times for patients in the North Western area, particularly patients in the Donegal area.

The Minister has committed once-off capital funding up to a ceiling of €19 million for the project and the HSE will fund the provision of radiotherapy services for patients from the Republic of Ireland. These patients will continue to have their diagnosis, surgery and other treatment planning in either Letterkenny General or Galway University Hospital, or one of the eight designated cancer centres. Chemotherapy will also be provided in either Letterkenny or Sligo General Hospital. Complex cancers, e.g. pancreatic cancer, will be managed at the designated cancer centres.

With regards to paediatric congenital cardiac surgery in particular there have been two meetings between the Department of Health and the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety and contacts are continuing with a view to determining as soon as possible how best an all-island service might be established and how soon this could be realised if it is determined, through consultation, to be the optimum solution. Another meeting is to take place on 9th November and in the meantime a project team comprising the hospital, HSE and Department of Health in Dublin is working on the issue to establish precisely the requirement to put in place this all-island service.

I am committed to working together with my Northern colleagues on issues of common concern and benefit. This is of particular relevance in the current time when both jurisdictions are implementing change and pushing forward health reform.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1035. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a hospital appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47799/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Drugs Payment Scheme Administration

1036. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will support the new drug for Cystic Fibrosis patients (details supplied) [47802/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE recently received an application for Kalydeco's inclusion under the Community Drugs Scheme. In accordance with normal procedures, the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics must conduct a Health Technology Assessment (HTA) on this product which will consider if the drug is cost effective at the price offered to the HSE. No reimbursement decision will be made until the HTA has been completed.

Health Services Expenditure

1037. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health under the bilateral agreement with the UK, the amount charged by the Health Service Executive for the treatment of patients who would be covered by the UK health system; the way this charge is calculated; what this

charge is used for; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47781/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Ireland operates a bilateral health care reimbursement agreement with the United Kingdom, in respect of health services provided under EU Regulations, covering such persons as temporary visitors between the two countries, pensioners of one country and their dependants residing in the other country, and the dependant families of persons employed in the other country. Under the terms of the agreement net liability between the two countries is calculated on a lump sum basis rather than an individual basis. The amount payable is the net difference between the costs to the Irish health services of providing care to those with only UK entitlements and the cost to the UK health services of providing services to those with only Irish entitlements. The payment made in any one year is based on an estimate of the number of persons falling within categories eligible for reimbursement and for whom each country is liable and an estimate of the average cost of providing health care treatment. The amount payable is agreed following compilation of the necessary data and discussions between the two administrations. Payments are made in advance and are subject to final settlement once all necessary statistical and financial information is complete. Total payments in any one year can relate to both final settlements in respect of previous years' liabilities and advance payments in respect of the current year.

By far the largest part of the net payment received from the UK authorities on an annual basis relates to the provision of health care to UK pensioners and their dependants residing in Ireland. The estimated number of pensioners for whom each country is liable was based on a survey by both administrations undertaken every three years, the most recent of which was completed in 2008. Recently both administrations agreed in principle to work towards a form of pensioner registration which will form the basis for calculating pensioner reimbursement costs in the future and agreed interim arrangements, based on previous survey results trends, for determining pensioner liability pending the implementation of same.

The amounts are received by the Health Service Executive as Appropriations-in-Aid and are offset against the gross funding requirements of the Executive at national level thus reducing the net liability to the Exchequer. A net amount of €270 million was received under the bilateral agreement in 2011.

Medicinal Products Licensing

1038. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on work by his Department to examine the way cannabis based medicinal products such as Sativex may be legally prescribed by medical practitioners for use by patients for the treatment of Multiple Sclerosis here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47811/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): My Department has been informed by the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) that it is in receipt of a market authorisation request from a manufacturer under the EU Mutual Recognition Procedure for a medicinal product containing Cannabis extract. This product is indicated for the relief of symptoms of spasticity for people with multiple sclerosis. Clinical trials in Ireland relating to this product will not be required.

Department officials are currently examining how best to legally describe authorised cannabis-based medicinal products so that they may be prescribed to patients in Ireland while maintaining existing controls on cannabis and cannabis substances similar to those that apply to other controlled drugs that can be misused. It is hoped to bring forward legislative proposals in early 2013.

Medical Card Appeals

1039. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an appeal against the decision to refuse an application for a full medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47814/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Card Drugs

1040. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health the name of each drug and product which has been withdrawn from the medical card scheme in 2012 and the basis for the withdrawal of each item [47815/12]

1166. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a list of medications that have been taken off the medical card over the past 12 months [48531/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1040 and 1166 together.

In the current financial environment the Health Service Executive (HSE) is facing a challenge to deliver services in a way that will minimise any adverse impact on patients and continue to protect, as far as possible, the most vulnerable citizens. Unfortunately, it has become necessary for the HSE to suspend certain products from its list of reimbursable items. These include glucosamine, omega-3 triglyceride products, orlistat, and gluten-free products.

Glucosamine is indicated for the management of symptoms of osteoarthritis. The National Centre for Pharmoeconomics (NCPE) have assessed the cost-effectiveness of glucosamine on two occasions and concluded that it did not offer value for money to the HSE. However, glucosamine products are available over the counter without prescriptions.

Omega-3 triglyceride products (e.g. Omacor) have been identified both nationally and internationally as not being cost effective or being of lesser benefit to patients. However, these products are also available over the counter without prescriptions, as is Orlistat.

Gluten-free products have become more widely available in supermarkets in recent years and tend to be significantly cheaper than products sold through community pharmacies. A Supplementary Welfare Allowance Adult Diet Supplement may be awarded by the Department of Social Protection to eligible persons. Persons wishing to apply for this allowance can do so by completing an application form which can be downloaded at the following link: <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Forms/Documents/swa9.pdf>. Separate application forms are available for children. For persons who are not awarded a Diet Supplement, moneys spent on gluten-free foods can be taken into account for tax purpose.

A full list of items available under the community drug schemes is available on the HSE's Primary Care Reimbursement Service website, www.pcrs.ie (choose 'List of Reimbursable Items'). In addition, the monthly updates (additions and deletions) to the product list are provided at the same location under 'Updates to the List of Reimbursable Items and High Tech Scheme List'.

Health Services Provision

1041. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the supports available in respect of persons (details supplied) in Dublin 17 [47819/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Help Service Provision

1042. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding home help in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3 [47820/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

General Medical Services Scheme Administration

1043. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding replacement doctors (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47712/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): A General Medical Services (GMS) panel can become vacant for a number of reasons, some of which can be foreseen and planned for, such as retirements or resignations, and others may arise due to unforeseen circumstances, for example sudden death or sudden incapacity of a general practitioner (GP).

In the case of foreseen/planned vacancies, the HSE will endeavour to put appropriate arrangements in place in advance of the GP retiring/resigning. Retirements can be planned for well in advance and the transition to a replacement GP contractor(s) generally runs smoothly, with minimal inconvenience arising for patients. In the case of resignations, the time frame for effecting the transition will normally be 3 months. Occasionally, due to logistical factors outside of the HSE's control, it can prove challenging to have the permanent replacement in situ prior to the existing contractor's departure but where this arises, temporary arrangements, such as the appointment of a locum or cross cover by other GPs in the locality, are put in place in the interim.

In the case of unforeseen vacancies arising due to the sudden death of a GP, the HSE is required to put an interim arrangement in place to ensure continuity of service for patients pending the engagement of a replacement GP contractor(s). This would involve locum cover or cross cover as mentioned above. In the case of sudden incapacity, the GP (where he/she is in a position to do so) would organise the interim cover arrangements and where he/she is not in a position to do so, the HSE would make the necessary arrangements pending either the GPs return to duty or the engagement of a replacement GP contractor(s).

I should point out that at no time in any of the above scenarios are GMS patients left without a named doctor. It is also worth noting that the enactment of the Health (Provision of General Practitioner Services) Act 2012 is of relevance in this context. As the number of GPs entering the GMS under the provisions of this Act increase over time it will assist in mitigating any service continuity issues that may arise when GMS panels become vacant, particularly in unforeseen circumstances.

Vaccination Programme

1044. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether his Department should follow the American example in that all children must have all vaccinations before starting school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47715/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Ireland's recommended immunisation programme is based on the guidelines of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. The objective of the *Primary Childhood Immunisation Programme* is to achieve an uptake level of 95%, the rate recommended by the World Health Organization, required to provide population immunity and to protect children, and the population generally, from the potentially serious diseases concerned. Since 2011 this 95% rate has been achieved for 6 in 1 vaccination. This protects children against Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Polio Hepatitis B and Haemophilous Influenzae type b. It is not the Government's intention to make vaccinations mandatory.

Health Services Expenditure

1045. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the level of funding provided by the State to the Brothers of Charity Services for each of the years 2009 to 2012 inclusive; the cuts to funding in the past 12 months; his views on whether the current level of funding is appropriate to deliver these vital services; if he will reinstate funding cuts to-date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47840/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

National Children's Hospital Location

1046. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the contacts he has had with a person (details supplied) in relation to the building of a National Children's Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47843/12]

1047. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he has had any communication with a person (details supplied) in relation to the Dolphin Report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47844/12]

1048. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or any intermediary acting on his behalf has had any communication with a person (details supplied), in relation to the Dolphin Report and the building of a National Children's Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47845/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1046 to 1048, inclusive, together.

As you will be aware, I established an independent Review Group to consider the implications of the decision of An Bórd Pleanála, received on 23 February 2012, to reject the planning application for the proposed construction of a national paediatric hospital on the site of the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. The aim of the Review was to consider all the possible options for the earliest possible delivery of a new children's hospital. The group presented its report to

me in June.

Since the report has been presented to me I have been carefully considering its contents and the issues involved and have sought further detailed analysis on technical issues from members of the Dolphin Group with particular expertise in these areas. I will bring the report and supplementary analysis to Government shortly, with my recommendation. Together in consultation with my colleagues in the cabinet we will then make a decision on the location of the new children's hospital.

While my Department has had informal contact with the individual referred to in regard to the new children's hospital, no independent report or formal advice has been sought from this individual nor from any other individual separate to the Dolphin Group. There is one process only. I can assure the Deputy that at the heart of any decision that is made in relation to the new children's hospital, the needs of the patient will be central to this process.

Departmental Bodies

1049. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Health if he has given any consideration to the amalgamation of the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council with HIQA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47786/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The amalgamation of the Pre-hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) and HIQA is not being considered.

Health Services Provision

1050. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health whether it is the case that a person (details supplied) in County Louth was contacted by the Health Service Executive and told to cancel an appointment they had made in London for a CT scan as a result of a change in procedures for issuing an E112, that they were told they would have to see a consultant here before having the CT scan in London; if the person will have to go through this procedure for every appointment; the extent of the delays caused to their treatment as a result of these new procedures; his views on whether requiring a person to seek an appointment with a consultant here through the public system in advance of every appointment in London will cause inordinate delays in their treatment; if he is satisfied the correct procedures were followed in this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47849/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1051. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a hospital appointment in respect of a person (details supplied) [47852/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Application Numbers

1052. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical cards currently in the system; the number of persons directly dependent on these cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47881/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): At the end of August 2012, a total of 1,836,604 medical cards and 131,318 GP Visit cards have been issued. Nearly 43% of the national population currently has free access to GP services under the GMS Scheme (40% medical card & 2.9% GP visit card). This compares to 31% as at end 2007.

Health Services Expenditure

1053. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the level of funding provided by the State to Prosper Fingal and Knockrose House for each of the years 2009 to 2012 inclusive; the cuts to funding in the past 12 months; his views on whether the current level of funding is appropriate to deliver these services; if he will reinstate funding cuts to-date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47879/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

1054. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a copy of the health policy that underpins the proposed changes of reducing therapy service provision to children with a moderate intellectual disability, specifically in the context of established special needs schools, in order to increase therapy service provision to children with special needs in mainstream [47886/12]

1055. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a copy of the guidelines or policy document on access to therapy provision for children in established special needs schools in the context of the proposed change to community based therapy provision [47888/12]

1056. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if the targets on the date specific project plan spanning dates in 2010/2011 as outlined in the HUB Change, specifying the proposed changes regarding therapy access for children with special needs were achieved on time; and if this project plan failed to meet its targets, the reason for same [47889/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1054 to 1056, inclusive, together.

The Health Service Executive has recognised the need to increase the level of consistency and standardisation in the way both early intervention services and services for school-aged children with disabilities are delivered and to this end is currently engaged in a reconfiguration of existing therapy resources to geographic based teams for children (0-18 years).

The National Programme on Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (0-18 years) has been established since 2010. It is supported by a National Co-ordinating Group which has representatives from the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Skills in addition to other key stakeholders. The Programme is based on the recommendations of the *Report of the National Reference Group on Multidisciplinary Services for Children aged*

5-18 Years produced by representatives of the professions and management involved in delivering multi-disciplinary services to children which is available on the HSE website www.hse.ie.

The Programme aims to address the following issues in relation to children's disability services:

- Inequity of access to services due to inconsistent development of services;
- Environmental change arising from the reorientation towards mainstream education leading to increasing demand for health services to support inclusion;
- Increasing demand for services due to population growth and increased identification of children with disability;
- The need to re-align services with emerging primary care and integrated service structures.

Implementation of the Programme encompasses two elements:

- Ongoing work in co-ordinating and re-organising early intervention services for children aged 0-5 years into integrated, geographically based teams;
- Supporting the re-organisation of services for school-age children aged 5-18 years according to the same model.

The Programme is rolling out at national, regional and local level and involves representatives from the health and education sectors, statutory and non-statutory service providers and parents working together to see how current services can best be re-organised.

The HSE is working very closely with the education sector, which is fully involved in the development of the Programme, to ensure that, from the children's and parents' perspective, the services provided by each sector are integrated. An Education and Health Working Group, comprising representatives of both sectors, is developing a framework for closer working relationships.

Information concerning implementation of the Programme is available on the HSE's Change Hub learning and development website www.hseland.ie. This includes an updated Project Plan covering 2011/2012 with updated targets, as identified in the HSE National Service Plan 2012. While significant progress has been made to date in rolling out the Programme, targets in some areas have not been met for a variety of reasons. Local Implementation Groups have now commenced in all but two areas. Quarterly reports on progress and achievement in meeting targets are monitored by the Programme's National Co-ordinating Group.

Decisions regarding any local re-organisation of services are the responsibility of the Local Implementation Groups (LIGs). These include stakeholders such as representatives of the service providers involved, parents and the educational sector representatives. Detailed local area action plans are being developed by the LIGs with the following objectives:

- One clear pathway to services for all children with disabilities according to need;
- Resources used to the greatest benefit for all children and families;
- Health and education working together to support children to achieve their potential.

The long term goal of this Programme is to bring consistency in service delivery and a clear pathway to services for all children with disabilities according to need. Implementation of this Programme will have a positive impact on the provision of clinical services for all children requiring access to health related supports, regardless of where they live or which pre-school or school they attend. While the Programme supports the principle of providing access to mainstream education where appropriate, it also recognises a continuing role for special schools.

Services for People with Disabilities

1057. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the reason the national disability database was not used to inform parents of the proposed changes to therapy provision for children with special needs as it was decided in 2009. [47890/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Health Service Executive has recognised the need to increase the level of consistency and standardisation in the way both early intervention services and services for school-aged children with disabilities are delivered and to this end is currently engaged in a reconfiguration of existing therapy resources to geographic based teams for children (0-18 years).

The National Programme on Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (0-18 years) has been established since 2010. It is supported by a National Co-ordinating Group which has representatives from the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Skills in addition to other key stakeholders. The Programme is based on the recommendations of the *Report of the National Reference Group on Multidisciplinary Services for Children aged 5-18 Years* produced by representatives of the professions and management involved in delivering multi-disciplinary services to children which is available on the HSE website www.hse.ie.

The Programme aims to address the following issues in relation to children's disability services:

The HSE has engaged in an extensive communications process regarding the Programme since it was launched in March 2010. This has included updates about the Programme on the HSE's dedicated learning and development website www.hseland.ie and the production and dissemination of an information bulletin to relevant stakeholders encompassing regional disability leads, service providers and umbrella groups such as Inclusion Ireland. Numerous information sessions for parents' groups have also taken place.

The National Disability Databases assist in informing the regional and national planning of disability services by providing information on current service use and future service need. The Databases are managed by the Health Research Board on behalf of the Department of Health.

Under Data Protection legislation, information held in relation to individuals can only be used in ways compatible with the purposes for which the information was initially provided. In the case of the National Disability Databases, information was sought from individuals for the purposes of recording current service provision, future service requirements, and for trend analysis and research. The use of this information for any other purpose would be in breach of the Data Protection Act.

Significantly, participation in the National Disability Databases is voluntary; the Databases do not, therefore, cover a proportion of people living in Ireland who have a physical or sensory or intellectual disability and who have opted not to be registered on the Databases.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1058. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 737 of 17 July 2012, when a person (details supplied) will receive an ear nose and throat appointment at Waterford Regional Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47895/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I believe that the Health Service Executive

have already responded to the Deputy in this matter.

Medical Card Eligibility

1059. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the income threshold criteria for medical card eligibility for those under the age of 25 years; if there has been any change in this position in the past 12 months; if he will provide a breakdown of the numbers of persons with medical cards and an age breakdown of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47896/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Persons aged 16 - 25 years, including students, who are eligible for medical card/GP visit cards are:

-Persons who are dependants of medical card/GP visit card holders;

-Financially independent persons with means who are within the medical card/GP visit card guidelines;

-Cases of undue hardship where it would be unduly burdensome to them to provide General Practitioner or medical and surgical services.

All 16 year old dependants of a medical card holder now receive their own medical card automatically. Eligibility is set to the parent's expiry date. Renewal/review forms are not issued.

A number of enhancements were made earlier this year to the medical card application system. In relation to applicants in the age group 16 to 25, being in receipt of age-related Supplementary Welfare Allowance no longer, in itself, prohibits a person from being awarded a medical card or a GP visit card.

In April 2012, there were 1,758,927 medical cards, of which 166,767 were for young people in the age group 16 - 24. There were 126,279 GP visit cards, of which 11,487 were for young people in the age group 16 - 24.

Health Services Provision

1060. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the hospitals that are implementing the hospice friendly hospitals programme; the hospitals not implementing the programme and the measures being taken to address this deficit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47902/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Home Care Packages

1061. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when the draft standards for home care developed by the Health Service Executive will be extended not only to contracted-out home care packages but to other types of home care, such as home care provided directly by the HSE, or provided by private companies to persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47903/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Home Help Service Provision

1062. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the decision to have the one hour per week home help assistance removed from a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [47947/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Home Care Packages

1063. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) in County Cork who has been an in-patient in Cork University Hospital for the past number of years is not being discharged to reside with their family and with the support of an appropriate care package [47959/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Food Safety Standards Inspections

1064. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the use of aspartame in children's products here and in the EU; and his plans to make changes to the law in this area here [47964/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) has advised that the safety of aspartame has been comprehensively evaluated by international scientific experts including the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the EU Scientific Committee on Food (SCF), the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives and the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These expert committees consider that aspartame is safe for use and have established an acceptable daily intake (ADI) for aspartame of 40-50 milligrams per kilogram of body weight per day. This ADI is applicable to both adults and children over the age of 12 weeks and therefore there are no additional restrictions on the use of aspartame in food particularly consumed by children.

However, following some recent concerns regarding the safety of aspartame raised by several members of the European Parliament and the publication of several new studies on aspartame, EFSA is currently undertaking a full re-evaluation of the safety of the sweetener. This will be completed by May 2013 following a period of public consultation on the draft evaluation report. This consultation period is planned to commence at the end of 2012.

It should also be noted that the FSAI reviews all information on approved food additives such as aspartame on an ongoing basis. Based on current information available the FSAI consider that aspartame is safe for use.

Services for People with Disabilities

1065. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health in the context of the Health Service Executive national programme for change in multi-disciplinary services for children aged five to eighteen years which has been initiated, if the multi-disciplinary team at a special needs school (details supplied) in County Cork will be disbanded to become part of community based teams; and if he will confirm that this will not result in any service reduction for the children attending this school. [47966/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Consultants Remuneration

1066. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of years a consultant needs to qualify for a full pension; under the reduced pay scheme if he will detail a consultant's pension on the date of retirement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47973/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Drugs Payment Scheme Administration

1067. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health his views on approving the concern drug Zytiga for inclusion on the medical card scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47979/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Following intensive negotiations with the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA), the Department of Health and the HSE have reached agreement on a major new deal on the cost of drugs in the State. This deal has a value in excess of €400 million over the next three years and will mean, amongst other things, greater access to new cutting-edge drugs. The HSE is finalising arrangements for the reimbursement of Abiraterone Acetate (Zytiga®) in line with the new agreement.

Primary Care Centres Expenditure

1068. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the reasoning and criteria used to change the proposed primary health care centre for Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, from being a publically funded development to being a public private partnership project; the timeframe for this project indicating the range of services that will be available in this centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47981/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The consideration of projects for inclusion in the multi-annual capital programme is an evolving process. There are always more construction projects than can be funded from the Exchequer's capital health care allocation. The Health Service Executive is required to prioritise infrastructure projects within its overall capital envelope taking into account the existing capital commitments and costs of completion over the period.

It is understood that the Deputy, in asserting that a PCC was to be delivered in Rowlagh by way of the HSE's capital programme, may be referring to lists reported in the media. It is important to state that these lists related to work that was ongoing; that they were work in progress. The prioritisation exercise is a dynamic process, constantly evolving to take account of changing circumstances, including the feasibility of implementation.

An assessment/evaluation of each proposed primary care centre location was undertaken with the infrastructural requirement evaluated under three headings: deprivation index, service priority and accommodation assessment. The selection of a delivery mechanism was not, however, solely dependent on the resultant priority or ranking. The delivery mechanism selected for each location was based on suitability and the availability of funding (insofar as it is known at any point in time). The following considerations were taken into account:

-Agreements for lease in place - where there were good prospects of the leased centre being delivered - these locations remained as lease strategy;

-The size of the centre - the larger centres are more attractive to PPP bidders;

-Extensions to existing facilities or refurbishment of existing buildings are not suitable projects for PPP.

The change in the delivery method for a potential PCC in Rowlagh/North Clondalkin was on the advice of the Head of Estates in the HSE, as PPP was considered to be the most expeditious method by which progress in this development could commence.

The method and time scale for the delivery of PCCs is dependent on a number of factors and the list will continue to be reviewed and revised as necessary. It is envisaged that approximately 20 of the 35 potential locations published as part of the Government's Infrastructure Stimulus Package will be progressed by way of PPP. The current position is that the HSE is engaging with the NDFA as required to progress the Primary Care Centre Public Private Partnership Programme. The HSE is currently analysing the available sites in each location and engaging with the GPs in each location to determine their interest in participating in the primary care centre development. It is not possible, at this time, to give start and completion dates for any of the 20 potential locations.

Proposed Legislation

1069. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health the plans in place to introduce a unique health identifier as recommended by HIQUA; if a decision has been taken to develop a healthcare focused identifier rather than utilising the PPS number; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47986/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Health Information Bill, which is currently being drafted, will provide a legal framework for the use of identifiers in the health system, both public and private. The deployment of a patient identifier is very important to the provision of a safe, efficient health system and will also support the move towards universal health insurance. The Bill is expected to be ready for publication next year. While various options are currently being examined it is intended that the health identifier will leverage the existing identity infrastructure administered by the Minister for Social Protection, including the Public Services Card which is currently being deployed by that Department. My Department is engaging with all relevant stakeholders including the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Data Protection Commissioner and the Health Information and Quality Authority in relation to this matter.

Diabetes Strategy

1070. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health the number of people aged between 16 to 25 years who died between 2005 and 2012 here following an acute complication secondary to Type 1 diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47993/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Vital Statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office. From 2007 to 2011 (the latest available full year of data), five persons between the ages of 16 and 25 died from insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (which includes Type 1 diabetes but excludes other types, such as Type 2). For three of the five deaths an additional diagnosis of ketoacidosis is recorded. No further information is available for the other two deaths.

Prior to 2007, due to the use of an earlier version of the International Cause of Death Classification system (i.e. ICD-9), it is not possible to distinguish between the different types of diabetes. However, one person between the ages of 16 and 25, in the period 2005 to 2006, is recorded as having died from diabetes mellitus.

Hospitals Building Programme

1071. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a detailed progress report on the new Kenmare, Community Hospital, County Kerry; when the new hospital will be ready to open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48029/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Staff

1072. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the reason the position of a specialist urologist was withdrawn in September 2012; his plans to reinstate this position; and if so, a timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48032/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Health Services Provision

1073. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the emergency response system in place for Spina Bifida or Hydrocephalus sufferers; and if he will identify the centres where this emergency treatment is available [48033/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Services for People with Disabilities

1074. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if any specific programmes have been put in place to assist persons with disabilities who are aging [48034/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Agencies provide tailored supports and activities to meet the individual needs of people with a disability including their needs as they grow older. As an example, the Department is aware of reminiscence therapy in St Raphael's Centre, Youghal aimed at older clients and the introduction of care standards by the Daughters of Charity Services to support people with intellectual disability and dementia.

However, the Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services, which was published in July this year, recommended a person-centred supports model and an assessment of need process which addresses the needs of the individual at whatever point they are in the life cycle. A person's requirements for supports and services should be re-assessed at the individual's request, at key transition periods or following a change in the individual's health or personal circumstances, in order to ensure that services are responsive to the changing needs of the individual. This re-assessment process should be practical and capable of being integrated into an agency's person-centred planning and manpower utilisation and deployment planning process.

The National Disability Databases assist in informing the regional and national planning of disability services by providing information on current service use and future service needs. The Databases are managed by the Health Research Board on behalf of the Department of Health. The National Intellectual Disability Database Annual Report for 2011, points to a changing age profile in those people with disabilities. This reflects an increase in the lifespan of people with intellectual disability and along with the general demographic trend, has major implications for planning for services designed specifically to meet the needs of older people with intellectual disability.

The Department has provided funding towards the Intellectual Disability (ID) Supplement to the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing, which was developed with a view to bridging the information gap that currently exists in Ireland in relation to ageing amongst those with intellectual disability. Over the next 10 years, the Supplement will chart and provide in-depth information on all domains of the lives of those participants, including their health, social, economic, environmental and psychological status. The data which becomes available from the ID Supplement, will be available to inform the ongoing planning and delivery of services to people with intellectual disability as they age.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

1075. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health his policy regarding the nursing homes support scheme (NHSS) in respect of a persons when an ancillary State support loan is not possible as the homeowner has availed of an equity release scheme; the assistance is available in such instances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48041/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Ancillary State support is an optional element of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme which may be available to people who have land-based assets in the State. It is effectively a loan advanced by the State which can be repaid at any time, but which will ultimately fall due for repayment upon the applicant's death. In order to avail of ancillary State support, the HSE must register a Charging Order against the asset. The Charging Order is a simple type of mortgage which secures the money loaned by the HSE.

The fact that an applicant to the Scheme has availed of an equity release scheme is not, of itself, a barrier to ancillary State support being approved. In such cases any money that applicant

received from the equity release which is still in their possession would be taken into account during the financial assessment and any equity remaining in the asset may still be considered for the loan. However, the HSE does not have to approve an application for ancillary state support where it is not satisfied that there is sufficient equity remaining in the asset to ensure the security of the loan.

Hospitals Expenditure

1076. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from the Children's University Hospital indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48042/12]

1077. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48043/12]

1078. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from National Maternity Hospital indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48044/12]

1079. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Dublin, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48045/12]

1080. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from St. James' Hospital indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48046/12]

1081. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from St. Vincent's University Hospital indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48047/12]

1082. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Tallaght Hospital, Dublin, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48048/12]

1083. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Connolly Hospital, Dublin, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012 [48049/12]

1084. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48050/12]

1085. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Ex-

ecutive has received any correspondence or contact from the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, Dublin, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48051/12]

1086. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, County Louth, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48052/12]

1087. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Cork University Hospital indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48053/12]

1088. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Kerry General Hospital indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48054/12]

1089. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Galway University Hospital indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48055/12]

1090. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Letterkenny General Hospital, County Donegal, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48056/12]

1091. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Mayo General Hospital indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012 [48057/12]

1092. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Mid-Western Regional Hospital, County Limerick, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48058/12]

1093. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Sligo Regional Hospital indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48059/12]

1094. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar, County Westmeath, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48060/12]

1095. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore, County Offaly, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48061/12]

1096. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Midland Regional Hospital, Portlao-

ise, County Laois. indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48062/12]

1097. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Naas General Hospital, County Kildare, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48063/12]

1098. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Cavan General Hospital, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48064/12]

1099. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Our Lady's Hospital, Navan, County Meath, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48065/12]

1100. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Waterford Regional Hospital, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48066/12]

1101. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from Wexford General Hospital, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48067/12]

1102. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from St. Luke's General Hospital, County Kilkenny, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012 [48068/12]

1103. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he or the Health Service Executive has received any correspondence or contact from South Tipperary General Hospital, indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48069/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1076 to 1103, inclusive, together.

With regard to the first part of this question - whether I have received correspondence from hospitals indicating that the hospital will be unable to live within its budget - I do not receive correspondence regarding expenditure of particular hospitals. It is a matter for HSE management to ensure that individual units operate within their budgets.

My Department does obtain relevant information on expenditure from the performance reports, which are also available to the Deputy on the HSE website at <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/corporate/performance/2012pr.html>.

The only specific issue notified to Finance Unit in my Department relates to Tallaght Hospital. The Vote and Treasury Section in the HSE has indicated that the level of funding issued to Tallaght Hospital is in excess of the approved budget. However, I understand that this has been the subject of discussions at the HSE Board and was approved by the HSE's Accounting Officer.

With regard to the second part of the question, this relates to whether correspondence has been received by the HSE and, as such, is an operational matter for the HSE. I have forwarded this to the HSE, which will reply directly to Deputy Kelleher.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1104. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health when an appointment for a MRI scan will be rescheduled in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48086/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Applications

1105. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; if he will expedite same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48091/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Card Applications

1106. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Health if an application for a medical card will be expedited in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48099/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Staff Issues

1107. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Health his views on the difficulty of retaining Irish-trained doctors and attracting doctors who have gone abroad to return to Ireland; his plans to improve this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48100/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE is committed to providing high quality, internationally recognised education and training in order to attract and retain Irish-trained doctors. It must be recognised that Irish-trained doctors choose to go abroad for a variety of reasons, including further training. Many return having gained further skills and expertise.

The number of Consultant posts in the public health service has increased by 31% since 2005, from 1,947 in 2005 to 2,580 in September 2012, reflecting the policy of moving to a consultant provided-service.

The NCHD workforce currently stands at 4,889 WTE – its highest number in some years. This reflects intensive efforts by the HSE in recent years to maximise recruitment and retention and measures to make posts more attractive for candidates. Since 11th July 2012, 81% of

NCHD posts are part of structured training schemes run by the postgraduate training bodies and funded by the HSE. Nineteen percent are service posts wherein doctors are required to participate in professional development programmes run by the postgraduate training bodies and funded by the HSE.

Recent developments include a 30% increase in GP training places available, from 120 to 157 per year; the introduction of 40 additional intern posts in specialty areas including anaesthesia, general practice, emergency medicine and paediatrics; the development and implementation of a three-year Basic Specialist Training programme in emergency medicine, with 78 places available on the programme, and expansion in the number of Higher Specialist Training places in radiation, oncology and anaesthesia and intensive care medicine.

Medical Research and Training

1108. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Health his views on the recent accusations that the Health Service Executive does not understand or care about education and research in the medical field; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48101/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am not aware of the recent accusations referred to by Deputy Spring, however I would certainly strongly refute the suggestion that the HSE does not understand or care about education and research in the medical field.

Medical education and training is a priority for the HSE and the delivery of high quality, internationally recognised training represents a strategic resource for the HSE and the wider public health system.

In this context, health service employers have repeatedly emphasised the central role played by NCHDs in the provision of on-site 24/7 medical care; and reiterated that NCHD access to high quality postgraduate medical education and training is essential to patient safety and progress towards a Consultant-provided service.

Health service employers are very committed to ensuring that: a) New working arrangements improve the flexible delivery of patient care while supporting NCHD participation in appropriate education and training. The key objective is to ensure safe service delivery to patients based on safe work patterns for doctors; b) Rostering arrangements provide for a safe level of medical cover, allow for sufficient handover time, ensure that training can be delivered satisfactorily, and meet service needs and EWTD requirements while allowing NCHDs a satisfactory quality of life; c) Medical education and training should receive due priority in rostering arrangements; d) Training principles agreed by the employers, the IMO and the training bodies in 2004 are incorporated in to rosters; e) A Consultant-provided service is introduced with increased promotional opportunities for NCHDs currently in training.

The Medical Practitioners Act 2007 has resulted in meaningful and very positive changes in the way doctors are registered and the regulation of medical education and training.

In relation to undergraduate training, the HSE has a statutory responsibility to facilitate the training of medical students - which it supports via a concord agreed with the University Medical Schools, a liaison group to coordinate all clinical placements and the establishment of 24 senior Academic Clinician posts in Medical Schools, jointly funded by the HSE and the Higher Education Authority.

Regarding postgraduate training, the HSE also plays a very significant role in postgraduate medical education and training in conjunction with the Medical Council and 13 postgraduate

training bodies.

Since taking office, I have spoken many times on health research. I passionately believe in the value of health research leading to informed action, be that for the individual patient or the service more generally. Knowledge derived from research is paramount in providing the evidence base for better health policies and systems; systems that underpin effective and efficient health service provision. Such evidence will be a key input to the creation of the fairer, more efficient health system that the Irish Government is seeking to create in this country for all of our citizens.

Cancer Screening Programme

1109. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the recent report by a person (details supplied) regarding breast health and the need for further promotion and breast awareness; his plans to continue raising awareness on this important issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48103/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Report to which the Deputy refers, found that among the cohort of 449 women surveyed at two breast care clinics in Ireland, more than 50% were unaware of less common breast cancer symptoms and over 30% waited over a month to report their symptoms to their GP.

Early diagnosis of breast cancer is linked to more favourable outcomes and longer survival and the study highlights the need for continued promotion of breast awareness and prompt help-seeking by women with symptoms.

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) has developed and implemented a training programme for nurses who work in primary care, with a particular focus on practice nurses. This course covers cancer prevention, referral and patient assessment, treatment and post-acute care. The NCCP has also developed national GP referral guidelines and a standard referral form for breast cancer making the referral process more seamless and efficient. Voluntary agencies working in the area of cancer prevention also promote the need to be aware of the signs of breast cancer, so that early intervention can be offered.

I would encourage any woman irrespective of her age who has immediate concerns or symptoms to contact her GP who, where appropriate, will refer her to the symptomatic breast cancer services in her area.

Illicit Trade in Tobacco

1110. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question 245 on the 12 of July 2012, if his support of international developments in relation to plain or standardised packaging for tobacco products is conditional on Irish Customs or Revenue assessments on the negative impact the introduction of such a measure could have on the illicit cigarette trade here; if he will confirm whether the high level of illicit cigarette trade here is negatively impacting on the effectiveness of anti-tobacco public health policies currently in place such as high taxation, the point of sale display ban and age verification; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48111/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As stated previously, I am supportive of any international developments in relation to plain or standardised packaging for tobacco products.

Plain packaging is one of the issues being considered in the context of the Tobacco Products Directive by the European Commission. It is hoped that the Commission will publish this legislative proposal in the near future. Recent international developments together with the forthcoming revision of the EU Tobacco Products Directive will inform policy direction in this area.

I understand that the Revenue Commissioners will also examine the matter in light of any specific proposals that may be brought forward in the context of the revision of the EU Tobacco Products Directive. Included in this examination is the requirement that packs of cigarettes must carry a tax stamp issued by Revenue. I am advised that whether a pack of cigarettes carries a genuine tax stamp is a key means for distinguishing between legal and illegal products, irrespective of the way in which the cigarettes are packaged. All tobacco products, whether legally produced, illicit or counterfeit are injurious to health and are therefore a threat to public health. I am concerned about the level of smoking in this country and it remains my objective that Ireland becomes a tobacco free society. The Report of the Tobacco Policy Review Group will identify further policy and legislative measures to be taken in order to reduce smoking prevalence in this country. The Report is due to be published in the coming months.

There is no doubt that the illicit trade in tobacco products poses a problem in this country. Combating this illegal trade is, therefore, a top priority for the Revenue Commissioners, who undertake a comprehensive programme of activity against it, aimed in particular at preventing importation of illicit product and prosecuting those involved in bringing it into the country or selling it here. Considerable success is being achieved in combating this illegal activity. In the period from January to October this year, for example, the Revenue Commissioners seized some 91 million smuggled cigarettes, along with almost 4 tonnes of tobacco. During that period there were over 100 convictions for smuggling or selling of illegal tobacco products.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

1111. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health when he intends to revise the classification of illnesses which come under the long term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48117/12]

1112. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health if he will include inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis on the long term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48118/12]

1113. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health if he will include polycythemia vera on the long term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48119/12]

1173. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health if he intends to consider the addition of ulcerative colitis to the list of illness which qualify for support under the long term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48616/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1111 to 1113, inclusive, and 1173 together.

There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Long Term Illness Scheme.

Under the Drug Payment Scheme, no individual or family pays more than €132 per calendar month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines. The scheme significantly reduces the cost burden for families and individuals incurring ongoing expenditure on medicines. In addition, people who cannot, without undue hardship, arrange for the provision of medical services for themselves and their dependants may be entitled to a medical card. In the assess-

ment process, the Health Service Executive can take into account medical costs incurred by an individual or a family. Those who are not eligible for a medical card may still be able to avail of a GP visit card, which covers the cost of general practice consultation.

Suicide Prevention

1114. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the cessation in funding for the applied suicide intervention skills training course at NUI Galway; and if alternative funding will be found to ensure the resumption of this training course which helps combat the risk of suicide [48128/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter the question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

1115. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Health the progress made in the extension of general practitioner cards to those persons on the long term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48130/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Programme for Government commits to reforming the current public health system by introducing Universal Health Insurance with equal access to care for all. As part of this, the Government is committed to introducing, on a phased basis, GP care without fees within its first term of office. Primary legislation is required to give effect to Government commitment to introduce a universal GP service without fees.

Legislation to allow the Minister for Health to make regulations to extend access to GP services without fees to persons with prescribed illnesses is currently being drafted by this Department and the Office of the Attorney General and will be published shortly. Implementation dates and application details will be announced in due course.

Medical Card Appeals

1116. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on a medical card appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48144/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Nursing Home Accommodation

1117. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the shortage of nursing home beds in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [48153/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Home Help Service Provision

1118. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the decision to have the home help assistance on a Sunday removed from a person (details supplied) in County Cork; if he does not intend to do so, if he will ask for an assessment of the person's needs to be carried out to determine what assistance they may need. [48160/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Symphysiotomy Report

1119. **Deputy Michael Conaghan** asked the Minister for Health when he expects the Walsh report on the practice of symphysiotomy here to be completed; when this report will be published; and the action he proposes to take following on from the report. [48179/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My first priority is to ensure that the women who have had this procedure have their health needs comprehensively and professionally met. In this regard, the HSE provides a range of services to women who continue to suffer the effects of having had this procedure. These services include the provision of medical cards, the availability of independent clinical advice and the organisation of individual pathways of care and the arrangement of appropriate follow-up.

As the Deputy is aware, my Department has commissioned an independent research report in relation to the practice of symphysiotomy in Ireland. The Research included a consultation process involving patient groups, health professionals and in particular the women who have experienced symphysiotomy. It is expected that this report will be presented to the Department in the near future.

It is intended that the research report will inform the Department's overall consideration of this matter, including the consideration of any actions that may be required and possible legal implications. It would be premature for me to make any other comments at this stage on what actions might be taken, prior to giving full consideration to the recommendations of the report.

Health Services Staff Issues

1120. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the progress made in filling a public Health Service Executive position (details supplied) in County Kildare; the timeline for the completion of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48191/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Provision

1121. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding supports in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5 [48194/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the

Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Departmental Submissions

1122. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Health if he will work in conjunction with Feileachan the stillbirth organisation to organise a national stillbirth remembrance day; if he will advise the organisation on the way to set this up and for his input and support; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48204/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I would like to thank the Deputy for bringing this matter to my attention again. I note that a submission on this matter has been received by my Department from Feileachan and is currently under consideration. I am aware that the Secretary General has contacted Feileachan to arrange a meeting on the 20th November 2012.

Hospital Transfers

1123. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if a decision has been made to move all respite patients from the Cottage Hospitals in Drogheda to Moorehall Lodge, Drogheda, County Louth; and the reason for this decision. [48215/12]

1124. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that the future of respite services is one of the issues under consideration in the current options appraisal for the future of the Cottage Hospital, Drogheda, County Louth; and the reason's a decision has been made to cease respite provision in the Cottage Hospital in advance of the conclusion of the consultation process. [48216/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1123 and 1124 together.

As these are service matters they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Applications

1125. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will investigate the medical card review in respect of a person (details supplied). [48220/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

1126. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health in order to ensure the future financial viability of the community hospital on Valentia Island, County Kerry, if he will ensure an increase in the funds paid per patient; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48222/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) was designated under section 40 of the Nursing Homes Sup-

port Scheme Act 2009 as the body which must negotiate and agree the price for long-term residential care services with all private nursing homes and voluntary nursing homes (which previously received funding for long-term residential care under section 39 of the Health Act 2004) that wish to be “approved nursing homes” for the purposes of the Scheme. This negotiation process is a necessary feature of the scheme due to the commitment by the State to meet the full balance of the cost of care over and above a person’s contribution. The NTPF is independent in the performance of this function. Consequently, any question of an increase to the cost of care would be a matter for the NTPF.

As the Deputy is aware, the NTPF has engaged forensic accountants to support it in its negotiating role. The forensic accountants have visited Valentia Hospital. Their report will inform future negotiations between the NTPF and Valentia Hospital.

National Lottery Funding Applications

1127. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding funding in respect of an organisation (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48224/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department has no record of an application for funding from this organisation from the 2012 National Lottery Discretionary fund. If the organisation wishes to make an application for National Lottery Funding they should send in a formal application. Detailed procedures, along with the application form are set out on my Department’s website - www.doh.ie. However, the details supplied with this question do not indicate that this is a health-related project.

Motorised Transport Grant Eligibility

1128. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a large number of motorised transport applications (details supplied) have been refused even though the persons concerned have been approved for the scheme on a number of previous occasions, all of the applicants live in very isolated locations and cannot use public transport; if each case will be fully reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48236/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Card Applications

1129. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [48278/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

National Children’s Hospital Status

1130. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his response to reports (details supplied) that a four member group has been conducting a further evaluation of possible locations for the new national children's hospital; if such a group has been established; the basis on which the group was established; the functions of the group; the terms of reference under which it operates; the person who appointed the members of the group; the names of the members of this group; the connection it has with the Dolphin Review; the recommendations the group has made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48293/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As you will be aware, I established an independent Review Group, chaired by Dr Frank Dolphin, to consider the implications of the decision of An Bord Pleanála to reject the planning application for the proposed construction of the new children's hospital on the site of the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. The report of that Group, chaired by Dr Frank Dolphin, was presented to me in June. My Department sought further detailed analysis on technical issues from those members of the Dolphin Group with the relevant technical expertise.

There is no "four-man group" as described in the details provided by the Deputy. Two of the individuals named are members of the Dolphin Group. Informal contact has been made with the other two individuals named in regard to the new children's hospital. No formal advice or report has been sought from them and no "four-man group" has been established. My recommendation to Government in regard to the location of the hospital will be based on the Dolphin report together with the supplementary analysis provided by a number of its members.

Primary Care Centres Provision

1131. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary question No. 637 of 9 October 2012, the services available at the primary care centre in Dundalk, County Louth; the involvement of the Health Service Executive in relation to that centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48295/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Card Applications

1132. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48298/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff

1133. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 588 of 16 October 2012, the level of cover has been provided for the 15 consultant posts currently vacant in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda and the one consultant post vacant in Louth County hospital in Dundalk; if these posts are exempt from the recruitment moratorium; if not, why not; if efforts are currently underway to recruit consultants to these positions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48308/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1134. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a hospital appointment will issue for surgery in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48320/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Public Sector Allowances Review

1135. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the allowance being paid to general practitioner trainees for out of work hours in lieu of overtime who, unlike other non consultant hospital doctors are paid a flat rate salary and this allowance; the reason there is a delay in the payment of this allowance even though it has been confirmed that it is being maintained; if he will expedite the payment of this allowance to those who are entitled to it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48323/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government has decided that, following the review of public sector allowances by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, certain allowances are approved for new beneficiaries but subject to review and/or modification. This includes the GP training allowance. The HSE has been advised that sanction for the payment has been restored.

Proposals for the review and/or modification of the GP training allowance will be the subject of engagement with staff representatives. The Health Service Executive has informed health sector unions of the outcome of the review.

Hospital Staff

1136. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown of agency usage across all disciplines in the Louth Meath Hospital Group currently and the comparative figures for 2010 and 2011 [48325/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Staff

1137. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the standard annual leave entitlements for non consultant hospital doctors; if a solution has been found for the dispute between the Health Service Executive and non consultant hospital doctors regarding these annual leave entitlements; if non consultant hospital doctors will be compensated for the fact that they may be rostered to work weekends and bank holidays; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48326/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The issue of NCHD annual leave had been the subject of dispute since implementation of the 2010 contract. The contract provides that non consultant hospital doctors (NCHDs) are entitled to 16 calendar days leave per 6 month period, with calendar days inclusive of weekends and that annual leave and public holidays would be granted in accordance with the provisions of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997.

I am pleased to be able to inform the Deputy that the HSE and the IMO have now finalised an Annual Leave Agreement with the assistance of the LRC, following the most recent conciliation conference held on 18th October. The Agreement encompasses public holiday entitlements.

Medical Card Eligibility

1138. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the withdrawal of a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare. [48339/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff

1139. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the result of the implementation of a National Directive from the Health Service Executive to reduce agency staff by 50% which has had negative implications for the nursing service and provision of care in HSE addiction services; if his attention has been drawn to the fact the directive may take three nurses leaving 6.5 nurses to deliver services in the former South West Area; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that clinical risk assessments are currently being conducted to identify the impact on patients care and the health and safety of the remaining nursing staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48340/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Psychological Services

1140. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) has been referred to the Primary Care Clinical Psychology Services in relation to the trauma he suffered as a result of alleged sexual abuse; if the person is currently receiving such support; if they are receiving any other supports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48342/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff

1141. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health when a podiatrist will be appointed to Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar, County Westmeath, as was recommended by the Health Service Executive in 2011; if same will now proceed; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [48343/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

European Health Insurance Card

1142. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health if any provision exists for applying for European health insurance card, formerly the E111 form, retrospectively, particularly in the case where a patient took ill suddenly, required immediate surgery in a foreign country and did not know of its existence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48347/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Under EU Regulations, all persons ordinarily resident in Ireland are entitled to apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) which covers them for necessary health care during a temporary visit to another EU Member State. All persons are entitled to healthcare under EU regulations in another Member State even if they do not hold a EHIC at the time treatment was provided.

If a person does not hold a current EHIC, it is possible to request a Temporary Replacement Certificate from the HSE whilst on a visit to another state. If this facility was not availed of and costs were incurred, the local Health office can process a claim for a refund by the patient on return to Ireland. The HSE can issue a temporary certificate retrospectively provided entitlement existed. However, it is the other EU Member State that determines the amount to be refunded and if the treatment provided was under EU regulations.

European Health Insurance Card

1143. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider the appointment of a patients advocate where such a role would provide patients and their families with the necessary information to avail of the European health insurance card, formerly the E111 form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48348/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): All relevant information concerning the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) is currently available on the Health Service Executive EHIC website: www.ehic.ie. Information is also available on the citizen's information website. More recently this information is available as a smartphone application which provides information on how to access health services in the Member State that a person is visiting and provides information on the processes to follow if an individual does not have an EHIC.

In light of this, I do not intend to appoint a patient's advocate to make this information available.

Rare Diseases Strategy Publication

1144. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Health the progress that has been made on a specific national approach to improve the health and well-being of persons with rare diseases, as recommended by the European Council action group in the field of rare diseases; the current status of a national rare disease strategy for the State in view of the number of persons estimated to suffer from a rare disease in this country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48354/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Ireland has been supportive of the EU proposals on rare disease which concluded with a council recommendation in June 2009. The end point is that countries are recommended to develop plans or strategies preferably by the end of 2013. We are now well advanced in developing this work.

I established a National Steering Group, in April 2011, to develop a policy framework for the prevention, detection and treatment of rare diseases based on the principles of high quality care, equity and to be patient centred. The policy will operate over a 5 year period, take account of the EU Council Recommendation on Rare Diseases (2009) and define priority actions subject to resource availability. Similar plans are being drafted by individual countries across the EU, including in the UK. The National Steering Group identified a number of areas relating to rare diseases which it is currently considering including centres of expertise, access to appropriate medication and technology, orphan drug development, research and information and patient empowerment and support. In addition, the steering group consulted extensively with patients and key stake-holders in June and July of this year on the broad proposals and recommendations that will emerge.

Hospital Services

1145. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that a replacement physiotherapist covering cystic fibrosis has been provided in a hospital (details supplied) in Dublin 1; if he will confirm that there has been no gap in physiotherapist services for children with cystic fibrosis attending the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48357/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Primary Care Centres Provision

1146. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the negotiations that have taken place between the Health Service Executive and the Clarke Partnership, Malahide, County Dublin in relation to Health Service Executive services and staffing level to be provided at the proposed Primary Care Centre at (details supplied) in Dublin 5 [48359/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The management and delivery of health care infrastructure is a service matter. Therefore your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Home Care Packages

1147. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health the names of the commercial companies that provide home care packages to those persons approved by the Health Service Executive; the total cost of home care packages in 2011; the amount paid to each company; the number of hours provided by each company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48367/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Home Care Packages

1148. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health the safeguards in place to ensure that those persons in receipt of home care packages from private providers are actually receiving the service that the State is paying for; the way the State guarantees that these persons providing the home care are properly qualified; in view of the fact that the State is the funding agency, is there a State complaints mechanism in place where people in receipt of home care can make complaints; the mechanism in place to terminate a contract between the State and a home care provider; what constitutes a breach leading to a discontinuation of the arrangement between the State and home care provider; if the State has ever terminated an arrangement for the provision of home care with an individual provider; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48370/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Applications

1149. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will issue on a medical card renewal application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48371/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Question No. 1150 answered with Question No. 1002.

Health Care Infrastructure

1151. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding plans for the development of a health campus in an area (details supplied) in County Galway; the current annual cost of maintaining and securing the Grove Hospital site; the future plans for the site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48382/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The management and delivery of appropriate health care infrastructure is a service matter. Therefore your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Ambulance Service Provision

1152. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when an ambulance crew and ambulance will be allocated on a permanent basis to an area (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48383/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Ambulance Service Provision

1153. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the current timetable for the development of a 24/7 ambulance base for the West Roscommon and East Mayo area; the progress made to date on providing a temporary location for an ambulance to service the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48384/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Acquired Infections

1154. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of cases of MRSA and clostridium difficile in hospitals over the last 12 months; the number of cases in 2010 and 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48385/12]

1157. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of cases of MRSA and Clostridium difficile in hospitals in the last 12 months; the figure for 2010 and 2011 respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48393/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1154 and 1157 together.

The information available on the number of cases of MRSA and Clostridium difficile in hospitals for 2010, 2011 and the first 6 months of 2012 is as follows.

MRSA: The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) which collates statistical information on bloodstream infections from all hospital laboratories, both public and private, reports on a quarterly basis. Provisional statistics for 2012 to end-June 2012 only are now available. MRSA statistics for 2010 and 2011 record 305 and 263 cases respectively. The figure to end June 2012 is 128 cases. The number of cases of MRSA has fallen by 55% between 2006 and 2011 (from 592 to 263 cases) and the downward trend is holding per statistical returns to date.

Clostridium Difficile: Clostridium difficile infection (CDI) or C. difficile associated disease (CDAD) has been a notifiable disease in Ireland since May 2008. Prior to 2012 only new cases of CDI were notifiable. The case definition for this disease has been revised and since 1st January 2012 both new and recurrent cases are notifiable. Clostridium Difficile statistics for 2010 and 2011 record 1,693 and 1,848 cases respectively. Provisional data for the first half of 2012 using the enhanced surveillance system which records both new and recurrent cases, indicates that there have been 939 cases of C. difficile. It is difficult to comment on these figures in that some of the increase may be due to changed testing practices.

The control of Healthcare Associated Infections (HCAIs) and antimicrobial resistance continues to be a challenge worldwide and the Department will continue to work at all levels to support healthcare policy development and assist healthcare providers in reducing same.

Ambulance Service Provision

1155. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding ambulance services (details supplied). [48388/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Services Provision

1156. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will support (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [48389/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Question No. 1157 answered with Question No. 1154.

Medical Card Appeals

1158. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will issue on a medical card appeal application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48422/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Supply

1159. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding medication in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 13; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48427/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

1160. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health when a date for an orthopaedic out-patient appointment at Our Lady's Hospital, Navan, County Meath, will be scheduled in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48430/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications

1161. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare is entitled to be covered by their medical card for specialised shoes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48434/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. *Questions Nos. 1162 and 1163 answered with Question No. 973.*

Hospital Services

1164. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm the current status of the previously commitment to provide ambulatory care centre at Tallaght Hospital, Dublin, if he will appreciate the importance of the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48512/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Pharmacy Regulations

1165. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the reason Metanium and Ateron are not available in chemists here and they are in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48516/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Metanium is a medicinal product used to treat nappy rash. For a medicinal product to be placed on the market in Ireland the manufacturer must make an application to the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) for an authorisation. The manufacturer of metanium has not made an application to the IMB to authorise metanium and consequently there are no metanium products available at present on the Irish market.

Ateronon is a food supplement. I have been advised by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland that the sale of Ateronon is not prohibited in Ireland and there are no regulatory reasons preventing its sale in pharmacies in Ireland. *Question No. 1166 answered with Question No. 1040.*

Disability Support Services Provision

1167. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health not to cut the Disability Services at Prosper Fingal, Swords and Prosper Services in Portmarnock as a matter of urgency [48537/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Northern Ireland Issues

1168. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy [48547/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My officials and I are involved in ongoing North South engagement. Ongoing priorities for advancing cooperation include those being

progressed through the structures of the North South Ministerial Council; the plenary meeting of the Council took place last Friday 2 November in Armagh and the Health and Food Safety Sectoral took place in July last. There is ongoing engagement at official level. Collaboration takes place on a wide range of health and social care issues including, for example, Radiotherapy Services, Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services, Health Promotion, Cancer Research, Food Safety and Suicide Prevention. Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) is involved in cross-border collaborative working in the field of health and social care and also manages and delivers a range of activities that are being supported by the EU Structural Fund Initiative - INTERREG IVA.

A Principal Officer, an Assistant Principal Officer (0.8 WTE) and a Higher Executive Officer, within the Capital/EU/International and Research Policy Unit have responsibilities that includes North South matters. In addition there is bilateral engagement between officials across my Department and officials in the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland on specific issues. It is not possible to quantify how much of an individual's time is spent engaged solely on North South activities. There are no specific vacancies relating to North South.

Question No. 1169 answered with Question No. 973.

Mental Health Services Provision

1170. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies at present in the community mental health teams across here and the location and grade where the vacancy occurs [48591/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter the question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Mental Health Services Provision

1171. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies at present in the child and adolescent mental health teams here and the location and grade where the vacancy occurs [48592/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter the question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Home Help Service Provision

1172. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health his views on the home help cuts in 2012; if he will protect home help hours in Budget 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48601/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The HSE has a statutory responsibility to live within the budget voted to it by the Oireachtas. In this context, the HSE recently developed a range of proposals to address funding pressures overall by the end of 2012. Most of the measures agreed focus on areas that do not have a direct patient impact. It is a priority of the Executive to minimise the impact on patients and clients of any spending reductions. In relation to home help, hours will continue to be based on a review of

individual needs and no current recipient of the service and who has an assessed need will be without a service. The position in relation to 2013 is being considered in the context of finalising the Estimates and Budgetary process for next year.

In relation to the individual case raised by the Deputy, this has been referred to the HSE for direct reply, as it is a service matter.

Question No. 1173 answered with Question No. 1111.

Health Insurance Cost

1174. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce bed re-designation in 2013; if this proposal must be approved by Cabinet; if it will require primary legislation; his views on the VHI's claims that it will result in a 45% increase in health insurance premiums; the discussions he has had with private insurers in relation to this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48638/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): A system of bed designation has been in place in public hospitals since the 1990s. Under this system, most beds are either designated as public beds or private beds: there is a small number of non-designated beds, such as those in Intensive Care Units.

Under the current framework, private in-patients who occupy public beds in public hospitals are not levied the daily maintenance charge, which ranges from €586 to €1,046 in most public hospitals.

The Comptroller and Auditor General reported in 2010 that 45% of in-patients treated privately by their consultants were not charged for their maintenance costs because they were not occupying designated private beds.

As part of Budget 2012, I announced that I intended to bring forward legislation to provide for the charging of all private patients in public hospitals, irrespective of whether they occupied a public or a private bed. In view of the significant potential cost implications for private health insurers, I subsequently indicated that I would be prepared to postpone implementation of the legislation until 2013 provided that the funds targeted for the current year were raised through a system of improved cashflow from the private insurers. Arrangements for this improved cashflow have now been agreed with the insurers, and the legal details are being finalised.

In relation to charging all private patients in public beds, the issue will be dealt with as part of the budgetary process for 2013. I will bring legislative proposals to Government on the matter in due course.

I am committed to keeping the cost of health insurance premia as low as possible. With this in mind, my Department is working closely with the four health insurers, through Consultative Forum on Health Insurance. The objective is to minimise costs, while always respecting competition law.

Speech and Language Therapy

1175. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding speech and language therapy in respect of a child (details supplied) in Dublin 11; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48641/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Speech and Language Therapy

1176. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding speech and language therapy in respect of a child (details supplied) in Dublin 9; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48642/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

1177. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health if he will update Dáil Éireann on the deliveries to date by public hospitals of targets that were set out by the Special Delivery Unit which he established following his appointment as Minister for Health; if he will update Dáil Éireann on the rewards system that may apply in respect of the delivery or surpassing of targets set out by the Special Delivery Unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48644/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In the current economic climate, the acute sector must reduce its costs in order to deliver the agreed level of activity within the resources available to it. In terms of service delivery, we must concentrate on getting the best possible services for patients from the budgets available to us. This means we need to focus on how beds are used, on the throughput of patients, on reducing length of stay to international norms and on having as many procedures as possible carried out as day cases rather than inpatient work, thus maximising also the efficient usage of operating theatre facilities.

Performance management by hospitals will be measured against a scorecard based on access, quality and finance. This scorecard is part of the HSE's Service Plan for 2012. I will set the access targets. Quality targets will be determined by the acute medicine programme, which was devised as part of the HSE's Clinical Programmes: this sets the standards and operational guidelines (including clinical care pathways, discharge planning, staffing, rosters) for managing and delivering acute medicine in hospitals. Its implementation is essential to the success of the SDU as it sets the standards and clinical performance against which the hospital is measured. Finance targets will be determined as the ability of the hospital, and later of Hospital Groups, to remain within budget.

Performance management of hospitals, and later of Hospital Groups, against the financial, access and quality indicators, will be based on the CompStat (Comparative Statistics) management performance approach used in the New York Police Department. This combines monthly data across a series of metrics on hospital performance with monthly performance management and review meetings attended by area and hospital senior management.

Scheduled Care

The SDU Scheduled Care Team was tasked with improving access to elective surgery and lowering waiting lists. There have been significant achievements in Scheduled Care since July 2011 when the SDU was formed.

Inpatient and daycase surgery

- Overall waiting list numbers have decreased from 56,020 to 51,955, a drop of 7%
- The number of adults having to wait more than 12 months is down from 2,732 to 408, a drop of 85%
- The number of adults having to wait more than 9 months is down from 6,277 to 2,342, a drop of 63%
- The number of children having to wait > 20 weeks is down from 1,712 to 670 a decrease of 61%

GI endoscopy

The SDU began to tackle long waits for routine GI endoscopy services (i.e. scopes) in May 2012 and:

- Since May 2012 overall waiting list numbers for scopes have decreased from 13,349 to 8,904, a drop of 33%
- Those having to wait > 3 months (the target for 2012) have decreased from 5,062 to 1,711, a drop of 66%

Outpatients

The initial priority for the SDU was trolley waits and daycases. It has now begun to work on improving access to outpatient services. The SDU and NTPF are on trajectory to take over the reporting of outpatient waiting times from the HSE from Oct 2012.

For the first time individual patient level waiting time data will be available at national level where data will be automatically extracted from all hospitals providing an outpatient service in the same format on a weekly basis. This is a major achievement by the SDU / NTPF in overcoming huge IT incompatibility, data quality and other resource issues.

The next step will be to reform the delivery of outpatient services in hospitals, critically examining processes and identifying areas for improved efficiency.

Unscheduled Care

The SDU was tasked with improving access to emergency care. Very significant progress has been made with the result that for significant numbers of patients, the experience in our EDs has been markedly improved.

- The number of patients waiting on trolleys in EDs has reduced by 22% from January to September, compared to the same period last year (or 13,450 fewer patients)
- The number of patients waiting on trolleys has fallen from a record of 569 on 5 January 2011 to 144 on 26 October 2012
- The 30 day moving average (average number of trolleys over 30 days) has fallen by 35% in 12 months, from 302 on 5 September 2011 to 197 on 7 September 2012
- The SDU's focus in relation to unscheduled care is now moving to patient journey time (attendance to admission/discharge) with that aim that 95% of ED attendees are discharged or admitted within 6 hours of registration and nobody waits more than 9 hours

- The SDU is working intensively to develop best practice hospital sites for patient pathways through unscheduled care.

With regard to a possible reward system, the principle of rewarding good hospital performance is one that I would generally endorse. Hospital budget allocations for 2013 are being carefully considered and I may consider some type of reward system within that context.

Health Services Staff Issues

1178. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if he plans to introduce a registration system for health and social care workers next year that will charge social care workers €295 to register; if he will consider reducing the fee or equalising it in proportion to other professionals such as nurses, €88, and teachers, €65; his response to their concerns that the fee of €295 would be an added burden on the already reduced salaries of 14% or 25% for new graduates entering the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48648/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Health and Social Care Professionals Council (HSCPC) and the 12 registration boards to be established under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 are responsible for protecting the public by regulating health and social care professionals. The Council (also known as CORU) was established in March 2007 and is working to put in place the necessary structures for registration, education and fitness to practise for the 12 health and social care professions, including social care workers, designated under the Act.

The first registration board to be established, the Social Workers Registration Board, which does not include Social Care Workers, was established in August 2010, and the associated Social Workers Register opened for receipt and processing of applications on 31st May, 2011. A second registration board, the Radiographers Registration Board, was established on 16th December, 2011 and its register is expected to be established in the near future. Three further registration boards, the Dietitians Registration Board, the Occupational Therapists Registration Board, and the Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board are currently in the process of establishment and it is also proposed to establish the Physiotherapists Registration Board either before the end of this year, or in early 2013.

It is proposed to establish the Social Care Workers Registration Board in 2013, although considerable work will be involved before it can open its register for receipt of registrants. All of the registration boards for the remaining designated professions should be established and their registers fully operational by 2015 or 2016 at the latest.

Under the provisions of the 2005 Act, there is a two-year transitional period from the date on which the register of the members of that profession is established, during which existing practitioners may apply for registration. The name of every registrant will be published in the register, which will be accessible on-line. Only those registrants who have satisfied the registration board for their designated profession that they hold an approved qualification and are “fit and proper” to engage in the practice of the profession will be entered on the register.

The State is currently funding the HSCPC in its establishment phase (€1.937 million in 2012) and will continue to do so on a reducing basis to end 2015.

The Council which is an independent statutory body is responsible for setting the level of fees and in doing this it is mindful of the requirement for it to become self funding by end 2015.

The current fee structure is as follows:

- A registration fee of €100 for new graduates, who have obtained recognised professional qualifications within two years of applying for registration;
- An annual retention fee of €295 for registrants, including those who paid the lower rate on graduation, is payable on the annual renewal date.

Since the annual renewal fee of €295 is subject to full tax relief it reduces to €174 at the higher level of tax which compares favourably with fees levied by Union and professional bodies where no tax relief is applicable.

All health regulators are self funding by way of annual fee income. The greater the registrant base the lower the annual fee charged. Given the enormous registrant base in teaching and nursing, for example, the annual fee charged amounts to less than €100 per annum. Health regulators are single profession regulators whereas the HSCPC is charged with regulating twelve disparate professions, which can add significantly to operating costs. The twelve designated professions to be registered by the Council range in number from under 50 in the case of Clinical Biochemists to a high of 3,000 approximately for Medical Scientists, but only amount to about 20,000 registrants in total across all professions. This is an extremely low registrant base when compared to a registrant base of well in excess of 60,000 for nurses.

The HSCPC is charged with extensive statutory functions under the 2005 Act, registration being only one, and the annual fee of €295 being charged by the HSCPC is considered the bare minimum required to enable the Council to operate. The fee is on a par with that charged by other health regulators and less than some in certain cases.

In response to concerns about the level of fee, the HSCPC has reviewed the regulatory structure to establish what scope exists for further reductions in registration fees and operational costs and has adopted the following measures:

- Where an existing practitioner with the necessary experience and recognised professional qualifications, or equivalent, pays the registration fee of €295 and is granted registration during the transitional period, also known as grandparenting, the application fee will cover them for the remainder of the grandparenting period and one full year of retention of registration after expiration of grandparenting. This concession will only apply to existing practitioners availing of the transitional provisions set out in the Act;
- The Council has requested the HSE to put in place arrangements for the deduction of the registration fee from monthly salary thereby spreading the cost throughout the year;
- Finally, the Council has proposed significant restructuring of the way in which the designated professions will be registered and regulated to provide a more cost effective operating system. This will require the enactment of primary legislation in due course.

Health Services Staff Issues

1179. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a redundancy issue in respect of a person from the Health Service Executive (details supplied) in County Tipperary; the reasons for the delay in the processing of this application; if he is aware of the hardship and financial impact this delay has on this person; if he will ask the HSE to rectify the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48651/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Home Help Service Provision

1181. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) in County Dublin has had their home help hours cut without assessment following their recent release from hospital [48666/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Care Services

1182. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a care plan in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3 [48691/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Services Provision

1183. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the supports available in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5 [48692/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Primary Care Centres Provision

1184. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide the list of primary care centres included in each of the bundles announced as part of the stimulus package; the funding allocated to each of these projects; the expected timeframe for the various stages of advancing these various projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48707/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The management and delivery of primary care centres through the public private partnership programme is a service matter. Therefore your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Care of the Elderly

1185. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health further to the Ombudsman's recently issued a report, Too Old to be Equal a Follow Up, in that report she makes three recommendations to his Department, if he will make a statement on each of these recommendations regarding implementation of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48727/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): This matter requires further consideration by Government in order to meet the requirements of the Equal

Status Acts and to ensure no hardship for those currently in receipt of the Mobility Allowance. We are seeking further legal advice as to the options available to the Government.

The Ombudsman is asking the Department to

- Remove the upper age limit as a condition of the Mobility Allowance scheme with immediate effect.
- Authorise the HSE to reconsider the application for complainants in the report without taking account of the upper age limit.
- Instruct the HSE to reconsider applications since 1 April 2011 which were refused solely on the basis of the upper age limit without regard to the upper age limit.

The Department is not in a position to amend the circular relating to the Mobility Allowance as recommended in the report. The recommendations, if implemented would ignore the very serious financial constraints on the Department, the HSE and the State generally. Implementation of the recommendations would create liabilities that the State could not afford.

Voluntary Sector Funding

1186. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will look at the budget for an organisation (details supplied) as a special case; if he will acknowledge the tremendous work that this organisation is carrying out and the truly great success story that it is; if he will reverse the 5% cut to their budget next year that equates to €400,000 in cuts to vital services; his views on whether such a cut, if implemented, will send special needs services in County Kerry back decades; if he will make a special case for special needs services in the county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48731/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Insurance Cost

1187. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will introduce a health insurance scheme that is fair and affordable for families and persons at an early date in view of the fact that thousands can no longer afford the rising costs of existing policies that are to be the subject of further increases in the new year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48734/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am very aware that health insurance is becoming harder to afford, in particular for older people, as insurers increasingly tailor their insurance plans towards younger, healthier customers. The Government is committed to keeping down the cost of health insurance so that it is affordable for as many people as possible and is also strongly committed to protecting community rating, whereby older and less healthy customers should pay the same amount for the same cover as younger and healthier people.

To support the principle of community rating, the Programme for Government contains a commitment to put a permanent scheme of risk equalisation in place. This is a key requirement for the existing private health insurance market and is designed to keep health insurance affordable for older persons and to maintain the stability of the market. I was pleased, therefore, to

recently publish the Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2012 on 18 October, to give effect to a new Risk Equalisation Scheme (RES) to be applied from 1 January 2013. An effective and robust RES is required in the Irish private health insurance market in order to protect affordability for those who need it most.

There can be little doubt that price increases will make it more difficult for persons who hold private health insurance to renew their policies. I have consistently raised the issue of costs with health insurers and am determined to address costs in the sector in the interests of consumers. I will continue to focus strongly on this issue.

I would also strongly advise consumers to shop around for the health insurance plan that best suits their needs. Consumers have a legal right to switch between or within insurers to get better value and to reduce their premium costs. All consumers should carefully consider the full range of plans and levels of cover available within the market, so that their own needs are fully met. Where customers wish to switch products, the relevant health insurance legislation ensures that switching is as easy and seamless as possible for customers. The evidence to date is that many people are changing their product choice or insurer following significant price or product changes. It is not open to a company to refuse a customer of another insurer the same level of cover. All plans are available to all customers, regardless of whether you are an employee of a particular organisation or not. Policy holders can switch to the same level of cover without waiting times for cover to apply.

In addition to the choices available to consumers in the health insurance market, the Government's clear objective is for the health insurance market to remain as competitive and affordable as possible, as we move towards a new system of Universal Health Insurance.

Mobility Allowance Eligibility

1188. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if persons who are genuinely entitled to the mobility allowance and who have been deprived of what has always been rightfully theirs are now going to be put into payment; if their payments will be backdated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48737/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The eligibility criteria for mobility allowance remain unchanged. Therefore people with a severe disability over 65 years of age are not eligible for the mobility allowance and the Health Service Executive is not authorised to pay the allowance to people outside of the eligibility criteria.

The Department of Health has accepted the Ombudsman's recommendation to review and revise the mobility allowance so as to render it compliant with the Equal Status Act.

The matter requires further consideration by Government in order to meet the requirements of the Equal Status Acts and to ensure no hardship for those currently in receipt of the Mobility Allowance. The Department of Health is seeking further legal advice as to the options available to the Government. However it must be acknowledged that the extension of the Allowance, as currently constructed, may have serious financial pressures on the health budget and may be unsustainable.

The recommendations, if implemented would ignore the very serious financial constraints on the Department, the HSE and the State generally. Implementation of the recommendations would create liabilities that the State could not afford.

Health Services Staff Issues

1189. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49075/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As Minister for Health, I am replying to this question only insofar as it relates to the health sector.

Where it is necessary to provide services on an extended-hours or 24-hour basis, staff are rostered for duty to ensure an appropriate match between the staff available and service required. Provision is also made, where appropriate, for some staff to be off duty but on-call to meet urgent but unpredictable service needs. Health service managers keep rosters under review to ensure the most cost-effective staffing arrangements having regard to service needs and to achieve optimum patient care. There are no general plans to cease the rostering of staff, as such arrangements are key to the provision of essential health services to the population.

Public Sector Staff Retirements

1190. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49087/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department has rehired three retired members of staff since July 2012 in line with a Government Decision on the arrangements for dealing with our forthcoming EU Presidency requirements. These staff members were rehired on a temporary basis to allow us to fulfil our responsibilities in the context of Ireland's forthcoming Presidency of the EU. These are staff members with experience and expertise that is of particular value to the running of our Presidency and their re-employment is very specifically related to that Presidency. It will accordingly terminate as soon as our Presidency tasks have been discharged.

For ease of reference I have attached the information requested by the Deputy in tabular format.

Grade	Length of Contract
1 Principal Officer (50% of full time)	13 months
1 Assistant Principal (50% of full time)	13 months
1 Assistant Principal (70% of full time)	10 months

The pensions of these staff are subject to normal pension abatement rules.

The information in relation to the Non-Commercial State Agencies is currently being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Parking Regulations

1191. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has considered increasing the fine local authorities can impose for parking illegally in a disabled car parking space; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47422/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The possibility of increasing fines for parking illegally in a disabled parking space was considered as part of a review of the Disabled Parking Scheme by my Department in 2010. The review, which was conducted in consultation with key stakeholders, recommended a number of improvements to the system which have since been introduced, but did not recommend a change in the fines concerned.

The fixed charge penalty for parking illegally in a disabled parking space is, at €80, double that applying to any other parking offence. If not paid in 28 days this fine goes up to €120. If the fixed charge is not paid within 56 days, the case can be taken to court. The courts have the power to impose a fine of up to €1,000 for a first offence and up to €2,000 for a second or subsequent offence. If an individual commits a third or subsequent offence within one year, the court may impose a fine of up to €2,000 and/or a prison term of up to three months.

I am satisfied that the penalties available in law for this offence are sufficient, and that they demonstrate the seriousness with which the law regards the misuse of disabled parking facilities.

Road Improvement Schemes

1192. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason for the delay with the work on the N86 road upgrade and when works will commence on the County Kerry Dingle road. [47679/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Youth Services

1193. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 309 of 18 October 2012, if he will provide advice and support on the tourism proposal for youth travel (details supplied). [47223/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the matter and the further details provided to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply to the Deputy. Please contact my private office if a reply is not received within ten working days.

Departmental Expenditure

1194. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 836 of 19 July 2012, if he will provide details relating to professional fees paid by his Department. [47256/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Details of consultancy and other external contracts are published on my Department's website in the features section at the following link: <http://www.dttas.ie/feature.aspx?id=82>. This information will be updated regularly.

Public Sector Staff Issues

1195. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Transport; Tourism and Sport the names of each staff member within his Department that has been rehired since March 2011 and the cost involved in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47302/12]

1245. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Transport; Tourism and Sport the exact number of public servants who are back in employment in the public service, who are on pensions and have accepted lump sums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49091/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1195 and 1245 together.

There has been no retired staff member rehired permanently in my Department since I came into office on the 9th March 2011, but there have been a number of retired staff members and former public servants rehired on a contractual basis or engaged to undertake a specific task. The details are set out in the table below.

Name	Grade	Amount
Frank Russell	Inspector of Air Accidents	€38,302.11
John A. McLoughlin	Radio Officer Grade III	€29,687.80
Thomas Byrne	Radio Officer Grade III	€32,578.36
John B. McLoughlin	Radio Officer Grade III	€19,806.99
Timothy Lyne	Radio Officer Grade III	€12,953.52
Gordon Duncan	Radio Officer Grade III	€10,385.76
Liam Dolan	Principal Officer	€1,256
Andrew Cullen	Assistant Secretary	pro bono
Paul Byrne	Principal Officer	€1,500
Bernadette Treanor	Equality Officer	€11,958
Dara Mullally	Principal Officer	€2,000

Five of these were Radio Officers to fill essential frontline vacancies in the Coast Guard until such time as recruitment processes for replacements could be completed. One Aeronautical Engineer was rehired temporarily for the Air Accident Investigation Unit. The other retired officials were engaged to chair the Steering group on the review of the Railway Safety Programme 2009-2013 and the VFM Policy Review Group on Tourism Product Development, respectively or were contracted to carry out specific short term exercises. All but the final three individuals in the table have completed their tasks.

Free Travel Scheme Administration

1196. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way subvention to Iarnrod Eireann for free travel passes is calculated and determined. [47402/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann in conjunction, as appropriate, with the Department of Social Protection, who administer the free travel pass scheme. I have referred the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Rail Services

1197. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide information detailing changes in train speeds and times over the past 30 years, for example, the average journey time by train from Dublin to Cork; the average speed of trains on this line; and the power of engines used by trains on this line; his views on whether the current work practices are an impediment to achieving greater improvements in journey times on this or any other line. [47403/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann in conjunction, as appropriate, with the National Transport Authority. I have referred the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Dublin Bus Services

1198. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the average age of a bus that is retired from the Dublin Bus fleet; and if buses retired from the Dublin Bus fleet are made available for purchase by private operators in the Irish market. [47404/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issued raised is an operational matter for Dublin Bus and I have referred the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Parking Regulations

1199. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has considered issuing penalty points to drivers who park illegally in disabled car parking spaces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47421/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Measures are already in place to deter against such illegal parking. A fixed charge of €80 applies to parking in a disabled person's parking bay. The amount of the fixed charge increases by 50% to €120 if it is not paid within 28 days.

If no payment is received within the 56 day period, a court prosecution is initiated. Where a person does not pay the charge is subsequently convicted in court of the said offence he or she is liable to a fine not exceeding €1,000 for the first offence, a fine not exceeding €2,000 for a second or subsequent offence and in the case of a third offence or subsequent offence committed within a twelve month period, a fine not exceeding €2,000 and/or a prison sentence of up to 3 months. The level of fine to be imposed in any instance is at the discretion of the court.

The focus of the penalty points system is on improving driver behaviour that impacts on

road safety. The only parking offence that is included in the system is the serious offence of dangerous parking. It is considered that it would not be appropriate to extend the system to include drivers who illegally park in a disabled person's parking bay.

Cross-Border Projects

1200. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the Narrow Water Bridge Project; the financial arrangements for the Narrow Water Bridge Project from Omeath, County Louth, to Warrenpoint, County Down; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47541/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Narrow Water bridge project was submitted for INTERREG IVA funding and the steering group of the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) responsible for overseeing the INTERREG programme has recently approved funding of €17.4 million for the project.

As part of the proposed financial arrangements, my Department together with the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland will be contributing towards the cost of the project.

Further work towards delivering the project now falls to Louth County Council, as the road authority responsible for the project in accordance with the provisions of the Roads Act, 1993, working with its Northern Ireland partners on the project.

Tourism Promotion

1201. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will confirm the status of Ireland.com; the reason behind its purchase by Tourism Ireland (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47542/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy will be aware, Tourism Ireland was established under the framework of the Belfast Agreement of Good Friday 1998. It is jointly funded by the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, and operates under the auspices of the North/South Ministerial Council through the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment in Northern Ireland and my Department here.

As I have previously stated, the decision to purchase the domain name "Ireland.com" from the Irish Times, and an analysis of a business case in this regard are operational matters for Tourism Ireland Limited and its Board while the issue of accommodating existing @ireland.com email address holders in as helpful and fair a manner as possible is the responsibility of the Irish Times.

In terms of the business case for the purchase, I understand that Tourism Ireland firmly believes that having a simple domain name like "Ireland.com" will have significant benefits to them. Primarily it is considered that, given the ease of recognition and memorability, the new domain name will deliver greater "stand out" for Ireland around the world. At present "Ireland.com" is a competitor with Tourism Ireland's discoverireland.com domain name for search engine traffic. Accordingly, the acquisition will be beneficial in accessing that traffic. Furthermore Tourism Ireland's business case for the project identified that cost savings will also be achieved through a reduction in their paid search engine optimisation activity. I understand that Tourism Ireland's projections show that the costs of the acquisition will be fully recouped in just over

three years.

Finally, with regard to “The Gathering Ireland 2013”, having a simple domain name like “Ireland.com” can only help in projecting an even stronger online presence to achieve our ambitious targets for visitor numbers next year and beyond.

Road Maintenance

1202. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide the National Roads Authority roads maintenance budget for the years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47550/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Each year the funding provided to the local authorities through the National Roads Authority under the roads budgets are outlined in the road grant allocation booklets, copies of which are available in the Dáil library.

Air Services Provision

1203. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress that has been made to date in improving air access to Ireland from North America; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47551/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Air access between Ireland and North American is crucially important for trade and tourism. In this regard, there have recently been two important announcements.

As part of a recent tourism mission to North America to promote the Gathering, I met with United Airlines in Chicago and a new Chicago-Shannon route has been confirmed for next summer. In addition, American Airlines recently announced that it is to begin a new daily service from Dublin to New York JFK from June 2013 in addition to its existing Dublin-Chicago route which operates six times a week. These are very positive developments and discussions are continuing with a number of other carriers for additional capacity linked to both general traffic demand and the expected increased traffic linked to the Gathering.

Current indications are that transatlantic capacity for summer 2013 will be higher than summer 2012, which was in the region of 27,500 seats per week. Tourism Ireland continues to work closely with Dublin Airport Authority to secure additional capacity.

Taxi Regulations

1204. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his reasons for applying further regulation and taxes on taxis (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47577/12]

1217. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the on-going concerns expressed by taxi drivers and owners in relation to such issues as the introduction of the nine year rule and the difficulty therein without the establishment of a workable taxi scrappage scheme; the reason the vetting system has not been overhauled despite concerns regarding public safety issues in the industry; the reason an independent appeals process has not been granted despite previous promises to give the taxi indus-

try access to the Ombudsman's office; the reason the Taxi Advisory Council was re-appointed to the exclusion of elected representative from the taxi industry and the failure therefore to establish a meaningful forum for dialogue within the industry; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there are concerns that the introduction of a SPSV penalty point system will unduly affect full time taxi drivers; and if his attention has been drawn to the anomalies such as an influx of part-time taxi drivers and students on Stamp 2 Visas into the industry. [48089/12]

1218. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason a single licence holder is prohibited from transferring their taxi licence whilst a multiple licence holder can transfer their plates into company names allowing them to pass on their plates as an asset of a company. [48090/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1204, 1217 and 1218 together.

The recommendations contained in the Taxi Regulation Review Report 2011 reflect the agreement of the Taxi Review Group and are aimed at facilitating better services for consumers and improving the operating environment for taxi drivers generally. The National Transport Authority (NTA) is the lead agency with responsibility for implementation of the recommendations of the Taxi Regulation Review Report.

I will bring a proposal to Cabinet shortly for the publication a Taxi Regulation Bill, 2012, which will replace the Taxi Regulation Act 2003 and extend the regulatory framework to give effect to recommendations from the Taxi Review concerning enforcement. The enforcement regime provided for in the Bill will be based on an intensified approach to tackling non-compliance depending on the gravity of the criminal offence or compliance failure.

Among other enforcement measures, the Bill will provide for the mandatory disqualification of taxi drivers upon conviction of certain criminal offences, which will complement existing Garda vetting of taxi drivers. The Bill will also provide for the temporary disqualification from holding a licence upon the accumulation of a specified number of demerits for specified breaches of the taxi regulations.

Compliance with the taxi regulations is a prerequisite for operating in the taxi industry. As proposed in the Taxi Review the establishment of the PPSN as the key data reference number for data sharing will greatly strengthen the investigation and enforcement capability of the relevant agencies: the NTA, An Garda Síochána, the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Social Protection.

The Taxi Regulation Bill will also provide for the prohibition on the transfer of a vehicle licence, including in circumstance concerning the change of ownership of a company.

Concerning vehicle standards and the age of some vehicles currently operating in the industry, the Taxi Review Group proposed to allow vehicles licensed before 2009 to continue to operate for up to fourteen years subject to a twice yearly NCT test. This will allow some time for vehicle owners and drivers to adjust to the new standards regime.

It is acknowledged that some of the measures proposed by the Taxi Review may lead to increased costs for individuals. However this will be offset by the benefits to the industry in terms of a better regulated and safer taxi sector.

In considering the future approach to regulation of the industry, including the matter of appeals, the Taxi Review Group felt it was appropriate to propose measures allowing a right of reply to individual taxi operators and to the taxi industry. Action 33 proposes a review process concerning certain decisions particular to the individual and Action 34 would allow industry

representative groups to make referrals to the Taxi Advisory Committee concerning the introduction of industry regulations, with Action 35 proposing a sub-committee to consider issues of particular concern to the taxi sector.

The Taxi Advisory Committee which I appointed during this summer includes representatives of small public service vehicle and driver interests in line with the provisions of Section 54 of the Taxi Regulation Act, 2003.

Traffic Management

1205. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding plans for a comprehensive traffic management plan and measures to minimise disruption for residents and businesses in Dublin in view of the upcoming construction works for the BXD Luas; if he intends to meet all of the relevant transport companies, agencies and business and residential stakeholders on this matter; if plans are being developed for the development of temporary taxi ranks and associated infrastructure in Dublin City centre in view of the proposed temporary closure of ranks on Dawson Street and St. Stephen's Green to facilitate the BXD Luas works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47623/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Following the establishment of the National Transport Authority (NTA) on 1st December 2009, the provision of infrastructure projects in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), such as LUAS BXD, now comes under the remit of the NTA. LUAS BXD to Broombridge is designed to be a key element in an overall integrated transport network for Dublin. It will create a LUAS network by joining the LUAS Red and Green Lines and will also link with rail services from Maynooth and Dunboyne and with existing QBC schemes which enter or cross Dublin City Centre. It will also in time interchange with future key projects such as Dart Underground and Metro North.

There has been extensive engagement between the RPA, Dublin City Council, Dublin Bus and the business community aimed at minimising the construction impacts of Luas BXD on all road users, including pedestrians, in the city centre area. The ongoing engagement between the relevant agencies on these important issues, which now also includes the NTA, will intensify both prior to and during the construction of the project.

An initial working group comprising the RPA, NTA and Dublin City Council has been established to work through the traffic management arrangements that will apply during the construction of the project. It is proposed that a wider Traffic Forum will also be established, which will include An Garda Síochána, Dublin Bus, the main contractors undertaking the works as well as representatives of traders and businesses. It is intended that this Traffic Forum will be the main focal point for addressing traffic matters on the project and I will chair the meetings of this body.

I understand that arrangements for the relocation of taxi ranks and bus stops affected by the construction works will be developed over the coming months in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Proposed Legislation

1206. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the new Road Safety Bill that includes roadside tests for drug drivers will be introduced and made law; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47649/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The General Scheme of a Road Traffic Bill is currently in preparation in my Department, and I expect to bring it to Government in the near future for approval to draft. Once drafted it is my intention to publish this Bill early next year. Once published, I will introduce it in the Oireachtas at the earliest possible date.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

1207. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the sports capital grants for applications made earlier this year will be allocated and made public; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47743/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department has received over 2,170 applications for funding under the 2012 Sports Capital Programme. This is the largest number of applications ever received under the Programme.

Departmental officials are processing all applications and this process will take some time due to the volume of applications received.

I expect to be able to announce the list of successful applicants later this year. All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application at that stage.

National Roads Authority Projects

1208. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the Gort to Tuam motorway project N17/N18, County Galway; when a contractor will be appointed; when the project is expected to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47822/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Safety Issues

1209. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will outline the regulatory measures for the sale and distribution of motor vehicle tyres; the level to which these measures are implemented and overseen; if he has, in conjunction with the Department of Finance, estimated the level of non-compliant operators and the loss of revenue to the Exchequer caused by these black economy operators; the measures he is taking to ensure all businesses in the tyre sales industry here are compliant with all relevant standards and regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47824/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have no role in

the trade of second hand tyres or in the other matters referred to by the Deputy in his Question, which relate to matters of trade and revenue collection.

Bus Éireann Services

1210. **Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way we arrived at a situation where Bus Éireann no longer has to live up to a Public Service Requirement; the reason expressway bus routes were designated as commercial in the first instance and now that they are being abandoned on commercially criteria; what he will instruct Bus Éireann and the National Transport Authority to replace them with; if he is satisfied with the fact that CIE and Bus Éiereann no longer live up to their mandates as providers of transport to all parts of our country, densely populated and sparsely populated alike; his views on whether the reduction in services provided by Bus Éireann in particular contribute to the decline of life in rural communities and smaller towns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47869/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I refer the Deputy to my response to his question of 23rd October, a copy of which is reproduced below. The provision of bus services and the routes they take are operational matters for Bus Éireann in conjunction with the National Transport Authority (NTA). I have referred the Deputy’s question to both for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Dáil Question No: 705 To ask the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the decision to cut bus routes is taken by The National Transport Authority, Bus Éireann or the Department of Transport; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan.

* For WRITTEN answer on Tuesday, 23rd October, 2012.

Ref No: 45726/12

Answered by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport Leo Varadkar

REPLY

Bus Éireann currently operates two types of public service; commercial services operating under the Expressway brand, which are operated under licences granted by the National Transport Authority (NTA) and socially necessary but financially unviable services, known as Public Service Obligation (PSO) services, which are operated under a contract with the NTA. The NTA makes a payment to the two bus companies that operate the PSO services for those services.

The legislation governing the licensing of commercial public bus passenger services, such as Expressway, is the Public Transport Regulation Act 2009. Responsibility for the licensing of Public Bus Passenger Services rests with the National Transport Authority (NTA). The NTA published, in November 2010, new Guidelines for the licensing of public bus services which set out the basis for a reformed licensing system for commercial bus passenger services in the State. There is nothing to prevent Bus Éireann from applying for an amendment to a licence in respect of such a service. As part of its Expressway turnaround plan, Bus Éireann is making changes to a number of its commercial services to meet the customer demand for limited stop services with quicker journey times and airport connections so that such services are commercially viable. Failure to react to this market demand and competitive pressures would result in

a reduction and/or loss of Expressway services and jobs.

Bus Éireann may also propose route changes to services provided by the company under its PSO contract with the NTA. Any such proposals are subject to negotiation with the National Transport Authority, who may accept, reject or modify any requested change to a PSO service.

Irish Coast Guard Issues

1211. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in relation to the forthcoming decision affecting the future of Valentia Radio Station, County Kerry, if a decision has been made regarding the future of the station; if he will reveal that decision; if a decision has not been made, when will he bring his recommendations to Cabinet and when he expects a decision to be made; the specific evaluation criteria there are for any such decision, including weightings; and his plans regarding the offer made to him directly by the Director of the Coast Guard to transfer key rescue communications equipment and eventually staff from Malin Head, County Donegal and Valentia to Blanchardstown, County Dublin. [47876/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Following on from the Irish Coast Guard - Value for Money Review, no decisions have been made in relation to the Marine Radio Sub Co-ordination Centres at Valentia or Malin Head. When I published that review, and the Value for Money review of the Marine Survey Office in July last I made it clear that I wouldn't accept or reject any of the recommendations until a full assessment of the proposals has been undertaken and actions prioritised to address the issues identified as requiring attention. This process of assessment and preparation of the action plan is in hand in my Department and I expect it will be completed shortly.

No offer has been made by the Director of the Coast Guard, nor are there proposals being considered, to transfer equipment or staff from Malin Head or Valentia to Blanchardstown, Dublin 15.

Irish Coast Guard Issues

1212. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in relation to the maritime radio stations, his plan to merge the MSO and IRCG divisions similar to the UK, thus saving on manpower and making end to end marine safety more efficient. [47877/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Both the Marine Survey Office (MSO) and the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) are divisions within the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and are under the responsibility of the Assistant Secretary responsible for the maritime sector. The recently completed value for money reviews undertaken by Fishers Associates into the MSO and the IRCG have recommended closer integration of both services, through for example sharing of IT systems, exchange of expertise and leveraging of synergies. These issues are being reviewed as part of the Department's consideration of the recommendations in the value for money reviews.

National Transport Authority

1213. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount it costs to run the National Transport Authority; the amount it costs to run his Depart-

ment; if he will quantify the savings at his Department when some of its duties were transferred to the new authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47938/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The cost of running the National Transport Authority (NTA) is an operational matter for the Authority and I have referred the Deputy's question to it for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

My Department's 2012 expenditure allocation and 2011 provisional expenditure outturn are set out in the Revised Estimates Volume, Vote 31 which is published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and is available on that Department's website. However for the Deputies information the allocation in 2012 from the Exchequer to the NTA is €376,985,000 (€246,747,000 for current expenditure and €130,238,000 for capital expenditure) and the provisional expenditure outturn for 2011 was €376,985,000 (€269,348,000 for current expenditure and €211,000,000 for capital expenditure).

The NTA has assumed responsibility for a range of tasks from my Department including national bus route licensing, rail passenger rights redress, Integrated Ticketing, the rural transport programme, the public service contracts with the CIÉ companies and for managing the State's contract with Irish Rail for infrastructure. To resource this remit a number of staff posts was transferred from my Department's allocation to the NTA. The associated pay allocations are adjusted to reflect the transfer of posts to the NTA. Consequently there are no net savings in my Department's vote as a result of the transfer of functions. However, it should be noted that the rationale for the creation of the NTA was not to generate cost savings.

Driving Licence Issues

1214. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the new driver licence card will be made available; the data that will be contained on the card; if he will ensure that provision is made for the inclusion of basic medical data and emergency contact numbers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47951/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In line with the requirements of EU Directive 2006/126EC, Ireland will introduce a new plastic card licence on 19 January 2013. In the immediate term, it is intended to include a numerical code that will indicate preference for organ donation. There are no plans to include basic medical data and/or emergency contact numbers and this position has been agreed in consultation with the Department of Health and Children.

Railway Stations Upgrade

1215. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request the chief executive officer of Iarnród Éireann to install a notice board beside the ticket office at a station (details supplied) in County Dublin informing commuters of the times the ticket office is opened and manned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48019/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Proposed Legislation

1216. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he expects the introduction of the law with regard to the testing of the unconscious driver; the reason there has been a delay in introducing same; if he envisages this measures being included in the upcoming Road Traffic Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48072/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In July 2011, I informed the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment, Transport, Culture and the Gaeltacht of my intention to provide for a number of road safety related measures, including testing of unconscious drivers following a collision where injury has occurred, in future road traffic legislation. The Committee expressed concerns that the taking of specimens of blood from unconscious drivers might raise constitutional issues and requested that advice be sought on the matter from the Office of the Attorney General (AGO).

My Department has sought that advice and is awaiting a response.

Provided the AGO indicates that it is appropriate to do so, I propose to provide for testing of unconscious drivers in the next Road Traffic Bill, which I hope to publish early in 2013.

Questions Nos. 1217 and 1218 answered with Question No. 1204.

Bus Éireann Services

1219. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a person with a previous conviction for a driving offence is disqualified from driving for Bus Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48094/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for Bus Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

1220. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a sports capital grant for the provision of an allweather playing pitch with lights in respect of a club (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48142/12]

1227. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update, and status report, on applications (details supplied) made under the 2012 sports capital grant programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48241/12]

1230. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update and status report on applications (details supplied) in County Donegal made under the 2012 sports capital grant programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48362/12]

1232. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a sports capital grant in respect of an organisation (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48535/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1220, 1227, 1230 and 1232 together.

My Department has received over 2,170 applications for funding under the 2012 Sports Capital Programme. This is the largest number of applications ever received under the Programme.

Departmental officials are processing all applications and this process will take some time due to the volume of applications received.

I expect to be able to announce the list of successful applicants later this year. All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application at that stage.

Rural Transport Services Provision

1221. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when RTPs may expect to be notified of amalgamations; their budget for 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48163/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): The National Transport Authority are currently developing an Implementation Plan which will involve the restructuring of RTP Groups. I understand that consultation with the County and City Manager's Association will take place as part of the process of developing this Plan. The Plan will be submitted to me for approval in the coming weeks. I will carefully consider the proposals submitted by the NTA and hope to be in a position to announce my decision on the matter before the end of this year.

Funding for 2013 will be determined in the coming weeks as part of the Estimates process with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Tourism Promotion

1222. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he will take to enhance and promote angling tourism; his plans to increase investment in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48181/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's Question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Road Improvement Schemes

1223. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the need for his Department to reinstate, partially or wholly, the local improvement scheme in order to remediate the damage caused to roads due to the inclement weather of this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48214/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Local Improvements Scheme provided funding for the maintenance and improvement of private road-

ways which are, in the first instance, a matter for the relevant landowner.

State grants available to supplement expenditure by local authorities on the maintenance of regional and local roads have been reduced significantly and there will be further cuts over the next few years. The scale of the cuts have necessitated that some grant programmes be curtailed or ended.

In making adjustments to the regional and local roads allocations the primary aim has been, as far as is possible, to protect previous investment in the road network and use the available funding to maintain and restore public roads, including those in rural areas. Given that priority, it was not possible this year to assist with any works on private roads.

The feasibility of providing funding to assist with maintenance of private roads will be reviewed in the context of the monies available under the 2013 grant allocations for regional and local roads. In the interim, it is open to local authorities to continue to operate the scheme or a similar scheme from their own resources.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

1224. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will list by applicant, the applications made under the sports capital programme 2012 in Dublin. [48238/12]

1225. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will list by name, all of the sports capital grant applications made under the 2012 sports capital programme in County Donegal. [48239/12]

1226. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will list by name, all the sports capital grant applications made under the 2012 sports capital programme in County Mayo. [48240/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1224 and 1226, inclusive, together.

My Department has received over 2,170 applications for funding under the 2012 Sports Capital Programme. This is the largest number applications ever received under the Programme.

I intend to publish a full list of all applications received under the Programme on my Department's website www.dttas.ie in the coming days.

Question No. 1227 answered with Question No. 1220.

Driving Licence Issues

1228. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to acquire Canadian recognition of valid Irish driving licences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48242/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Road Safety Authority (RSA) has operational responsibility for approving countries for the recognition and mutual exchange of driving licences.

As you would expect, it is preferable to conclude mutual agreements at a national level so that there is a consistent approach across the whole country. This approach reduces the not insignificant burden of evaluating a number of licensing regimes within a single country where a federal arrangement applies.

However, for practical purposes, it is not always possible to work at a national level. In such cases, an alternative is to work with individual provinces where there might be a concentration of Irish emigrants. As such, following engagement with the Irish Embassy in Ottawa, a number of provinces in Canada have been identified for mutual recognition purposes. It has been decided, at this time, to prioritise Ontario as it is now home to a large community of Irish people.

The RSA have recently provided a comprehensive report to the Irish Embassy in Ontario on the details of the driver licensing and driver testing system in Ireland. The Embassy has also requested similar information from the licensing authority in Ontario. Once this information has been provided by the Canadian authorities, the RSA will seek to come to a mutually acceptable agreement, if appropriate, with the licensing authority in Ontario. Until that time, the Irish Embassy in Ontario is actively pursuing the Canadian authorities at a local level, and the RSA is in regular contact with the Embassy in an effort to minimise any delays in this process.

Sports Funding

1229. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of money that was paid via the Irish Sport Council, to high performance athletes in each of the years 2009 to 2012 inclusive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48338/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Irish Sports Council, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport, including the allocation of funding to high performance athletes.

I have referred the Deputy's question to the Irish Sports Council for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a reply has not been received within ten days.

Question No. 1230 answered with Question No. 1220.

Road Improvement Schemes

1231. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the proposed flyover at Newlands Cross, Clondalkin, Dublin and if the impact of works and the completed project on residents will be taken into account; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48508/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Question No. 1232 answered with Question No. 1220.

Northern Ireland Issues

1233. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide details of the type and frequency of North South engagement his Department undertakes; the current priorities in this area; the number of whole time equivalent staff assigned to these matters; the grades involved and the amount of time each grade spends on North South Activities as a proportion of their WTE employment; the co-ordination arrangements that have been put in place; if there are any current vacancies in North South Co-operation unites; the duration of this vacancy and the steps being taken to fill the vacancy. [48553/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I and my officials are directly involved in ongoing and frequent North South engagement up to and including the highest levels. Most of this work is undertaken in the context of actively pursuing our priorities for advancing cooperation through the structures of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC). As the Deputy will be aware the Council meets in both Transport and Tourism Sectoral formats. The last NSMC Transport meeting took place on the 5th October. Amongst the areas of ongoing North South cooperation discussed at this meeting were the mutual recognition of penalty points, progress on the A5/A8 road projects, the development and delivery of road safety strategies, cooperation in the area of enforcement of vehicle safety standards and current EU proposals with implications for the transport sector on the island.

The next NSMC Tourism Sectoral is scheduled for the 28th November. Amongst the discussion items will be Tourism Ireland's Business Plan for 2013 and major tourism initiatives next year such as The Gathering Ireland 2013 and the UK City of Culture.

With regard to staffing, because of the importance of the work within the Department, in practice north/south cooperation is mainstreamed into day-to-day work right across the Department. The divisions and agencies dealing with various policy areas have regular interaction with their colleagues in Northern Ireland.

As previously outlined to the Deputy, general North/South coordination is overseen within my Department by the Tourism Marketing & Impact Assessment Unit and is supported by 1 Principal Officer, 1 Assistant Principal Officer and 1 Higher Executive Officer led by the relevant Assistant Secretary. Responsibility rests with this unit as it also deals with the oversight of Tourism Ireland, the only North South body under the aegis of my Department. There are no vacancies in this unit at present.

Road Projects Contracts

1234. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in view of the fact that on Tuesday 30 October the main N86 Camp to Dingle road was shut down by protestors over alleged non-payments for work carried out by them for the contractors who had won the National Roads Authority contract to do the work, the action that will be taken to ensure that this type of situation does not happen again; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48654/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to

the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects, including this one on the N86, is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Tourism Promotion

1235. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 711 and 712 of 23 October 2012, and in respect of his Department's €330,000 expenditure on the domain name Ireland.com as part of the €495,000 overall paid for the domain name from the Irish Times, if he will provide an outline of the revenue headings and quanta of profit from which Tourism Ireland expects to recoup the €495,000 expenditure by 2015. [48662/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The matter raised is an operational one for Tourism Ireland Limited as the body responsible for promoting the island of Ireland as a visitor destination overseas. I have referred the Deputy's Question to Tourism Ireland for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Industrial Disputes

1236. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will ensure that all the industrial relations mechanisms of the State are utilised as a matter of urgency to avoid the proposed upcoming strike action at Aer Lingus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48667/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Industrial relation issues at Aer Lingus are a matter in which I have no direct function and are for the airline to address in conjunction with unions and employees.

I have urged the parties to re-engage in deliberations with the assistance of the industrial relations mechanisms of the State as soon as possible so that the planned industrial action can be averted.

Tourism Promotion

1237. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way the Atlantic Corridor will be marketed and promoted and to whom; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48673/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Operational responsibility for the promotion and development of tourism, including particular tourism products and regions, rests with the tourism agencies. Accordingly, the matters raised are operational ones for Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland and I have referred the Deputy's Question to them for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Bus Éireann Services

1238. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the status of the services tender for the Bus Éireann breakdown service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48677/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for Bus Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

1239. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the objective criteria that will be used to assess sports capital grant applications to ensure that allocations are fairly distributed across the country, according to sporting need. [48699/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): Every valid application is assessed according to the following criteria:

- Extent to which the project will increase the levels of active participation/ improved standards of sporting performance, especially among women and older citizens
- Level of socioeconomic disadvantage in the area
- Technical merits of the project
- Financial viability of project
- Level of own funding available
- Extent to which applicant will be able to maintain project after completion
- Current and planned levels of sport and/or recreational sport facilities in the area
- Current or proposed sharing of facilities with other sporting groups or schools
- Level of SCP (or other Government) funding received in the past
- Strategies to be used to attract people from disadvantaged areas
- Priority of proposed improvements/ facility in relation to existing facilities.

National and regional projects are also assessed on 4 additional criteria:

- Priority as identified by the relevant National Governing Body of Sport (NGB)
- Priority as identified by the Irish Sports Council (NGB and third level only)
- Location of facility within the network of national, regional and municipal multi-sport facilities
- Linkages with Local Authorities Swimming Pools Programme (municipal multi-sport only)

Allocations also take account of county populations.

Road Projects Contracts

1240. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the M11 project announced under the stimulus package; the various stages of this project; the expected timelines for each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48708/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects, within its capital budget, is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. In this context the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Framework 2012-2016 included funding provision for N11 Arklow to Rathnew and Newland Cross projects.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Projects Contracts

1241. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the N25 project announced under the stimulus package; the various stages of this project; the expected timelines for each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48709/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Subject, therefore, to appropriate funding arrangements being put in place the implementation of projects under the infrastructure stimulus package will be a matter for the NRA. As the Deputy is aware, however, the stimulus plan will be funded in part from the sale of state assets. No such as asset sales have taken place to date.

Regional Road Network

1242. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the Galway city bypass project announced under the stimulus package; the various stages of this project; the expected timelines for each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48710/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As indicated in the announcement on the infrastructure stimulus package the Galway city bypass project, while an important project, is on hold at the moment pending the outcome of legal proceedings.

Road Projects Contracts

1243. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he and

the National Roads Authority will clarify the uncertainty in relation to the M20 County Cork to County Limerick motorway project as it has added to the delay with the N21 Adare bypass that was recently refused planning permission by an Bord Pleanála and is a major blow to business and tourism in County Kerry; if his attention has been drawn to the impact the major bottleneck of traffic in Adare is having on tourism and job creation in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48730/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The decision of An Bord Pleanála to refuse planning permission for the Adare by-pass is regrettable. While we do not currently have the funding to the construct the by-pass I would have liked to have seen the project brought to ‘shovel-ready’ stage. It will now be necessary to consider alternative options for Adare.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

The NRA will be working within a very restricted budget for the next number of years. These funding constraints mean that it will not be possible to progress a range of worthwhile projects for now. In the case of the M20 project, had An Bord Pleanála approved the scheme, the NRA/Local Authorities concerned would have been required to exercise the CPO authorisation within 18 months or the approval would lapse. The land costs involved would have been very significant. For this reason I considered it prudent to stop the process prior to that happening rather than tie up so much capital in land acquisition at the expense of road maintenance and minor improvements. The project has not, however, been abandoned but deferred in the light of the current circumstances. When the financial position improves the NRA will re-examine the position in relation to this, and other worthwhile projects.

For now NRA will have to work within its capital budget and assess and prioritise projects within that funding envelope. In this context I have referred the issue of the NRA response to an Bord Pleanála’s decision on the Adare bypass to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don’t receive a reply within 10 working days

Public Sector Staff Issues

1244. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the sectors of the public sector that are currently employed on a roster basis and if there are any plans to remove employees from the rostering system. [49079/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): There are two areas in my Department with rostered attendance patterns, the Irish Coast Guard and the Driver and Vehicle Computer Services Division, where staff work shift patterns. The rostered work patterns are necessary in the case of the Irish Coast Guard to provide a 24 hour/7 day rescue service for the State 365 days a year. The shift patterns in the Driver and Vehicle Computer Services Division are to provide technical support for the National Vehicle and Driver Computer system in particular outside of the normal 9 to 5 working hours. There have been no plans submitted to me to change this system.

Question No. 1245 answered with Question No. 1195.