

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 8, inclusive, answered orally.

Proposed Legislation

9. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when he intends to action the 2011 programme for Government commitment to legislate for a reformulated code of laws, replacing both the Ministers and Secretaries Acts and the Public Service Management Act, on the legal relationship between Ministers and their civil servants and their legal accountability for decisions and for management of Departments. [10439/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In line with the Programme for Government commitment referred in the Deputy's question, I am committed to bringing forward the necessary legislative changes or other reforms to meet the objective of ensuring greater clarity and legal certainty regarding the legal relationship between Ministers and their civil servants and the appropriate accountabilities that apply in each case.

The Deputy may be aware of the background to this commitment.

The need to see, in appropriate circumstances, beyond the corporate 'veil' of ministerial responsibility that often descends on government departments when significant issues are raised regarding administrative performance was a priority highlighted by both government parties prior to the last election.

The "New Government, Better Government" policy document which I authored advocates a wide-ranging series of reforms to ministerial responsibility and in particular legislative reform to re-define the relationship between Ministers and their Departments. While this is a complex area, the fundamental objective is to enshrine three basic propositions:-

- If the Minister takes a decision personally, he or she should say so and account for it.
- If the decision is taken by the Department then the relevant, named official should say so and account for it.
- The Minister would then have to account for the degree of supervision and oversight he or she exercised over the Department

I have asked the Government Reform Unit in my Department to carry out a review of the current accountability framework for ministers and civil servants set out in the Ministers and Secretaries Acts and the Public Service Management Act, 1997.

Work is now at an advanced stage in my Department in finalising a policy paper based on the outcome of that review. The paper examines the current legislative framework underpinning civil service accountability in these statutes, as well as the current administrative and organisational accountability arrangements in place. It also explores the international practice and developments in this area. To assist with this work, a consultation process on these issues has been carried out; this initially included international academics, national experts and commentators and some senior civil servants.

I expect to bring this paper to Government shortly to seek approval for the publication of the policy paper. It is intended that the paper should act as a basis for a process of wider consultation on the proposed reforms.

I look forward to hearing the views of the Deputy and other members of this House in the course of this consultation.

Public Procurement Tenders

10. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in view of the National Procurement Service annual survey's 2012 acknowledgement that the challenges facing micro enterprises include particular barriers to participation in the public procurement market the action he will take to reduce existing barriers and increase micro enterprise participation in the public procurement process. [10431/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): In March 2012 in conjunction with Minister for Small Business John Perry and I launched a Report on Opportunities in Public Sector Procurement. The Report, compiled by DCU, was a result of Ireland's first national survey of public procurement practice, carried out by the National Procurement Service (NPS) of the OPW, with over 4,000 suppliers and 600 public procurers contributing to the research. Some of the key recommendations regarding micro industry are outlined below.

1. Minimise Barriers to Micro and Young Enterprises through Open Tendering

Department of Finance Circular 10/2010 recommends that all supplies and services contracts below €125,000 and all works contracts below €250,000 are to be awarded under open procedure. The National Procurement Service actively promotes the use of the open procedure at its training courses for public sector buyers. It also provides a link on eTenders showing that the open procedure should be used below the Thresholds stated.

2. Facilitate Micro-enterprise Access through Lots and Joint Bidding

The new eTenders website is designed to make it easier for public sector buyers to use lots when going to tender. It allows the buyer to specify the number of lots and then to provide detailed specifications for each lot. The new system also allows for suppliers to include a separate bid if where they win all lots available in a tender. Again the National Procurement Service actively promotes the use of Lots at its training courses for public sector buyers.

Similarly the NPS encourages SMEs and micro-enterprises to collaborate on public sector tenders by encouraging joint bidding or consortium formation.

In NPS competitions, the tender documents explicitly seek to encourage the participation of SMEs. A prime example of this is when the NPS decided to divide the office supplies contract into three individual lots for Stationery, ICT Consumables and Paper. SMEs that believed the

scope of the competitions were beyond their technical or business capacity were encouraged to explore the possibilities of forming relationships with other SMEs or with larger enterprises.

Through such relationships they could participate and contribute to the successful implementation of any contracts that resulted from these competitions and therefore increase their social and economic benefits. Larger enterprises were also encouraged to consider the practical ways that SMEs could be included in their proposals to maximise the social and economic benefits of the contracts that result from these tenders.

3. Reduce Paperwork Burden

The NPS in conjunction with the Chief State Solicitor's Office have produced a set of standardised documents for use by contracting authorities when tendering. This has permitted suppliers to become more familiar with the questions to be answered and the forms to be appended to their tender thus making it easier for them to respond to tenders. The new eTenders website also allows suppliers to load their corporate documents such as Tax Clearance Certificates, Accounts etc on to the site just once where they can be used for multiple tenders. These documents are stored securely and comply with the data protection requirements.

The NPS places Prior Information Notices on the EU's official Journal, which give up to a years notice of intention to go to the market for goods or services. Similar information is also made available on the NPS web.

The National Procurement Service (NPS) is working with an established collaborative working group to identify and implement practical solutions to challenges for the SME sector in relation to public procurement.

In exceptional circumstances, and if appropriate, the NPS pilots innovative solutions that can involve research and expenditure up to EU thresholds with a view to informing future tender competitions and the development RFTs that would issue to market.

The NPS Survey for 2013 has just closed and again has had a very positive response from both Suppliers and Buyers. A report on the findings of this latest survey will issue in the second quarter.

Public Service Reform Plan Measures

11. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will specifically outline the way the interests of the citizen user of public services are included in framing the reform objectives of his Department; if he has consulted with citizen and consumer advocacy groups to ensure that his proposals are geared towards providing the best possible service from the perspective of the citizen user; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10193/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Government's Public Service Reform Plan, published in November 2011, is based on five core commitments to change, which include "Placing customer service at the core of everything we do". To this end, the Reform Plan includes a range of actions to improve the citizen's access to, and interaction with, Government services.

No one has a monopoly on good ideas and a broad range of voices, opinions and perspectives should be used to inform and enhance the decision-making and planning processes. In terms of public services, it makes sense that the views of service users are sought and valued,

and I welcome all constructive input and feedback in this context. For this reason, I regularly meet with the relevant Oireachtas Committees to review progress on the Reform Plan and outline planned initiatives.

Engagement with the citizen and improving customer services are important and ongoing considerations for all Government Departments and Agencies. As part of this, the Customer Charter initiative involves a process whereby Departments and Agencies are required to consult with their customers, to set service standards, to measure progress against those standards and to report on that progress in their annual reports. To assist organisations in this process, my Department published revised guidelines for the Preparation of Customer Charters and Customer Action Plans last year.

Consultation on specific policy issues is undertaken by the relevant Department or Agency. For example, in the context of my own Department, members of the public were invited to submit suggestions for savings and efficiencies as part of the Comprehensive Expenditure Review in 2011. More recently, my Department has undertaken consultation processes on issues such as the regulation of lobbying, Whistleblowers legislation and proposals for changes to the Civil Service Accountability framework.

The overall reform programme also sets out to make Government more open, transparent and accountable. Significant progress is being made in this area, for example, the extension of the Ombudsman's remit, establishing a legal framework for Oireachtas inquiries, reform and extension of Freedom of Information, regulation of lobbying and the introduction of comprehensive whistleblower protections. In the context of being open to a wide range of voices and perspectives, I would also make reference to the Convention on the Constitution, which is a forum of 100 people, including 66 randomly selected citizens.

Overall, we are making good progress on the implementation of our ambitious programme of Public Service Reform. In this context, our objective is not just a leaner and more efficient Public Service, but also a more integrated, responsive and customer-focused Public Service.

Capital Expenditure Programme Issues

12. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the progress he expects to be made in 2013 on the implementation of the stimulus plan announced in July 2012; the number of jobs that will be created under the plan in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10399/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): On 17 July 2012, the Government announced its plans for an additional 2.25 billion euro investment in public infrastructure projects in Ireland. The most important contribution capital investment can now make is in providing the capacity for the economy to grow, which will in turn create employment.

As the Deputy will recall, the stimulus package included 1.4 billion euro to fund the proposed new Public Private Partnerships (PPP) programme and the delivery of this is the initial focus for my Department. This 1.4 billion euro investment is additional to the direct investment by the exchequer in infrastructure which will be some 3.4 billion euro in 2013.

Job creation is a critical priority for Government. Investment in the projects included in the Stimulus package is expected to generate significant numbers of jobs spread out across the country. Previous analysis of each sector indicates that the investment in the PPP Pipeline may generate around 13,000 direct jobs and many more indirect jobs. It will also create much needed

social and economic infrastructure and aid economic recovery. I have asked my Department to update this analysis to verify these figures and help to target our scarce resources to best effect.

I am anxious that this new Programme be rolled out as quickly as possible so that we can create the extra jobs on the ground without delay. The PPP projects are large value investments and by their nature are complex and take time to develop and deliver both for the public and the private sector. From the public sector side, my Department is working closely with the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) and Sponsoring Departments to progress projects and to accelerate delivery of the programme. On the basis of this work, NDFA expect to issue tenders for the schools bundles by end May, at the latest. The tender for the Primary Care Centres Bundle is expected to be issued in August followed by the Grangegorman tender in September. Tenders for the two new PPP roads projects are also due to issue by the summer.

The preparatory work for the projects is well underway in the various Departments and Agencies. At this early stage in the process most of the employment impact to date has been in the technical and advisory areas.

It is too early to provide exact numbers of jobs created so far, although some projects such as the new DIT Grangegorman project have already seen significant employment impact where a team of 40 architects, engineers, quantity surveyors and other specialists are already in place. Similarly in relation to the schools and primary care centres, a number of technical advisors and design teams are in place.

The NDFA have established a model to track employment creation on Schools Bundle 3 PPP project which commenced last November. To date, it shows that 321 jobs have been created by this project, 274 direct jobs and 47 indirect jobs. This model will be updated regularly and will be used to track job creation for Stimulus Package Phase 1 projects.

Further employment benefits will be evident as the projects progress through the tendering phase and construction gets underway. The indicative timetable for the projects suggest construction is expected to commence on the first roads project in Q3 2013 and on the accommodation projects by Q4 2014.

My Department together with the NDFA and the Sponsoring Authorities are also looking at how to maximise job creation as part of each tender competition that is in line with procurement regulations. With the NDFA, we are also examining ways to encourage SME participation by facilitating access to the programme and the NDFA is working with Enterprise Ireland to organise awareness raising events for SMEs.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

13. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding the negotiations with the public sector unions on a successor to the Croke Park Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10376/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Negotiations have taken place between public service employers and the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions regarding the Government's stated intention to reach agreement on securing an overall saving of €1bn gross from the public service pay and pensions bill by 2015. Following intensive engagement in recent days between the parties, which was facilitated by the Labour Relations Commission (LRC), the LRC has developed and recommended a set of proposals for consideration and agreement that seeks to secure the €1bn gross savings required by the Exchequer while ameliorating the impacts on public service staff particularly those on

low and middle incomes to the greatest extent possible. Public servants will be able to consider the full set of proposals by the LRC which were published yesterday and the public service staff representatives who remained in negotiations have indicated that these proposals will be subject to ballot by members.

I am satisfied that, subject to its ultimate acceptance and the necessary legislation being passed by the Oireachtas, the proposals will produce the necessary savings of €1 billion over the lifetime of the Agreement.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

14. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of posts that have been filled in the public sector since the beginning of the moratorium on recruitment; if he will provide details by Department and the rationale for the lifting of the moratorium in these areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10371/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy is aware, the Government is committed to delivering a leaner, more efficient public service; a process that continues to require tight control of public service numbers.

The moratorium on promotion and recruitment in the public service has been an important control mechanism for this purpose and has served to help reduce numbers and allow for some limited recruitment where necessary, for example in frontline service posts in the health and education sectors.

At the end of 2012, there were just over 290,000 public servants, which is a net reduction of some 30,000 since 2008. Within that, it has been necessary to allow for some limited recruitment to protect service levels, but such exemptions are only considered in exceptional cases and in pressing circumstances.

My Department is currently compiling the specific data and information requested, which will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible. In the meantime, the Deputy can consult my Department's web site, which has details on public service numbers and trends as far back as 1994.

Looking forward over the course of the next few years, the public service will be required to deliver more savings and maintain services with fewer resources and staff. Budget 2013 will deliver a further reduction in Public Service numbers to a ceiling of 287,000, and by end-2014 this must go down again to 282,500.

It is part of the day to day function of the Boards and Management of all public bodies to assess, budget and plan for current and ongoing staffing requirements within the context of reducing public service numbers. In support of this, the Strategic Workforce Planning Groups in each sector are currently ensuring that sectoral employers develop plans to deal on an ongoing basis with the operational and strategic consequences arising from the reductions in public service staffing numbers.

Public Sector Staff Remuneration

15. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the saving to the Exchequer if all annual public sector pay, to include local authorities and State agencies, was capped at €100,000. [10428/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I refer to my replies to Questions Nos. 162, 163, 166, 167 and 171 of 8 November 2012.

The estimated full year gross saving in the Exchequer and Local Government pay bill arising from a cap of €100,000 is €290m. The estimate takes account of the reductions in pay arising from the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (No. 2) Act, 2009, but does not take account of any offsetting reductions in taxes and levies. As the combined effect of the estimated marginal tax rate and the pension related reduction at a pay level for a public servant of €100,000 p.a. or higher is at least 62.5%, the estimated net savings would be reduced to less than €110m.

Public Procurement Regulations

16. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will confirm if National Procurement Service contracts are now mandatory for all local public sector contract procurement; and if so, the necessary minimal annual turnover of a business to qualify to tender for a contract. [10437/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): In July 2012, following a government decision to make eight of the National Procurement Service (NPS) contracts mandatory, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform issued 'Circular 06/12: Public Procurement (Framework Agreements)'. The purpose of this Circular is to inform all public bodies of the mandatory requirement to utilise central contracts, put in place by the NPS, when procuring a range of commonly acquired goods and services. Such central arrangements are targeted at securing best value for money and facilitating contracting authorities to deliver services within their budgetary constraints. The eight mandatory contracts are:

1. Stationery & Office Supplies
2. Paper
3. Janitorial Supplies
4. ICT Consumables
5. Managed Print Services (When opting for managed print service solutions it is mandatory to use this framework agreement.)
6. Advertising (Print Media)
7. Motor Vehicles (Cars and Pick-up Trucks)
8. Energy (Electricity and Natural Gas)

The annual turnover required for each competition depends on the estimated value of the contract and will be different for every competition run by the NPS.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

17. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the savings he envisages from the single public service pension scheme which came into effect on 1 January 2013; the timetable over which these will materialise; the number of employees he

expects to be hired under the terms of the scheme in 2013; his views on the operation of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10395/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): My Department estimates that the Single Public Service Pension Scheme will, in the long run, lead to a reduction of about one third in the cost of providing public service pensions, subject to the important caveat that long-term projections in this area are inherently subject to a high degree of uncertainty. This amounts to an eventual saving in terms of annual pension outgo of some €1.8 billion in current terms. The key features of the Single Scheme giving rise to this projected saving are career-average benefit accrual, higher pension age, and pension increases linked to consumer price inflation.

Since the Single Scheme only applies to new-entrant public servants, this foreseen long-term annual outgo saving of one third will not be fully achieved until pension payments to current pensioners and current, pre-Single Scheme, staff have ceased. On this basis, realization of the full dividend to the public finances should be approached early in the second half of this century, with meaningful annual savings emerging during the period 2040 to 2050.

At this early point in the year I am not in a position to give an estimate of the likely number of Single Scheme members who will be hired over the course of 2013. A particular uncertainty in this context is the fact that appointees to public service jobs who have worked in the public service in the 26 weeks preceding their appointment will generally not become members of the Single Scheme.

With respect to the operation of the Single Scheme, my Department is liaising closely with Government Departments and other public service employers. A key priority during the current start-up phase of the scheme is to ensure the reliable collection and remittance of member contributions. Looking further ahead I am determined to ensure that all aspects of scheme functioning, including benefit accrual recording, communication with members and periodic actuarial review are delivered in a reliable and cost-effective manner.

Flood Prevention Measures

18. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the steps being taken to address flood risks within the Shannon basin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10263/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): There is on-going progress in respect of the River Shannon Catchment Flood Risk Assessment & Management (CFRAM) Study which is the core strategy for addressing flood risk in the Shannon Basin.

That assessment is being carried out by Jacobs Engineering, consultants for the Shannon CFRAM Study. In brief the current stages of the assessment covers Data Collection & Surveying, Hydrology Analysis and Detailed Hydraulic Modelling. This stage in turn will lead to the production of a detailed suite of flood hazard maps for public consultation. Details of the Study and regular updates can be found on www.cfram.ie or <http://shannoncframstudy.ie>.

At present, detailed ground surveying of over 1,500 kilometres of watercourses in the Shannon is nearing completion. The outcome of this stage of extensive activity will provide the necessary data to allow work on the development of sophisticated hydraulic models to be advanced.

As the Deputy is aware, Jacobs Engineering was requested by the Office of Public Works (OPW) to carry out a review of the operating regulations and procedures of the control structures along the river Shannon - the River Shannon Water Level Operations Review. The purpose of the report was to identify potential improvements with respect to flood risk management that could be introduced in the short term. This review was carried out in advance of the detailed hydrological analysis and hydraulic modelling which is being addressed within the overall Shannon CFRAM Study.

Arising from consultations on the report, it was agreed, to explore the possibility of carrying out a water level monitoring exercise, involving controlled raising and lowering of weir boards at selected locations, subject to favourable hydrological conditions.

It is important to note that operational control of water flows and levels on the Shannon is a matter for both the ESB and Waterways Ireland. The OPW met with both organisations recently to review the scheduling of such an exercise having regard to existing water management protocols operated by these two bodies for the major storage areas in the Shannon system. It has been agreed that Jacobs Engineering will brief the two bodies shortly on their Operations report in order to advance the water monitoring proposal.

Expenditure Reviews

19. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which cost cutting targets set by his predecessors in the context of the memorandum of understanding have been met to date; if in the course of the review of the Croke Park agreement, cognisance will be taken of previous cost-cutting throughout the sector in order to ensure fairness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10348/13]

29. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if in the context of cost-cutting exercises throughout the public sector, he has identified any particular Government Departments or bodies under their aegis, State or semi-State, which have performed better than others in terms of meeting targets; if particular cognisance is likely to be taken of the issues in such circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10349/13]

154. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which public expenditure has been reduced by each Department in each of the past five years to date; the degree to which identified targets continued to be met in this regard; his projections for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10712/13]

155. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if she will indicate by each Department, the extent to which costs have been reduced under the separate headings of public expenditure reduction and-or public sector reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10713/13]

157. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which savings have been achieved by each Government Department and relevant State or semi-State bodies under their aegis; the degree to which this meets any targets set; the extent of any revision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10715/13]

158. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if any particular Government Department and their respective bodies under their aegis are expected to improve their performance in respect of savings, cost-cutting or reform targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10716/13]

159. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if in the context of the on-going need to reduce costs in line with the memorandum of understanding entered into by his predecessors, he sees the need to incentivise the achievement of such targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10717/13]

161. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total extent of savings achieved to date in the past five years through the elimination of waste; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10719/13]

163. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which he has identified any issues which have culminated in cost overruns in each Government Department and or their subordinate bodies and or agencies in each of the past four years to date; the action required to address any such issues arising; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10721/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 19, 29, 154, 155, 157 to 159, inclusive, 161 and 163 together.

The Government is making good progress on achieving all of our targets and priorities, as articulated in the Government Programme. We are bringing public expenditure back to a sustainable level and driving forward the public service reform agenda to ensure that efficiencies and reformed work practices play a full part in contributing to the overall budgetary consolidation effort.

The medium-term expenditure management process began with the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) exercise in 2011, which was carried out by all Departments to identify ways of reducing expenditure, in line with commitments under the Joint EU/IMF Programme of Financial Support for Ireland, while minimising the impact on service delivery.

Ministerial expenditure ceilings for 2012-2014 were introduced on an administrative basis in the *Comprehensive Expenditure Report*, published in December 2011. The CRE exercise forms the foundation of these ceilings and is the basis for all subsequent decisions on expenditure. The precise composition of the 2013 budgetary consolidation was set out in the *Expenditure Report 2013*, published on 5th December, 2012.

As regards the question of incentives to achieve targets and reduce costs, it is relevant to note that the Medium Term Expenditure Framework envisages a new “carryover” facility for Departments that manage their allocations within budget in any year, so that they can use these savings in the following year. Those Departments that are proactive in driving reform, innovation and structural planning will naturally be best-placed to avail of this facility into the future. The consequence on Departments who exceed their current expenditure ceiling in any given year will be the assimilation of an offsetting adjustment in their envelope for the following year, and they will be required to devise appropriate policy measures to live within the reduced allocation. It will be a matter for Ministers and Heads of Department/Office to devise forward-looking plans and policies and to ensure that the Ministerial Expenditure Ceilings are adhered to.

The Implementation Body has reported total savings in the order of €1.5 billion over the first two years of the Agreement, which comprises of approximately €810 million and €680 million in pay and non-pay savings respectively. This is happening in a climate of industrial peace in the Public Service. In addition, I welcome the recent proposals from the Labour Relations Commission agreed pay deal which will help reduce the Public Service pay bill by €1 billion. While good progress has been made on delivering savings and implementing change, it remains a matter for each Minister and their Departments to ensure that the Vote-level allocations are

adhered to and at the same time ensure that they continue to provide essential frontline services and respond to increasing demands.

Public Sector Management Remuneration

20. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to assemble key data on high payscales in the public and private sectors such as through a new high pay commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10196/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I refer to my reply to Question No: 2834 of 23 January 2013. I have no plans to establish a new high pay commission to assemble pay data. The collection of pay data currently forms an important part of the services provided by the Central Statistics Office.

Public Procurement Tenders

21. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his attention has been drawn to the concerns raised by the school supply sector who believe their businesses cannot survive if excluded from the public procurement process; and the action he will take to tackle these concerns. [10432/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): Leveraging the public procurement spend for the benefit of the economy as a whole has assumed increasing importance in these challenging economic times. Public procurement is discussed at policy level not only in terms of achieving cashable savings but also in terms of offering growth opportunities to small indigenous suppliers who have borne the brunt of the downturn in the domestic and international economy.

In NPS competitions, the tender documents explicitly seek to encourage the participation of SMEs. A prime example of this is when the NPS decided to divide the office supplies contract into three individual lots for Stationery, ICT Consumables and Paper. SMEs that believed the scope of the competitions were beyond their technical or business capacity were encouraged to explore the possibilities of forming relationships with other SMEs or with larger enterprises. Through such relationships they could participate and contribute to the successful implementation of any contracts that resulted from these competitions and therefore increase their social and economic benefits. Larger enterprises were also encouraged to consider the practical ways that SMEs could be included in their proposals to maximise the social and economic benefits of the contracts that result from these tenders.

Codex Ltd, an indigenous company, won the Stationery contract, with an estimated value of €10m per annum, and are sourcing up to 60% of their products using 136 local Irish agents and manufacturers.

Furthermore, the ICT Consumables contract, worth an estimated €8m per annum, was also won by another Irish SME, Datapac Limited. The NPS has also, as part of its education and development remit, an active programme to educate SMEs in how to participate effectively in the public service procurement process. To date the NPS has facilitated workshops and presented at seminars to over 3,500 SMEs nationwide.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

22. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will outline the numbers and cost of agency staff under the aegis of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10304/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question the following table outlines the numbers and cost of agency staff in my Department or in State Agencies under the aegis of my Department:

Office of Public Works

Year	Numbers of Agency Staff	Cost (€'000)
2012	3	210

Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

Year	Numbers of Agency Staff	Cost (€'000)
2012	2.875 (Full Time Equivalent)	120 *
2013 (to date)	3.5 (Full Time Equivalent)	20

* The approximate costs to the Irish Exchequer would be €35,000 (representing 25% of the above total). The majority of costs relating to the numbers of agency staff used by the SEUPB are funded through Programme Technical Assistance. The remainder of these costs is jointly funded via the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland. (Therefore the cost to the Irish Exchequer is approximately 25% of the costs detailed above).

Commercial Rates Valuation Process

23. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide an update in the revaluations process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10191/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In accordance with the Valuation Act, 2001, which came into force on 2nd May, 2002, a national programme, under the direction of the Commissioner of Valuation, is being rolled out progressively for the revaluation of all commercial and industrial properties in the State.

The revaluation programme which has been completed in three County Council areas in Dublin began in November 2005 in the South Dublin County Council area and has since been rolled out to the areas covered by Fingal and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils. The revaluation of South Dublin was completed in December 2007, Fingal was completed in 2009 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown was completed in 2010. The revaluation of Dublin City Council area began in May 2011 and will be completed this year. The Commissioner signed valuation orders for Waterford on 12th December, 2011 and Limerick on 29th March, 2012. The Waterford and Limerick revaluations will be completed in 2013 and 2014 respectively. At that stage, approximately 33% of all rateable properties in the country, representing over 50% of the national valuation base in monetary terms, will have been revalued. The Commissioner has also indicated his intention, subject to a statutory consultation process which is now underway, to sign Valuation Orders in relation to the Galway City Council, Carlow and Kilkenny rating authority areas during 2013.

24. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will ensure that there are no further pay cuts imposed on low and middle income public sector workers. [10303/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Discussions have taken place between public service employers and the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions regarding the Government's stated intention to reach agreement on securing the required overall savings from the public service pay and pensions bill by 2015. Following intensive engagement in recent days between the parties, which was facilitated by the Labour Relations Commission (LRC), the LRC has developed and recommended a set of proposals for consideration and agreement that seeks to secure the savings required by the Exchequer while ameliorating the impacts on public service staff particularly those on low and middle incomes to the greatest extent possible. Public servants will be able to consider the full set of proposals by the LRC which will be available shortly and the public service staff representatives who remained in negotiations have indicated that these proposals will be subject to ballot by members.

State Agencies

25. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the savings achieved to date from the rationalisation and elimination of State agencies; the additional savings expected in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10401/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Since the Government announced its programme of agency rationalisation measures in the Public Service Reform Plan, I have consistently argued that the real benefit from the rationalisation of State Bodies will be a less crowded administrative landscape resulting in greater democratic accountability, less duplication of effort and clearer lines of responsibility for the citizen. This will be of real and lasting benefit to all citizens, regardless of any headline figure on savings.

Specifically, the Public Service Reform Plan aimed to secure €20 million in enhanced service efficiencies and value-for-money from the rationalisation programme. This figure, however modest it appears, will be achieved. The bulk of the savings are derived from a reduction in the number of public servants working in the State Bodies affected. The rationalisation agenda is just one of the reform measures announced in the Public Service Reform Plan and the Programme for Government which facilitates the Government in ensuring delivery of critical services while still being able to reduce public service numbers.

There will of course be other cash savings realised over time as organisations, financial systems, office accommodation etc. are rationalised into leaner, more coherent structures. These savings, some of which will be once-off, will be factored into the overall budgetary framework as they arise.

Public Sector Pensions Issues

26. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the saving to the Exchequer if he imposed public service pension reduction bands (details supplied) to all public sector pensions, including local authorities and State agencies. [10430/13]

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 99% reduction for pensions above a certain level. The changes in rates and bands proposed by the Deputy would save approximately €10 million gross in a full year.

Threshold	Band
First 12,000	0%
Between 12,000 and 24,000	6%
Between 24,001 and 60,000	9%
Between 60,001 and 80,000	20%
Between 80,001 and 100,000	50%
Above 100,000	99%

State Agencies

27. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the steps he will take to prevent the establishment of new State agencies and quangos; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10411/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The focus to date of this Government has been on the rationalisation of state bodies, and by the end of 2012 there were rationalisation measures fully implemented across 21 bodies and measures effecting a further 82 bodies at advanced legislative/administrative stages. The Programme for Government also contains a commitment that when a Department is proposing a new agency or state body, it must prove that the proposed new functions cannot be carried out within its existing structures. In November 2011, I strengthened this commitment by setting out a requirement in the Public Service Reform Plan that in future, legislation to create a new state body should include a ‘sunset clause’ ensuring that the body will cease to exist after a predetermined date unless the body’s mandate is specifically renewed.

Construction Contracts Issues

28. **Deputy Patrick O’Donovan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will consider, as part of the Construction Contracts Bill, a project bank account system, which was previously proposed by this Deputy and which has recently been progressed in Northern Ireland to ensure that only payments owing to subcontractors and individuals relating to particular projects can be made from specific bank accounts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10194/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I would refer the Deputy to my reply to his previous written PQ (PQ 9199/13 - answered 20 February 2013) in which I noted that the key objective of the Construction Contracts Bill is to ensure that cash flows down the supply chain on all construction contracts.

This is achieved by providing a statutory schedule of payments, prohibiting the use of ‘pay when paid’ clauses in construction contracts and, most importantly, it provides the means for subcontractors to enforce these rights; by suspending their labour and the provision of statutory adjudication. Given these provisions the requirement for security of payment reduces since the exposure of a subcontractor to non-payment is greatly reduced.

A range of security of payment options, including Project Bank Accounts were considered in the initial drafts of the Construction Contracts Bill and provision was made for devices such as bonds as part of the first draft of the Bill that was introduced to the Seanad by Senator Feargal Quinn. However such mechanisms were omitted from the current draft of the Bill in order to reduce the administrative and cost burden to the small businesses that make up a large proportion of our construction industry.

Policy in relation to public works contracts is reviewed on a regular basis by the Government Contracts Committee for Construction and the introduction of Project Bank Accounts is under consideration at present.

Question No. 29 answered with Question No. 19.

Public Sector Staff Remuneration

30. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide in tabular form the saving to the Exchequer if public sector increments were withdrawn for all pay under €50,000, between €50,001 and €60,000, between €60,001 and €70,000 and more than €70,000. [10429/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Based on updated information submitted to my Department on the total cost of increments in a full year in the various sectors, the full year cost of increments in the public service (excluding the Local Authority sector) is now estimated at some €150 million per annum. My Department will review the information available to it on the cost of increments across the public service and write to the Deputy with relevant information on those costs.

Budget 2014 Issues

31. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the changes he plans to the budgetary process and timetable for budget 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10388/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The “two-pack”, which has just been agreed at EU level, reinforces the European Semester process and introduces a common budgetary timeline for all Euro-area Member States both in relation to the publication of the national budget and the enactment of the legislation.

Member States are required to publish their draft budget for central government and the main parameters of all other General Government sub-sectors no later than 15 October, each year. The common budgetary timeline also requires that the final budget should be adopted by 31 December.

Accordingly, much of our existing budgetary process, which is currently completed in the first week of December, will have to be progressed earlier in the year. Both myself and my colleague, the Minister for Finance, will be considering the precise implications for Ireland’s traditional budgetary process to ensure that Ireland complies with these new arrangements.

Freedom of Information Legislation

32. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he intends consulting with the Information Commissioner in relation to those State agencies and or bodies which may be excluded from the freedom of information legislation to be introduced later this year; his views on the possible limitations that will come with the inclusion of An Garda Síochána, refugee and asylum agencies as set out in the draft heads of the Bill. [10444/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Decisions on the application of Freedom of Information to public bodies are a matter for Government based on proposals presented to them by me as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government decided last July to endorse the principle contained in the Programme for Government that Freedom of Information should apply to all public bodies subject to some exemptions - in whole or in part - agreed in the public interest. In developing my proposals, I have had regard to the views publicly expressed by the Information Commissioner in relation to the application of FOI to public bodies.

In terms of the inclusion of An Garda Síochána, it remains my intention that Freedom of Information will apply to the administrative records of An Garda Síochána, subject to security exceptions, as set out in the Programme for Government. In the cases of the refugee and asylum agencies, no exemption or exclusion is being proposed, in line with the long-standing position of the Information Commissioner that FOI should apply to these bodies in line with best international practice.

Croke Park Agreement Implementation

33. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on whether the volume and quality of services delivered to the public will be improved as a result of the outcome of the Croke Park talks; the way this is measured; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10386/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Government has, and will continue to be acutely aware of the needs and interests of the users of public services and the quality of those services. The Government's ambitious Public Service Reform Plan was published in November, 2011 and sets out the basis for the comprehensive and strategic reform of the Irish Public Service. The Plan includes a core commitment to "*place customers at the core of everything we do*". In the context of a smaller and leaner Public Service, there is a requirement to become more strategic and flexible and to focus on supporting citizens and businesses where and when they need it most.

The recent discussions between public service management and the ICTU Public Services Committee have resulted in a set of proposals from the Labour Relations Commission on a series of pay and productivity measures in order to achieve the Government's target of an additional €1 billion in savings as part of our determination to meet our fiscal targets.

The proposals contain a number of reforms and workplace changes that will help to ensure that front line services are maintained and in some areas improve these services, in the face the necessary reduction in the numbers of public service staff.

The full details of the LRC proposals are available on my Departments website.

Exchequer Savings

34. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the gross and net savings in each of the next three years from the targeted redundancy scheme in the public service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10396/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy is aware this Government is committed to developing a leaner, more efficient Public Service. To this end, we agreed on 2 October 2012 to accelerate the reduction in Public Service numbers in order to achieve the previous end 2015 target of 282,500 by end 2014 instead.

Greater efficiencies in the way the Public Service is going about its business means that some functions and work areas are no longer required, and in such instances - where redeployment is not suitable - voluntary redundancy may be required.

For the time being, voluntary redundancy will be rolled out in three areas where a sound business case has been made - the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and specific parts of the Health and Education Sectors. These Departments estimate that there will be scope to effect about 2,000 exits from their areas over time, mainly from back office support areas and management and administrative grades. How this estimated number of exits translates into actual savings over the next three years will be determined by a number of variables, including the take-up rate among staff in the targeted areas, their number and grade mix, timing of departure, etc., information on which will not become apparent until the scheme is offered to the effected staff.

Analysis by my Department estimates that for every 1,000 employees who opt to participate in a voluntary redundancy programme there will be a gross cost of approximately €109 million. The gross payroll savings for 1,000 employees will amount to €57 million every year. Therefore the initial cost of 1,000 employees leaving would be recouped in two years. On a net basis, the cost is in the order of €100m and the savings in the order of €37m. Further savings will be realised in the future when these employees reach retirement age, because of their reduced pension entitlements.

Public Sector Staff Remuneration

35. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the proportion of the €1 billion cuts to public sector pay and pensions sought by him over the next three years that must come through in 2013. [10443/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Ireland is committed to reducing its general government deficit to less than 3% by 2015. To meet this commitment the Medium Term Fiscal Statement indicated that, in addition to the overall consolidation of €3.5 billion required for 2013, an additional €3.1 billion in savings and revenue raising measures must be identified for 2014 and €2 billion in 2015. If the public service pay and pensions bill at 36% of spending is to make a proportionate contribution to the necessary additional expenditure reduction currently identified as necessary for the next 3 years based on current economic forecasts, it will require a further reduction of some €1 billion in the cost of the pay and pensions bill. Based on current estimates a contribution of some €300 million of that saving is targeted for delivery in 2013.

Small and Medium Enterprises Supports

36. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he is

encouraging small and medium enterprises to form consortiums when bidding for larger public procurement contracts; and in such instances the monetary value of a large contract. [10435/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Guidelines issued by my Department (Circular 10/10) require public bodies to conduct the public procurement function in a way that facilitates and does not place barriers to participation of small and medium enterprises. In relation to improving access for SMEs to larger contracts, the guidance advises contracting authorities to consider sub-dividing of procurement requirements into “lots” where it would be appropriate, practical and can be done without compromising efficiency and value for money. In cases where it is not possible to divide a larger contract into lots, contracting authorities are advised to ensure that the terms of the contract facilitate the inclusion of smaller enterprises. In this regard, tenders documentation can be developed in a manner that enables SMEs to combine with others to make a joint bid for a contract that they might not be in a position to perform on their own.

Given the variety of supplies and services tendered for by the public sector, Circular 10/10 does not assign a monetary value to define what a large contract is. This is because certain contracts for supplies and services may not be suited to SMEs for non-monetary reasons (e.g. the supply of electricity, pharmaceuticals, heavy machinery and large scale IT software projects).

I would add that National Procurement Service tender documentation has been developed to encourage the participation of SMEs. For example, the contract for office supplies was divided into three individual lots for Stationery, ICT Consumables and Paper. SMEs that believed the scope of the competitions were beyond their technical or business capacities were encouraged to explore the possibilities of forming relationships with other SMEs or with larger enterprises. Through such relationships they could participate and contribute to the successful implementation of any contracts that resulted from these competitions and therefore increase their social and economic benefits.

Larger enterprises were also encouraged to consider the practical ways that SMEs could be included in their proposals to maximise the social and economic benefits of the contracts that result from these tenders. For example, Codex Ltd, an indigenous company, won the Stationery contract, with an estimated value of €10m per annum, and is sourcing up to 60% of their products using 136 local agents and manufacturers.

The National Procurement Service (NPS) established its ‘Working Group to assist Small and Medium Enterprises’ in February 2012 to facilitate open discussion on the issue of public service procurement. The Working Group consists of representatives from the NPS, the Health Service Executive, the Irish Business and Employers Federation, the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association, Chambers Ireland, and the Small Firms Association. The Group has met on a number of occasions and has raised many issues relating to procurement and particularly how these issues impact on SMEs. Resulting from these discussions the NPS has developed a training programme to educate SMEs in how to participate effectively in the public service procurement process. To date the NPS has facilitated workshops and presented at seminars to over 3,500 SMEs nationwide.

Departmental Legal Costs

37. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he is seeking further reductions in legal costs incurred by the State across all Departments and State bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10407/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): State bodies are the largest single consumer of legal services, and so it is critical to ensure that the State is achieving maximum value for money, while at the same time ensuring that it does not distort an important market. My Department is reviewing both the level of expenditure on, and the procedures that are being used to procure, legal services.

The paper “*Reducing Public Expenditure on Legal Services: Avoid, Minimise, Recover*” published in the Expenditure Report 2012, details a range of measures which have already been taken to reduce expenditure as well as making recommendations for further areas where savings may be achieved. Specific reductions which have already been made include:

- The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Act 2009 which imposed reductions on levels of professional fees, including legal fees. The fees payable to State Solicitors, who act on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions in cases of indictable prosecution outside Dublin, were reduced by 8% with effect from May 2009 under the terms of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009 (No 5 of 2009). The Act also provided that I carry out a review of the operation, effectiveness and impact of the amounts and rates fixed by regulation under the Act before the 30 June every year, and consider the appropriateness of these amounts and rates having regard to any change of circumstances. I have conducted an annual review of the fees payable to State Solicitors in each year since the reduction of 8% in 2009 and have not found cause to vary the fees. The review due for 2013 has not yet commenced but it is intended to be undertaken in the very near future.

- From peak expenditure levels, the Chief State Solicitor’s Office (CSSO), has made reductions in spending of 28.6%, the Office of the Attorney General (AGO) 14.4%, and the Office of the Director for Public Prosecutions (DPP) 11.3%.

- The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) pays set rates for specific services supplied by legal practitioners. In 2011 the Office implemented a 10% cut in these rates in response to a similar measure imposed by the Department of Justice on fees paid for the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme.

- The State Claims Agency is reducing fees paid to barristers by 25% and is establishing a legal costs unit which will handle third party costs associated with the Mahon and Moriarty Tribunals.

- A range of Offices have unilaterally sought and achieved reductions in legal fees. As part of the review of this area underway in my Department, a number of further cost-saving measures are being examined, including greater use of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms; greater use of competitive tendering procedures; and more informed structures in departments to enable better case management and control access to legal services. The paper published in the Expenditure Report 2012 also sets out some guiding principles to ensure that the State interacts with legal matters in the most cost-effective manner possible:

- Avoid - all expenditure on legal services must be warranted, and the decision on whether a particular service is required at all, could be provided in-house, or needs to be sourced externally, should be made by personnel with the requisite expertise.

- Minimise - when external legal services are deemed necessary, they must be procured in the most cost-effective manner possible.

- Recover - when the State is involved in a successful case, every effort should be made to recover costs from the other party. This involves proper maintenance of the case file by those practitioners representing the State.

My Department will shortly issue a new Circular on Procurement of Legal Services and Managing Legal Costs. This Circular clarifies and underlines the importance of the obligations upon public bodies to comply with the procurement rules and guidelines in retaining legal services. The Circular outlines appropriate competitive procedures that can be used in the engagement of legal services and sets out a number of approaches and tools for public bodies to use in managing legal costs.

The Legal Services Bill, which will soon be entering Committee Stage, and which my colleague the Minister for Justice & Equality intends to become law by the end of the year, contains measures which will help to ensure that the broader market for legal services operates in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The new Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicator, which will replace the Office of the Taxing Master, will improve the predictability and openness of legal costs by producing transparent guidelines and publishing the results of its cost determinations.

Officials in my Department are examining whether the market for Government advocacy work is currently operating in fair and open manner, and conducting a comparative analysis of the best methods of procuring counsel for State work.

Public Procurement Contracts Social Clause

38. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has progressed the inclusion of a social clause in public sector procurement contracts. [10438/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The scope for including social considerations in public contracts is something that I have been examining closely recently. In this regard, I would refer the Deputy to my reply on this issue (PQ 3066/13 - answered 23/01/13).

The inclusion of a social clause in all public procurement contracts requiring that, for example, a quota of long-term unemployed be employed in the delivery of the contract poses a number of risks. In the current economic climate, and in particular bearing in mind the difficulties in the construction sector, businesses have for obvious reasons been reducing their existing workforce rather than taking on new employees. Consequently, it would be expected that, where a business is awarded a public contract, the work would be carried out by the existing employees of that business. In such circumstances a social clause requiring that a number of long-term unemployed be employed in delivering a public contract could either impose an additional cost on SMEs that they may not be able to afford, or result in an employee of the supplier being let go in favour of a long-term unemployed person.

The Government has a wide range of measures that it is deploying to facilitate job creation and support labour activation, with particular emphasis on assisting long term unemployed people. Obviously, the main purpose of the public procurement process is to ensure that goods, services and works are purchased by the State in a manner that is legal, transparent and of high probity, and our key requirement is the achievement of value for money. Within this context, my Department and the National Procurement Service are examining the use of social clauses as an additional means of supporting activation and we are seeking to identify the scope for the use of social clauses in parts of the capital area in particular.

Coillte Teoranta Harvesting Rights Sale

39. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide an update on his plans to sell Coillte's timber harvesting rights; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10367/13]

45. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans for the sale of harvesting rights to State forests; if he has carried out a cost benefit analysis of this proposal; if so, if he will publish its findings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10195/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 39 and 45 together.

The House will recall my announcement of the shape and scale of the State asset disposal programme in February, 2012. The Government then decided in June that a long-term concession contract for the harvesting rights to Coillte forests represented the best option for realising value from Coillte in the short to medium term.

A Steering Group, comprising my Department, the Department of Finance, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and NewERA was tasked with exploring how best to proceed in order to implement this decision. NewERA, on behalf of the Steering Group, has since been working closely with Coillte to analyse the various financial and technical issues arising (including quantification of any liabilities that might arise for the Exchequer) and specialist advisers were also engaged by Coillte in late 2012 to further inform this process. The Steering Group is currently considering the results of this analytical work and relevant Ministers have been kept informed on progress to date.

At this point in time, it is not appropriate for me to give any further information on the matter, until such time as Ministers have been fully briefed on the conclusions of the Steering Group and have had time to consider the matter.

Semi-State Bodies Remuneration

40. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on whether there should be reductions in salaries for high-earning officials in the commercial semi-State sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10408/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy will be aware, I have no statutory role in relation to the remuneration of staff below Chief Executive Officer (CEO) level in the commercial State sector.

The Government supports a strong policy of pay restraint in the public sector and the Deputy will also be aware that in June, 2011 the Government took two significant steps in relation to the payment arrangements of CEOs in Commercial State Bodies. In the first instance we introduced salary reductions along with a general salary ceiling of €250,000 per annum to all newly appointed CEOs in Commercial State Companies. In the second instance we sought voluntary reductions in the salary levels of those already serving CEOs with salaries in excess of €250,000 per annum.

The salary ceiling of €250,000 per annum for newly appointed CEOs was arrived at through a combination of an across-the board 10% reduction and an additional reduction equivalent to that applied to public servants under the terms of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (No 2) Act 2009. In the interests of achieving fairness and balance, salary reductions were also applied in respect of newly appointed CEOs of commercial State companies with

salary maxima below the ceiling of €250,000 per annum. This has had the effect of reducing the salary levels of all newly appointed CEOs in a proportionate manner while maintaining the established weightings between the Commercial State Companies.

The sole exception to this arrangement is in respect of the more recently appointed CEO of the ESB for whom a salary of €318,083 per annum was approved and which is proportionate to the reductions imposed generally under the formula applied. However, it is important to note that in this particular and exceptional case the CEO concerned has agreed to a reduced salary of €295,000 per annum. Furthermore, it is Government policy that, in general, newly appointed CEOs are to be placed on the minimum point of the relevant salary range as opposed to the practice of assigning such personnel to around the mid range of such salary scales under an established pay formula for this purpose.

The position in respect of CEOs who were already serving in June 2011 is that, for contractual reasons the imposition of reduced salary rates could not be unilaterally imposed by Government. However, incumbent CEOs in the Commercial State Companies with a salary in excess of the general salary ceiling of €250,000 per annum were requested to make a voluntary waiver of salary of 15%, or to waive a lesser amount if the application of the full 15% reduction would have brought their salary below the €250,000 salary ceiling.

All of the relevant incumbent CEOs whose salaries were, at the time of this request, in excess of €250,000 per annum agreed to the application of the waivers.

The system of Performance Related Award Schemes for the CEOs of Commercial State Companies has been discontinued for all serving and recent appointees to such positions.

While I have no statutory role in relation to the remuneration of staff below CEO level in Commercial State Companies, I have written to the relevant Ministers about this matter asking that they write to the Chairs of the Commercial State Companies under their aegis to request that they ensure that cognisance is taken of Government policy on pay within the public sector when considering the remuneration of all future appointments of staff within those organisations and, specifically, that they ensure that 2nd tier management remuneration is set at levels that allow for reasonable headroom between this tier and the revised levels of salary which will apply to CEO posts.

Public Sector Staff Redundancies

41. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the discussions he has had with trade union representatives and other groups in respect of his proposed programme of targeted redundancies in the public sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10385/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Government has decided that voluntary redundancy will be introduced in certain targeted sections of the Public Service where staff surpluses are identified by management and where redeployment is not suitable. My Department agreed the terms for voluntary redundancy with the Public Services Committee of ICTU in June 2012, a copy of which can be found on my Department's website at: <http://per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Collective-Agreement-June-2012.pdf>

As announced recently, voluntary redundancy will first be rolled out in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and certain parts of the Health and Education Sectors. These Departments are currently drafting plans which will identify the precise areas to be targeted and the timing of exits. Once these details have been finalised, the need for further engagement with

union representatives within the sectors will then be considered by local management.

Public Sector Staff Issues

42. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the percentage of clerical officers across the public service who are women. [10441/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Data on the gender break down in the clerical officer grade across the public service is not readily available. However, for the Civil Service there are just over 11,000 clerical officers or equivalents of which some 75% are female.

National Lottery Licence Sale

43. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of initial expressions of interest in the National Lottery licence that have been received; the prospective date on which the awarding process will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10402/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): It is intended that the competition for the next National Lottery licence will commence during the second quarter of this year. It is envisaged that the licence will be awarded in the second half of 2013 and that it will come into operation in 2014.

My officials and the Department's financial and commercial advisers have met with a number of parties who have indicated an interest in bidding for the next licence. It would not be prudent of me to indicate at this time the precise number of parties who have been in contact with my Department. The Deputy will appreciate that I, as Minister, have no role in relation to engaging with potential bidders.

Public Procurement Tenders

44. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the measures he has introduced since March 2011 that have improved public procurement practices by removing obstacles and encouraging the involvement of small and medium enterprises and micro enterprises. [10433/13]

55. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the steps being taken to assist small business in obtaining public contracts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10264/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 44 and 55 together.

In relation to improving access for SMEs to public procurement opportunities the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has issued guidelines (Circular 10/10) that require public bodies to promote participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in the award of public contracts. These guidelines set out positive measures that contracting authorities are to take to promote SME involvement in a manner that is consistent with the principles and rules of the existing public procurement regulatory regime. The guidance also highlights practices that

are to be avoided because they can unjustifiably hinder small businesses in competing for public contracts. The key provisions of the guidance include:

supplies and general services contracts with an estimated value of €25,000 or more to be advertised on the www.etenders.gov.ie website;

less use of “restrictive” tendering procedures and greater use of “open” tendering;

ensuring that the levels set by contracting authorities for suitability criteria are justified and proportionate to the needs of the contract;

sub-dividing larger requirements into lots where this is practical.

Circular 10/10 has been in place for just over two years. It is clear that there is a need to ensure greater consistency in relation to the implementation of this circular. In this regard, the National Procurement Service (NPS) established its ‘Working Group to assist Small and Medium Enterprises’ in February 2012 to facilitate open discussion on the issue of public service procurement. The Working Group consists of representatives from the NPS, the Health Service Executive, the Irish Business and Employers Federation, the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association, Chambers Ireland, and the Small Firms Association. The Group has met on a number of occasions and has raised many issues relating to procurement and particularly how these issues impact on SMEs. Resulting from these discussions the NPS has issued two circulars to all buyers in, and suppliers to, the public service with the aim of improving practice in the procurement arena.

Question No. 45 answered with Question No. 39.

Sale of State Assets

46. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when the proceeds from the sale of State assets will be available for investment in the economy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10410/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Work is ongoing and significant progress has already been made in preparations for transactions in the State asset disposal programme that I announced last February. I envisage that significant further progress will be made during the course of this year, including the receipt of the initial proceeds for some of the assets, as circumstances allow.

Coastal Erosion

47. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his attention has been drawn to any studies or surveys in the County Cork area identifying the threat to farmland from coastal erosion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6938/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): I would point out that the investigation of coastal erosion, in the first instance, is a matter for the relevant local authority concerned.

My Office is not aware of studies or surveys in the County Cork area specifically identifying the threat to farmland from coastal erosion. The South Coast Report of the Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS), published by OPW in 2011, provides some erosion hazard

mapping. These maps are strategic level predictive erosion hazard maps for the years 2030 and 2050 and do not distinguish between farmland or other types of land that may potentially be at risk from erosion. The ICPSS report and maps are available on the OPW website www.opw.ie under Flood Risk Management/Publications.

Cork County Council may have carried out or commissioned other studies or surveys and the Council can be contacted directly on this.

Office of Public Works Properties

48. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a list of all properties for which the State has a long-term rental agreement. [10427/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The table schedules 267 leases with a term of 15 years or more managed by OPW for the provision of office space for the various Government Departments/Agencies.

COUNTY	BUILDING NAME	ADDRESS 1
CARLOW	Carlow Gov Off Church St	Church Street
CARLOW	Carlow Prob & Wel Service	Quinn House
CARLOW	Carlow Vehicle Reg Off	6-8 Lower Staplestown Road
CARLOW	Carlow Temp Decent Off (D/E/TE)	O'Brien Road
CAVAN	Bailieboro SWO	Barrack Street
CAVAN	Cavan Gov Off Newcourt Shop Ctre	Newcourt Shopping Centre
CAVAN	Cavan Gov Off Elm Hse	Elm House
CLARE	Kilrush SWO	45 Moore Street
CLARE	Shannon Driving Test Centre	1 Fergus Road
CLARE	Ennis Education Office	First Floor
CLARE	Ennis Education Office	First Floor
CLARE	Kilrush Decentral.Revenue Off.	Enterprise House
CORK	Bandon SWO	Weir Street
CORK	Bantry SWO - 6 Main Street	6 Main Street
CORK	Bantry Customs and Excise	Old Convent House
CORK	Castletownbere SWO	Church Gate
CORK	Clonakilty SWO	9 Wolfe Tone Way
CORK	Cork C&E Centre Park House	Centre Park House
CORK	Cork Gov Off Connolly Hall	Connolly Hall
CORK	Cork Gov Off Connolly Hall	Connolly Hall
CORK	Cork Prob & Wel Serv Grattan St	Grattan Street
CORK	Cork Gov Off Hibernian House	Hibernian House
CORK	Cork Gov Off Irish Life Bldg	Irish Life House
CORK	Cork Gov Off Irish Life Bldg	Irish Life House
CORK	Dunmanway SWO/CSO Office	Main Street
CORK	Fermoy SWO - Connolly Street	Connolly Street
CORK	Cork Marine Office	Riverview Business Park
CORK	Cork Education Office	Block C Heritage Business Park
CORK	Cork Prob & Wel Serv Cove St	St Nicholas Church
CORK	Carrigaline DSFA Office	Units 2 & 4
CORK	Cork HIQA Decent Office	Unit 1301, Building 1000
CORK	Mallow SWO (New)	Fair Green
CORK	2B Drinan Street CWS	2B Drinan Street

COUNTY	BUILDING NAME	ADDRESS 1
CORK	3 Drinan Street CWS	2C Drinan Street
CORK	Bantry ESO	Unit 2 The Warner Centre
DONEGAL	Ballybofey SWO	13 Main Street
DONEGAL	Ballyshannon Marine Office	Main Street
DONEGAL	Dunfanaghy SWO	Main Street
DONEGAL	Glenties Marine Forestry Off	Mill Road
DONEGAL	Killybegs Government Office	Donegal Road
DONEGAL	Letterkenny Revenue Office	Kilmacrennan Road
DONEGAL	Letterkenny Driving Test Centre	Unit 5 Pearse Road
DONEGAL	Letterkenny Prob/Wel Main St	48-50 Lower Main Street
DONEGAL	Letterkenny Education Office	McKendrich House
DONEGAL	Falcarragh CWS	Chapel Road

COUNTY	BUILDING NAME	ADDRESS 1
DUBLIN	Abbey Street Upper 26 - 30	Chapter House
DUBLIN	Abbey Street Upper 26 - 30	Chapter House
DUBLIN	Abbey Street Upper 26 - 30	Chapter House
DUBLIN	Tara Street Apollo House	Tara Street
DUBLIN	Ballyfermot Prob & Wel Service	Le Fanu Road
DUBLIN	Clonskeagh Belfield Office Park	Block 5 Belfield Office Park
DUBLIN	Bishops Square	Redmonds Hill
DUBLIN	Bishops Square	Redmonds Hill
DUBLIN	Bishops Square	Redmonds Hill
DUBLIN	Blanchardstown Gov Off	Block A Westend Office Park
DUBLIN	Bow Street Gov Office	31-35 Bow Street
DUBLIN	Capel Street 89 -94	89 -94 Capel Street
DUBLIN	Clare Street 12	12 Clare Street
DUBLIN	Claremont Road Revenue Office	Claremont Road
DUBLIN	Clondalkin Education Office	Convent Road
DUBLIN	Clondalkin Education Office	Convent Road
DUBLIN	Clondalkin SWO Ninth Lock Rd	Block B
DUBLIN	Clonmel Street [Clonmel Place]	Clonmel Place
DUBLIN	Kildare Street 43-44	Confederation House
DUBLIN	Dun Laoghaire Prob&Welfare Serv	Foundation House
DUBLIN	Dun Laoghaire Vehicle Reg Off	111 Lower Georges Street
DUBLIN	D'Olier Street (D'Olier House)	D'Olier Street
DUBLIN	Donaghmede Prob/Welfare Service	Donaghmede Shopping Centre
DUBLIN	Adelaide Rd 65A (Davitt House)	65A Adelaide Road
DUBLIN	Earlsfort Terrace Earl Ctr Blk C	Earlsfort Centre Block C
DUBLIN	Ely Place 7-8 Ely Court	7-8 Ely Place
DUBLIN	Finglas Prob&Welfare Service	Poppintree Mall
DUBLIN	Finglas Shopping Centre FÁS	Unit 14C
DUBLIN	Wilton Place Fitzwilton House	Wilton Place
DUBLIN	Frederick St NorthFrederick Crt	Frederick Court
DUBLIN	Frederick St South Frederick Hse	Frederick House
DUBLIN	Amiens Street (Gandon House)	Amiens Street
DUBLIN	Amiens Street (Gandon House)	Amiens Street
DUBLIN	Amiens Street (Gandon House)	Amiens Street
DUBLIN	Kilbarrack SWO	Greendale Shopping Centre
DUBLIN	St Stephens Gr 67-71Hainault Hse	67-71 St Stephen's Green

Questions - Written Answers

COUNTY	BUILDING NAME	ADDRESS 1
DUBLIN	Harcourt St Harcourt Centre Blk 2	Harcourt Street
DUBLIN	Harcourt Road 4-5	4-5 Harcourt Road
DUBLIN	Harcourt Sq Garda Block 1	Harcourt Street
DUBLIN	Harcourt Sq Garda Block 2	Harcourt Street
DUBLIN	Harcourt Sq Garda Block 3	Harcourt Street
DUBLIN	Harcourt Sq Garda Block 4	Harcourt Street
DUBLIN	Harcourt Street 75-78	76-78 Harcourt Street
DUBLIN	Hatch Street 13-15	13-15 Hatch Street
DUBLIN	Holles Street Holbrook House	Holbrook House
DUBLIN	Irish Life Centre Block D E & F	Lower Abbey Street
DUBLIN	Irish Life Centre Block 5/7	Lower Abbey Street
DUBLIN	Harcourt Road Dun Sceine	Iveagh Court Block A
DUBLIN	Lombard St East 8 - 11 Joyce Hse	8-11 Lombard Street
DUBLIN	Lucan SWO - Chapel Hill	Chapel Hill
DUBLIN	Lucan SWO - Main Street	Main Street
DUBLIN	Malahide SWO	Main Street
DUBLIN	Merrion Square 24	24 Merrion Square
DUBLIN	Mespil Road 43-49	43-49 Mespil Road
DUBLIN	Molesworth Bldg Setanta Cntre	Molesworth Street/South Frederick
DUBLIN	Molesworth Bldg Setanta Cntre	Molesworth Street/South Frederick
DUBLIN	Mount St Lr 73-79 Ballaugh House	73-79 Lower Mount Street
DUBLIN	Mount Street Lower 85-93	85-93 Lower Mount Street
DUBLIN	Mount St Upr 36	36 Upper Mount Street
DUBLIN	Nassau Building Setanta Centre	Nassau Street
DUBLIN	Nassau Building Setanta Centre	Nassau Street
DUBLIN	Nutgrove SWO	Nutgrove Shopping Centre
DUBLIN	Pearse St 212-213 Oisín House	212-213 Pearse Street
DUBLIN	Ormond Quay Upper 19	Upper Ormond Quay
DUBLIN	Leeson Street Lower Ossory House	Earlsfort Centre
DUBLIN	North Circular Road Park House	North Circular Road
DUBLIN	North Circular Road Park House	North Circular Road
DUBLIN	Park West Business Park Block 43	Block 43
DUBLIN	Parnell Sq 13-15 Parnell House	13-15 Parnell Square
DUBLIN	Conyngham Road Phoenix House	Phoenix House
DUBLIN	Rathgar Driving Test Centre	95 Orwell Road
DUBLIN	Santry Revenue Warehouse/Office	Unit H Furry Park
DUBLIN	Statoil Building	1 Setanta Place
DUBLIN	Shelbourne Rd 21 Shelbourne Hse	21 Shelbourne Road
DUBLIN	Earlsfort Tee St Steph Gr Hse	Earlsfort Terrace
DUBLIN	Earlsfort Tee St Steph Gr Hse	Earlsfort Terrace
DUBLIN	Swords Business Campus Unit 4	Swords Business Campus
DUBLIN	Swords Agricultural Inspectors	Castle Shopping Centre
DUBLIN	Tallaght Gov Off Plaza Complex	Plaza Complex Belgard Road
DUBLIN	Tallaght Gov Off Plaza Complex	Plaza Complex Belgard Road
DUBLIN	Tallaght Gov Off St Johns Hse	St John's House
DUBLIN	Tallaght Revenue Commissioners	Unit 247
DUBLIN	Tallaght Prob and Welf Service	Westpark House
DUBLIN	Thomas Street 126 - 7	126 -127 Thomas Street
DUBLIN	Mount St Lr 79-83 Timberlay Hse	79-83 Lower Mount Street
DUBLIN	Blackrock Trident House	Trident House
DUBLIN	Andrew St 10-12	10-12 Andrew St

COUNTY	BUILDING NAME	ADDRESS 1
DUBLIN	Finglas Driv Test Ctr+Rev Store	Unidare Industrial Estate
DUBLIN	Parnell Sq 16	16 Parnell Square
DUBLIN	Earlsfort Terrace Earl Ctr Blk	Earlsfort Centre Block J
DUBLIN	Abbey Street Upper 26 - 30	Chapter House
DUBLIN	Navan Road Ashtowngate	Block D
DUBLIN	Dawson St 18A Royal Irish Acad	Bective House
DUBLIN	Waterloo Road St Martins House	Dublin 4
DUBLIN	Earlsfort Tce St Steph Gr Hse	Earlsfort Terrace
DUBLIN	Balbriggan Passport Office	Unit 1, Fingal Bay Business Park
DUBLIN	Adelaide Road 29-31	29-31 Adelaide Road
DUBLIN	Tallaght PIAB	The Grain Hse, Blk 1, The Exchange
DUBLIN	Tallaght Education Office	County Hall, Belgard Sq North
DUBLIN	Garden Lane Prob/Welfare Off	Carmans Hall
DUBLIN	Great Strand St Millennium Hse	52-56 Great Strand Street
DUBLIN	Swords Business Campus Unit 5/6A	Swords Business Campus
DUBLIN	Swords Business Campus Unit 5/6C	Swords Business Campus
DUBLIN	The Chancery Building	3-10 Chancery Lane
DUBLIN	Revenue Castleview Georges st	Block C
DUBLIN	Navan Road Ashtowngate Block B	Navan Road
DUBLIN	Blanchardstown Gov Office	Block 3 Grove Court
DUBLIN	Blanchardstown Gov Office	Block 3 Grove Court
DUBLIN	Kings Inn House SWO & ESO	Parnell St
DUBLIN	Kings Inn House SWO & ESO	Parnell St
DUBLIN	Smithfield Probation Service	Blocks B1
DUBLIN	Nth King St 90 Georges Court	Smithfield
DUBLIN	Nth King St 90 Georges Court	Smithfield
DUBLIN	Smithfield Off of Film Class	Block B2
DUBLIN	Corn Exchange CWS	Unit A The Corn Exchange
DUBLIN	Damastown CWS	Damastown Close
DUBLIN	Clifton Court CWS	Clifton Court

COUNTY	BUILDING NAME	ADDRESS 1
GALWAY	Ballinasloe Gov Office	3 Society Street
GALWAY	Clifden Driving Test Centre	Market Street
GALWAY	Galway Irish Water Safety	Long Walk
GALWAY	Galway Garda Training	Mayoralty House
GALWAY	Galway Gov Off Ross House	Ross House
GALWAY	Galway Prob & Wel Serv	Abbey Arch Units 1, 4, 5,7 & 8
GALWAY	Galway Prob & Wel Serv	Abbey Arch Units 1, 4, 5,7 & 8
GALWAY	Galway Education Office	Victoria Place
GALWAY	Galway Driving Test Centre	Unit 4 Westside
GALWAY	Gort SWO	Gort
GALWAY	Loughrea Agriculture Offices	ESB Premises
GALWAY	Loughrea Agriculture Offices	ESB Premises
GALWAY	Loughrea SWO - PMPA Building	PMPA Building
GALWAY	Tuam Ordnance Survey Office	Airlooney House
GALWAY	Tuam DTC	Balgaddy Road
GALWAY	Galway Prob & Wel Serv	Abbey Arch Units 1, 4, 5,7 & 8
GALWAY	Galway Revenue Fairgreen	Fairgreen Rd and Loughatalia Rd
GALWAY	Loughrea Trans & RSA Temp Off	Clonfert House

Questions - Written Answers

COUNTY	BUILDING NAME	ADDRESS 1
GALWAY	Loughrea Trans & RSA Temp Off	Clonfert House
GALWAY	Loughrea Trans & RSA Temp Off	Clonfert House
GALWAY	Galway SWO - Island House	Island House
KERRY	Kenmare SWO	Old Bridge Street
KERRY	Listowel SWO	12 The Square
KERRY	Tralee Prob and Wel Service	7 Ashe Street
KERRY	Killarney Park Court	Beech Road
KERRY	Listowel Revenue Office	Old Mill Road
KERRY	Killarney Park Court	Beech Road
KERRY	Blennerville Agri Eng Off	Jeannie Johnson Building
KERRY	Killarney Park Court	Beech Road
KERRY	Tralee ESO	17 Castle Street
KILDARE	Naas Driving Test Centre	Clarendon House
KILDARE	Naas Agric Off - Poplar House	Poplar House
KILDARE	Naas SWO - Rathasker Square	Unit 2 Rathasker Square
KILDARE	Naas Agric Off Spring Garden Hse	Spring Garden House
KILDARE	Naas Rev & DSP Office	St David's House
KILDARE	Newbridge SWO - Henry Street	Henry Street
KILDARE	Naas Gov Office	Maudlins Hall
KILDARE	Willow Hse Millennium Pk Block 6	Block 6, Willow House
KILDARE	Athy Social Protection Office	Unit 4
LAOIS	Portlaoise DAF Appeals Office	Kilminchy Court
LAOIS	Portarlinton Decentral Office	Data Protection Commissioners
LAOIS	Portlaoise Agri Gandon Court	Gandon Court
LAOIS	Portlaoise Agri Gandon Court	Gandon Court
LAOIS	Portlaoise Agri Gandon Court	Gandon Court
LEITRIM	Ballinamore SWO	Main Street
LEITRIM	Carrick-on-Shannon Dent SWO	Attyory
LIMERICK	Moyross Garda Clinic	Moyross Community Enterprise Cen
LIMERICK	Limerick SWO - Plassey	International Business Park
LIMERICK	Limerick Driving Test Centre	Woodview Shopping Centre
LIMERICK	Limerick Education Office	Rosbrien Road
LIMERICK	Newcastlewest Prob/Wel Office	Churchtown Road
LIMERICK	Limerick Prob/Welfare Service	Theatre Court 1st & 2nd Floors,
LIMERICK	Limerick Prob/Welfare Service	Theatre Court 1st & 2nd Floors,
LIMERICK	Limerick Gov Off Houston Hall	Houston Hall
LIMERICK	Limerick Decent Off DFA	Henry St
LONGFORD	Moyne Wildlife Office	Longford Road
LONGFORD	Granard SWO	1 Moxham Street
LOUTH	Dundalk CWS	Unit 2
MAYO	Ballyhaunis SWO	Main Street
MAYO	Castlebar SWO - Humbert Mall	Humbert Mall
MAYO	Claremorris SWO	James Street
MAYO	Ballina Road Safety HQ Unit 3	Moyvalley Business Park
MAYO	Ballina Road Safety HQ Unit 4	Moyvalley Business Park
MAYO	Castlebar ESO Anchor House	Anchor House
MEATH	Kells SWO	Headfort Place
MEATH	Navan SWO	Kennedy Road
MEATH	Trim NCSE	Mill Street
MEATH	Navan Gov Off Kilcairn	Kilcairn
MEATH	Navan Athlumney House	Atulumney House

COUNTY	BUILDING NAME	ADDRESS 1
MEATH	Navan Revenue Abbey Mall	Abbey Road
MONAGHAN	Ballybay Social Protection	7 Main Street
MONAGHAN	Ballybay Livestock Office	Main Street
MONAGHAN	Carrickmacross SWO	Ardee Road
MONAGHAN	Castleblayney SWO	Monaghan Road
MONAGHAN	Monaghan CWS	14 Church Square
OFFALY	Birr Government Offices	Emmet Street
OFFALY	Birr Forestry Office	Hamilton House
OFFALY	Birr Government Offices	Emmet Street
OFFALY	Tullamore SWO Castle Buildings	Office Suite 1 & 2 Castle Builds
OFFALY	Tullamore ESO	Unit 1
ROSCOMMON	Dillon House CRAGA Office	Dillon House
SLIGO	Sligo Gov Off-Westward Town Cntr	Westward Town Centre
SLIGO	Sligo Driving Test Centre	Carrowgobbadagh
SLIGO	Beulah Building	Finisklin Road

COUNTY	BUILDING NAME	ADDRESS 1
TIPPERARY	Clonmel Gov Off Harbour Hse	Harbour House
TIPPERARY	Roscrea SWO	The Malthouse
TIPPERARY	Templemore SWO	Mary Street
TIPPERARY	Tipperary Driving Test Centre	Canon Hayes Centre
TIPPERARY	Roscrea Civil Defence Office	Enterprise Hse, Benamore Bus Pk
TIPPERARY	Roscrea Civil Defence Office	Enterprise Hse, Benamore Bus Pk
TIPPERARY	Tipperary Temp Decent Off	Block 2 Rossmore Village
TIPPERARY	Roscrea Equality Auth Office	Birchgrove House
TIPPERARY	Clonmel Mary St ESO	Mary Street
TIPPERARY	Clonmel Mary St ESO	Mary Street
WATERFORD	Dungarvan Gov Off Civic Bldgs	Civic Offices
WATERFORD	Lismore SWO	Main Street
WATERFORD	Waterford Gov Off-Johnstown	Johnstown Industrial Estate
WESTMEATH	Athlone DTC	Unit 8 McCormack Centre
WESTMEATH	Mullingar Prob & Wel Serv	Friars Mill Road
WESTMEATH	Mullingar Gov Offices	Friars Mill Road
WESTMEATH	Athlone DSP/Prob & Wel	Grace Park
WEXFORD	Gorey Government Offices	Thomas Street
WEXFORD	Rosslare Harbour Veh Reg Office	Rosslare Harbour
WICKLOW	Wicklow Gov Off Murrough	The Murrough
WICKLOW	Block D Bray Civic Centre	Cualann Centre

Croke Park Agreement Issues

49. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the latest date by which he expects the Croke Park talks to be concluded with the outcome approved by all sides; when implementation of the agreement will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10392/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In recent weeks, extremely difficult and complex discussions have taken place between public service management and public service staff representatives seeking agreement on a series of measures that will secure an additional €1 billion saving from the public service pay and pensions bill by 2015.

Following intensive engagement in recent days between the parties which was facilitated by the Labour Relations Commission (LRC), the LRC has developed and recommended a set of proposals for consideration and agreement that seeks to secure the savings required by the Exchequer while ameliorating the impacts on public service staff to the greatest extent possible. Public servants will be able to consider the full set of proposals by the LRC. The public service staff representatives who remained in negotiations have indicated that these proposals will be subject to ballot by members over the coming weeks.

It is now a matter for public service staff representatives to submit the proposals to their executives in the first instance and then to ballot in accordance with each union's own rules. Unions and their members must now be allowed the time and space to consider the proposals put before them.

Legislation will also be needed to underpin this agreement and this will also be progressed over the coming weeks.

Public Sector Staff Remuneration

50. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the action he will take to protect the current pay arrangements for prison officers. [10440/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In recent weeks, extremely difficult and complex discussions have been underway between public service management and public service staff representatives seeking agreement on a series of measures that will secure an additional €1 billion saving from the public service pay and pensions bill by 2015.

Following intensive engagement in recent days between the parties which was facilitated by the Labour Relations Commission (LRC), the LRC has developed and recommended a set of proposals for consideration and agreement that seeks to secure the savings required by the Exchequer while ameliorating the impacts on public service staff to the greatest extent possible. Public servants will be able to consider the full set of proposals by the LRC. The public service staff representatives who remained in negotiations have indicated that these proposals will be subject to ballot by members in the coming weeks. The Government will await the outcome to this process but, in the absence of agreement, measures will be taken by the Government to secure the necessary reduction in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2015.

Communications Mast Issues

51. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the implications that the closure of Garda stations will have upon the ownership and operation of any telecommunications masts which are being used by public and or private telecommunications companies at present, specifically with reference to the arrangements envisaged upon the sale of former Garda stations; the income the State currently receives from telecommunications companies in respect of same; the projected loss to the State from this income; if consideration has been given to whether such masts will now require planning permission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10309/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The Commissioners of Public Works are currently addressing the property management implications arising from the Garda Station rationalisation programme. The Office Of

Public Works is currently examining each property to identify, in the first instance, if there is any State requirement for the properties, their potential for disposal and/or the utilisation of the properties by community groups.

The Commissioners of Public Works have granted licences to third parties in respect of masts at 11 of the Garda Stations included in the recent closure of 100 stations. The ownership of these masts remains unchanged and the only immediate impact on the operation of the mast is that alternative access arrangements may need to be put in place. The existing revenue stream from the mast infrastructure will be taken into account by the Commissioners as part of the decision making process for the future use of the properties.

The current net annual income to the State from these licences is approximately €109,400 and there is no projected loss to the State at this time. The Commissioners are currently examining if there are any planning issues associated with the use of these properties.

Public Procurement Tenders

52. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide details of the measures he has introduced that encourage buyers to break contracts into lots. [10434/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Guidelines issued by my Department (Circular 10/10) require public bodies to conduct the public procurement function in a way that facilitates and does not place barriers to participation of small and medium enterprises. As one measure to achieve this, the guidance advises that the sub-dividing of procurement requirements into "lots" should be considered by contracting authorities where it would be appropriate, practical and can be done without compromising efficiency and value for money.

The guidance also provides that in establishing framework agreements, contracting authorities are to consider how proposed arrangements will impact on SMEs. They are required to ensure that the terms of the framework facilitate the inclusion of smaller enterprises if these can meet requirements or compete for particular lots. Also smaller companies can combine with others to make a joint bid for a contract that they might not be in a position to perform on their own.

Circular 10/10 has been in place for just over two years. It is clear that there is a need to ensure greater consistency in relation to the implementation of this circular. In this regard, the National Procurement Service (NPS) established its 'Working Group to assist Small and Medium Enterprises' in February 2012 to facilitate open discussion on the issue of public service procurement. The Working Group consists of representatives from the NPS, the Health Service Executive, the Irish Business and Employers Federation, the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association, Chambers Ireland, and the Small Firms Association. The Group has met on a number of occasions and has raised many issues relating to procurement and particularly how these issues impact on SMEs. Resulting from these discussions the NPS has issued two information circulars to all buyers in, and suppliers to, the public service with the aim of improving practice in the procurement arena.

Appointments to State Boards

53. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has

included gender parity for the board membership as part of his reforming agenda of the State agency sector. [10442/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): As the Deputy is aware in 2011 the Government introduced new arrangements for the appointment of State board members. Under the new arrangements Departments now invite expressions of interest from the public in vacancies on the boards of bodies under their aegis on their websites. It is open to all members of the public regardless of gender, political affiliations or geographical location to apply for appointment to these vacancies.

I am satisfied that the new arrangements introduced by the Government in 2011 have significantly improved transparency in the making of appointments to State Boards compared with the making of appointments in previous years.

The following table outlines the breakdown by gender of the State Boards under the remit of my Department:

	Current Members nominated by Ministers/Government					Current Members nominated by other Bodies			Chairpersons	
Name of Board	Total No. of Places on Board	Board positions currently vacant	Men	Women	Current Total	Men	Women	Current Total	Male	Women
An Post National Lottery	7	1	2	-	2	3	1	4	1	-
Outside Appointments Board	5	1	3	1	4	-	-	-	Vacant	-
Public Appointments Service Board	9	-	3	3	6	1	-	1	1	-
Civil Service Arbitration Board	4	-	4	-	4	-	-	-	1	-
Totals	25	2	12	4	16	4	1	5	3	-

As the table shows of the 16 members nominated by myself or the Government 25% of the appointments were female. In view of the statutory procedures for the appointment of members of the Civil Service Arbitration Board and the Public Appointments Service, there is limited scope for me to take a factor such as gender into account when I make such appointments.

I would like to make it clear that it is my intention in the limited number of appointments I have to make to increase the number of women appointees over the lifetime of the Government.

Public Sector Reform Review

54. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has estimated the deflationary impact on the economy that will result in cutting the pay and premia of public sector workers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10377/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I refer to my reply to Question No. 16 of 23 January 2013.

Question No. 55 answered with Question No. 44.

Coillte Teoranta Harvesting Rights Sale

56. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on a report commissioned by Impact, entitled Assessment of the Consequences of the Proposed Sale of Coillte's Timber Harvesting Rights, which found no economic case for the sale of Coillte's harvesting rights; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10368/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Proposals for the sale of Coillte's harvesting rights under the State assets disposal programme are being considered within the context of a full and rigorous assessment of all the implications of a harvesting rights transaction for both the company and the timber processing sector in general.

My Department has actively engaged with Coillte, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the NewERA unit of the NTMA over recent months to examine the financial and other implications of a harvesting rights sale. In this context, a number of detailed financial, technical and other specialist reports have also been prepared by external advisors in full consultation with the Board of Coillte and its executive management.

The authors of the IMPACT commissioned report, on the other hand, have not had the opportunity to consider the very detailed information available to the State and their analysis of the potential costs and proceeds from a harvesting rights transaction appears to be based on historical, publicly-available information as well as a number of assumptions in relation to transaction structure and sale conditions which are not necessarily in line with the proposals that the Government is currently developing.

Construction Contracts Issues

57. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his strategy for supporting construction subcontractors; the progress that has been made in this strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10232/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Programme for Government contains a commitment to introduce new legislation to protect small building subcontractors that have been denied payments from bigger companies. In this regard, my colleague Minister of State Brian Hayes is working with Senator Feargal Quinn to develop the Senator's private member's Construction Contracts Bill into a robust piece of legislation. The Bill has passed Second Stage in the Dáil.

The key objective of the Construction Contracts Bill is to ensure that cash flows down the supply chain on all construction contracts. This issue is addressed in the Bill by providing statutory arrangements in relation to payments under construction contracts, including providing for interim payments. The Bill also provides the means for subcontractors to enforce these rights; by suspending their labour and the provision of statutory adjudication.

I understand that Minister Hayes will shortly bring proposals to Government in advance of Committee Stage. This is an important piece of legislation aimed at creating a more level playing field between contractor and subcontractor in the construction sector. Therefore it is essential that these complex issues are properly assessed so as to avoid imposing unnecessary regulatory or cost burdens on parties in dispute, the State or others.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

58. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of public sector workers who have retired in the last three years within his Department or any office or body under his aegis that have been reinstated; if he will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10995/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Details are set out in the following table of the officials who retired from my Department in the last three years that are currently employed by the Department:

GRADE	POSITION HELD	DURATION	COST 2012/2013
Counsellor	To assist in preparations for and the duration of the Irish Presidency of the European Union, January-June 2013	Contract from 1 May 2012 to 30 June 2013	Approx €35,516 (for period of contract)
First Secretary	Embassy Canberra (temporarily filling vacant post)	Contract from December 2012-March 2013	Approx €17,145 (for period of contract)

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.

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.

There are no State agencies or bodies under the aegis of my Department.

Illicit Trade in Tobacco

59. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the measures he is taking to ensure a clampdown on the illicit tobacco trade. [10463/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners, who are responsible for the collection of tobacco products tax and for tackling the illicit trade in tobacco products, that they attach a high priority to dealing with this criminal activity. Their "Strategy on Combating the Illicit Tobacco Trade (2011-2013)", which is published on the Revenue website (www.revenue.ie), includes a range of measures designed to complement each other in targeting the supply and demand sides of the market for illicit tobacco products. This multi-faceted strategy includes ongoing analysis of the nature and extent of the problem, developing and sharing intelligence on a national, EU and international basis, ongoing review of operational policies, development of analytics and detection technologies, and optimum deployment of resources at both point of importation and within the country to intercept and seize illegal products and to prosecute those involved.

Interception of illicit tobacco products is achieved through a combination of risk analysis, profiling, intelligence, and the screening of cargo, vehicles, baggage and postal packages. Revenue officers also target the illicit trade at the post-importation level by carrying out intelligence-based operations and random checks at retail outlets, markets and private and commer-

cial premises.

In carrying out this important work Revenue works in close cooperation with other relevant agencies, both nationally and internationally. There is extensive cooperation between Revenue and An Garda Síochána, and the agencies concerned in the State and in Northern Ireland work closely together, through a cross-border group on tobacco enforcement, to target the organised crime groups that are responsible for a large proportion of the illegal tobacco market. In addition, cooperation takes place with other revenue administrations and with the European Anti-Fraud Office, OLAF, in the ongoing efforts to tackle the illicit trade at international level.

Considerable success has been achieved in combating the illegal trade, and more than 95 million illicit cigarettes were seized during 2012. Revenue is committed to ensuring that the highest possible levels of seizures of illicit product are achieved on an ongoing basis and will see to it that this work continues to have high priority.

There has been considerable success also in detecting and prosecuting those involved in the illicit trade, with 132 convictions during 2012 for the smuggling or sale of illicit products.

Revenue is conscious that those involved in the illegal trade in tobacco are constantly looking to avoid detection by seeking out new ways of smuggling the illicit product and putting it on the market, and that its own response needs to be agile and adaptive in combating this criminal activity to take account of this.

Property Taxation Exemptions

60. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Finance if a person with multiple sclerosis who had a house built to their specific needs will be exempt from paying the property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10518/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I assume the Deputy is referring to the Local Property Tax (LPT). I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that it is not possible to give a definitive reply based on the information provided by the Deputy. While there is no specific exemption from the LPT for a person with multiple sclerosis, the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2013 contains a provision that, if enacted, may be helpful, depending on the particular circumstances involved. Section 6 of the Bill provides for a reduction in the market value of a residential property that has been adapted for occupation by a disabled person where the adaptation has been grant-aided by a local authority. The impact of specific adaptations on a property can be to decrease the value which may in turn impact on the LPT liability.

The market value reduction is limited to the lesser of the market value attributable to the adaptation work carried out on the property and the maximum grant payable under the relevant local authority scheme. The relief ends on the sale or transfer of a property that has been adapted, unless the person with the disability continues to reside in the property.

Primary Medical Certificates Applications

61. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Finance if he will reconsider the application for a primary medical certificate for the purpose of section 92 of the Finance Act 1989 and the Disabled Passengers (Tax Concession) Regulations 1994, which was refused following a purported medical examination in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford

when in fact they were not examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10689/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Scheme provides relief from VAT and VRT (up to a certain limit) on the purchase of a car adapted for the transport of a person with specific severe and permanent physical disabilities, to those who meet certain disability criteria. The disability criteria for eligibility for the tax concessions under this scheme are set out in the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994. To get the Primary Medical Certificate, an applicant must be severely and permanently disabled and satisfy one of the following conditions:

- a) be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both legs;
- b) be wholly without the use of one leg and almost wholly without the use of the other leg such that the applicant is severely restricted as to movement of the lower limbs;
- c) be without both hands or without both arms;
- d) be without one or both legs;
- e) be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both hands or arms and wholly or almost wholly without the use of one leg;
- f) have the medical condition of dwarfism and have serious difficulties
- g) movement of the lower limbs.

If the Primary Medical Certificate is refused, the person may appeal the refusal to the Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal, National Rehabilitation Hospital, Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. I would point out that the Medical Board of Appeal is independent in the exercise of its functions.

Illicit Trade in Tobacco

62. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if he has any indicative figures of the potential loss of excise duty from the sale of tobacco illicitly. [10464/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that determining the scale of any illicit black market activity, and the loss of excise duty that it causes, is problematic, and any estimates of such loss need to be viewed with caution. In the case of cigarettes, I am advised that a survey in respect of 2011 carried out for the Revenue Commissioners and the Health Service Executive found that some 770 million illicit cigarettes were consumed in the State. This would indicate a loss of the order of €258 million in excise duty and VAT, in that year.

A similar survey was undertaken in 2012, and the results are being compiled at present.

IBRC Liquidation

63. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance following the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Act and the appointment of a special liquidator to resolve IBRC's balance sheets, the way the liquidator will deal with outstanding loans to the company; the way the liquidator will approach the outstanding issue of loans that are secured against mortgaged prop-

erties, where the property owner has arranged a debt write down with their bank following a sale; his views on whether the liquidator should allow property sales to go ahead and loans to be separated out from properties and repaid to the liquidator, or whatever asset manager is eventually appointed, on their own. [10475/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Special Liquidators that any properties for sale where the sales contract has not been signed will be included in the valuation process as set out in the IBRC Act. No property will be sold unless the bid is equal to or in excess of the independent valuation that is to be obtained as part of that process. The contractual terms and conditions of mortgage customers will not change as a result of the appointment and all debts owing to IBRC (In Special Liquidation) remain due and enforceable. I have been advised that it is the intention of the Special Liquidators to package and sell the mortgage book as a portfolio. Borrowers, third parties and other financial institutions will be given the opportunity to bid for specific portfolios (or component parts thereof) as part of an open and transparent process. As this sales process has not yet commenced, the Special Liquidators are not in a position to comment or speculate on the impact this may or may not have on the borrowers concerned or the arrangements that may or may not be agreed with the eventual purchasers of those assets.

IBRC Liquidation

64. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will explain the decision to provide €1 billion credit facility from the National Asset Management Agency for the use of the special liquidator of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation; when the decision was made; what the credit facility is intended to be used for; the way the €1 billion, if used, will be repaid to NAMA; if he had to seek permission to use NAMA for such a credit facility from another entity such as the European Central Bank; if the funding of the credit facility comes from cash assets at NAMA; and if NAMA can still meet its bond repayments due at the end of 2013. [10476/13]

94. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement by the National Asset Management Agency on 21 February 2013 that it has made a €1bn credit line available to Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, if he will confirm the interest rate and arrangement fee that applies to the facility and any moneys advanced under it. [10643/13]

95. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement by the National Asset Management Agency on 21 February 2013 that it has made a €1bn credit line available to Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, if the NAMA action was subject to a NAMA board decision; and if so, the date of the board decision. [10644/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 64, 94 and 95 together.

On 7 February 2013 I issued a Direction (NAMA/3/12/IBRC Act) to NAMA pursuant to the IBRC Act 2013 to provide such credit facilities to a special liquidator on such terms and conditions, as are specified in the direction. NAMA has complied with this Direction and made a €1 billion credit facility available to the special liquidator. The interest rate as per the facility agreement is referenced to the daily one-month euribor rate plus a margin of 140 basis points. The facility will be advanced to IBRC (in Liquidation) as needed for both the general corporate purposes of the Company and to discharge the Company's obligations to derivatives counterparties under derivative collateral arrangements and/or obligations to the NTMA under the NTMA ISDA Master agreement. The amounts drawn under this facility shall constitute and rank as costs of the liquidation of the Company.

I am advised by NAMA that following receipt of the Direction, the Board of NAMA met on Thursday, 7th February 2013 and approved the €1 billion facility. NAMA has made this facility available to the Company in accordance with its approved liquidity policy and from its own liquid assets. The granting of this facility does not impact on NAMA's ability to redeem its senior bonds in accordance with the previously indicated senior bond redemption targets.

IBRC Liquidation

65. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an assessment of the value privileged inside information may have to potential buyers of Irish Bank Resolution Corporation during the term of liquidation. [10502/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): It is not possible to attach a value to this privileged information. I have been informed that in addition to the policies and procedures that have been put in place by the Special Liquidators to ensure that no privileged information leaves IBRC (in Special Liquidation), employees owe a common law duty of confidentiality such that they cannot use confidential information obtained during the course of their employment to the detriment of their (former) employer. In addition Ethic in Public Office Acts applies to current former executives and other office holders in the IBRC where the salary earned by those employees is not less than the maximum salary of a higher executive officer (general service grade, Class B PRSI) in the Civil Service (c.€55,415). Codes of Conduct issued under these Acts require that former office holders should act in a way which ensures an unfair advantage would not be conferred in a new appointment, by virtue of for example, access to official information the office holder previously enjoyed.

Legislative Process

66. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will identify all non-Government parties which contribute to the drafting of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Bill 2013. [10503/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Bill 2013 (the "Bill") was drafted by the Office of the Attorney General. The formulation of the legislation was primarily conducted by the Department of Finance. However advices were received from Arthur Cox Solicitors and in connection with the preparation of the legislation. In addition the National Treasury Management Agency, the National Asset management Agency and the Central Bank of Ireland were consulted in respect of the preparation of the legislation. Those agencies may have also obtained their own external legal advices. The Special Liquidators were also provided with the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Bill.

Legislative Process

67. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline the involvement of a law firm (details supplied) in the drafting of any part of the Irish bank Resolution Corporation Bill 2013. [10504/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The company referred to in the question provided legal advices in connection with the formulation and preparation of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Bill, which was drafted by the Office of the Attorney General. The

substance of those advices are subject to legal professional privilege.

Ministerial Meetings

68. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance the recent contacts he had had with Mario Draghi, President of the ECB. [2376/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): It should be noted that every economics and finance minister in the European Union is a member of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Ecofin). Each month the Ecofin Council meets to discuss economic policy coordination, economic surveillance, monitoring of Member States' budgetary policy and public finances, financial markets and capital movements, as well as other matters. In addition, the Eurogroup - which comprises ministers of the Member States whose currency is the euro - usually meets the day before the Ecofin meeting to deal with issues relating to the Economic and Monetary Union. The President of the ECB is also in attendance at these meetings. As Minister for Finance, I have regular contact with Mario Draghi, President of the ECB mainly on the margins of these Eurogroup and Ecofin meetings. In the period from December 2012 to date (27 February 2013), Ecofin and Eurogroup meetings took place on the 3rd and 4th December 2012, 12th and 13th, the 21st and 22nd January 2013 and the 11th and 12th February 2013. I also had a teleconference call with Mr Draghi on the 18th December 2012.

Also, arising from Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, I represented the EU alongside Commissioner Rehn and President Draghi at the G20 Meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in Moscow on 15 and 16 February. I had discussions with both the Commissioner and President Draghi in Moscow on both G20 and broader issues.

Sale of State Assets

69. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the number of external consultants currently engaged by his Department providing advice in respect of the proposed sale of State assets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2818/13]

70. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of expenditure incurred in 2012 in respect of advice and preparatory work connected with the sale of State assets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2820/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 69 and 70 together.

Where requested by Government, NewERA (a business unit in the NTMA) is carrying out advisory and oversight roles in relation to the possible restructuring or disposal of commercial State company assets. NewERA's role in these disposal processes is to assist and advise the relevant Government Departments in representing the Government's financial interests in the context of asset disposals and to ensure that Government-agreed timelines and financial objectives are clearly communicated to the relevant parties. It is also the responsibility of NewERA to ensure that the Government Steering Group overseeing the transactions is kept fully informed of progress and developments with the goal of ensuring that the financial objectives of the process are achieved.

In order to assist NewERA in its role the NTMA (acting through its NewERA unit) have currently engaged three external consultants who are providing advice in respect of various techni-

cal aspects of the proposed disposals of State assets. The NTMA (acting through its NewERA unit) incurred €43,050 in respect of external advice procured in 2012.

In relation to the sale of Irish Life, Goldman Sachs were appointed as advisors in 2011. Fees payable to Goldman Sachs for services provided (from appointment in 2011 – 2013) are being finalised. Legal advice in respect of the purchase and sale of Irish Life was provided by Matheson. An interim payment of €108,613.97 (not including VAT) was paid in January 2013. Once again fees payable to Matheson in respect of legal services are still being finalised.

Promissory Note Negotiations

71. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance if he proposes to discuss the promissory note at the next EU Council meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2300/13]

73. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance if he has discussed the promissory note with any of the EU leaders since Ireland took over the EU Presidency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2316/13]

83. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance if he has discussed the issue of the promissory note at any of his recent bilaterals with EU leaders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5092/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 71, 73 and 83 together.

The negotiations surrounding the promissory note have been conducted over several months. I took the opportunity to raise the matter with my EU colleagues whenever the opportunity was afforded me. I impressed on colleagues the importance of putting in place long-term stable funding as a means of greatly enhancing our debt sustainability. As the Deputy will be aware, the outcome was very successful from an Irish point of view.

I do not intend raising this matter at the next meeting of ECOFIN as we have reached a very satisfactory solution.

Ministerial Meetings

72. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance the recent contacts he has had with European Commissioner Ollie Rehn. [2375/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As Minister for Finance, I have regular contact with members of the European Commission, including Commissioner Rehn. This level of interaction has increased during the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union and my consequent role as Chairman of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council. It should be noted that every economics and finance minister in the European Union is a member of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Ecofin). Each month the Ecofin Council meets to discuss economic policy coordination, economic surveillance, monitoring of Member States' budgetary policy and public finances, financial markets and capital movements, as well as other matters. In addition, the Eurogroup - which comprises ministers of the Member States whose currency is the euro - usually meets the day before the Ecofin meeting to deal with issues relating to the Economic and Monetary Union. Commissioner Rehn is also in attendance at these meetings.

As Minister for Finance, I have regular contact with Commissioner Rehn mainly on the margins of these Eurogroup and Ecofin meetings. In the period from December 2012 to date (27 February 2013), Ecofin and Eurogroup meetings took place on the 3rd and 4th December 2012, 12th and 13th, the 21st and 22nd January 2013 and the 11th and 12th February 2013.

Arising from Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, I represented the EU alongside Commissioner Rehn and President Draghi at the G20 Meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in Moscow on 15 and 16 February. I had discussions with both the Commissioner and President Draghi in Moscow on both G20 and broader issues.

Commissioner Rehn also attended the Oireachtas Committee on Finance - Presidency Inter-parliamentary Committee which I opened last Monday, 25th February. I had a discussion with the Commissioner on a number of issues on the margins of the conference.

Question No. 73 answered with Question No. 71.

Banking Sector Regulation

74. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance the progress there has been at EU Council meetings on tightening banking regulation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2380/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware I have responded to a similar question in January 2013. I will therefore limit my response to progress since then. I chaired the ECOFIN Council meetings on 22 January and 12 February. Minister of State Hayes represented Ireland as the delegate at both of these meetings. At these meetings I provided Ministers with an update on the various banking regulation dossiers currently being discussed i.e. the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM), the Capital Requirements Regulation and Directive (CRD IV) and the Bank Resolution and Recovery Directive (BRR).

Having assumed the Presidency of the Council of European Union, Ireland is currently engaged in trilogue and tripartite discussions with the European Parliament and the Commission on the Capital Requirements Regulation and Directive and on the Single Supervisory Mechanism. In relation to these dossiers the engagement with the Parliament is now advanced and the Irish Presidency is hopeful of reaching a conclusion in the coming weeks.

Work is also progressing on the Bank Resolution and Recovery dossier. It would not therefore be appropriate for me to comment further at this stage except to say that in its European Presidency Ireland will be doing all it can to continue to progress work on these dossiers in the coming weeks.

Unemployment Levels

75. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance following budget 2013, the level of unemployment forecast for the end of year 2013. [3247/13]

76. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the level of long-term unemployment forecast for the end of 2013. [3222/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 75 and 76 together.

My Department produces and publishes forecasts for the total unemployment rate, and does not disaggregate this between short and long-term unemployed. Furthermore the projections are full year averages rather than end-year forecasts.

In this context, my Department's latest forecast - published at Budget time - is for an average unemployment rate of 14.6 per cent this year.

I am fully conscious that the long-term unemployed make up a substantial part of those currently unemployed. For instance, figures published this morning show an unemployment rate of 13.7 per cent (unadjusted for seasonal factors) in the fourth quarter of last year; those unemployed for one year or longer account for three-fifths of these.

The Government is fully conscious of the scale of this problem and several initiatives have been introduced to mitigate the challenges faced by those suffering from long-term unemployment and to eliminate barriers preventing re-entry into the workforce. The *JobsPlus Initiative*, for example, which was introduced as part of the 2013 Action Plan for Jobs, aims to incentivise businesses to hire those who have been on the Live Register for 12 months or more by providing a cash-flow benefit to businesses based on the duration of unemployment.

Finally, I would draw attention to the labour market figures published this morning. These show annual employment growth in the fourth quarter of last year - the first time we have seen such growth since mid-2008. Also, Live Register figures for February show that the standardised unemployment rate now stands at 14.1 per cent, a significant fall from the 15.0 per cent figure seen in the same month in 2012.

In summary, while it is clear that progress is being made in tackling the unacceptably high level of unemployment, I recognise that there is still more to do. As such, job creation continues to be a key priority of the Government.

Tax Code

77. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance his views that businesses operating in the domestic economy would benefit from effective tax rates as being paid by multinationals in this State. [3227/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): All companies in Ireland pay the standard 12.5% rate on their trading profits which are generated in Ireland. A higher 25% rate applies in respect of investment, rental and other non-trading profits and profits from certain petroleum, mining or land dealing activities. I am aware of recent media reports which refer to the ways that some multinational companies structure their international tax affairs to minimise their tax costs and I understand that some of these reports have suggested that some companies in multinational groups pay Irish corporation tax at rates that are lower than 12.5%.

At this point it is important to state clearly that such companies are not paying a low rate of Irish tax - as already stated all companies in Ireland pay the standard 12.5% rate on their profits which are generated in Ireland. The reports concerned appear to have incorrectly attributed to Ireland profits that represent the return due to assets in other jurisdictions, owned by group companies that are not resident in Ireland.

The ability of multinational entities to lower their world-wide rates of tax using international structures reflects the global context in which Ireland and indeed all countries operate. Differences arise in the legal and tax systems between countries. International tax-planning takes account of these differences in national systems and rules. The only way to effectively

deal with such arrangements is for countries to work together to examine these structures and to consider how international rules can be amended to ensure fair levels of taxation.

In this regard, Ireland is participating in projects at EU and OECD level which aim to address these issues. The Deputy may be interested to note that the work being undertaken by the OECD as part of their Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) project, makes explicit reference to how harmful international tax practices may lead to multinational companies having a competitive advantage over companies operating mainly on the domestic level. Irish officials have been actively involved in the BEPS project and have recently attended and contributed to meetings on this issue. In our current role as President of the EU Council, Ireland has invited the OECD to participate in an upcoming discussion on BEPS by high level officials.

There is broad agreement internationally that responses to the tax practices of transnational, indeed global, corporations requires international coordination of policy, legislation and tax administration. This level of coordination is necessary because the concerns arising are typically the result of the interaction of the tax regimes across countries in which multinationals operate - rather than the law or practice of any individual country.

As I have highlighted, the only way to effectively address this issue is at the international level and the appropriate action is being considered in this regard. Ireland remains fully committed to this approach to ensure fair play in international taxation.

Small and Medium Enterprises Supports

78. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he is taking to deal with the issue of debt overhang that is impacting on the small and medium sized enterprise sector. [3223/13]

79. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the meetings that he has had with representatives of the banking sector to address the problem of debt overhang impacting on the small and medium enterprise sector especially amongst small business and micro business. [3224/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 78 and 79 together.

Debt overhang and SME arrears are issues which impact on the ability of a SME to meet its existing commitments as well as hindering its ability to secure additional credit which it may need. I meet regularly with representatives of the banking sector about all aspects of the economy and this is a topic addressed in those meetings.

The Central Bank has acknowledged that the work already done by banks on mortgage arrears needs to be matched by the banks' efforts on their small business portfolios. There has been engagement by the Central Bank with the lenders on their approaches in this area and this will be a major area of focus for the Central Bank in 2013. It will encourage a clear strategy, better specialist skills and operational capabilities within the banking sector and a more determined effort to work through the existing stock of troubled loans to try to recover or resolve individual cases.

Maternity Benefit Issues

80. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated number of women

affected by changes to maternity benefit in budget 2013, broken down by county; the estimated amount saved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [4050/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the expected yield from the taxation of Maternity Benefit payments, which will take effect from 1 July 2013, is estimated at €15 million in 2013 and €40 million in a full year. Such payments will remain exempt from Universal Social Charge. The statistical basis of this estimate was the estimated aggregate amount of the benefit likely to be paid and the proportion of that amount expected to yield income tax, and not the expected numbers of recipients. Accordingly, a precise number of recipients that will be liable to income tax on the benefit is not available. However, I understand that the Department of Social Protection have estimated that the average weekly maternity benefit recipients in 2013 to be 22,800, including those who will not have an increased liability to income tax.

A breakdown of the numbers of recipients on a county basis is not available.

In addition, I would point out that as a result of Maternity Benefit payments becoming liable to income tax for all claimants with effect from 1 July 2013, three possible tax outcomes could arise:-

1. An individual will pay no income tax on their maternity benefit payment as their tax credits will be sufficient to reduce their tax liability to zero.
2. An individual will pay income tax on their maternity benefit payments at the standard rate.
3. An individual will pay income tax on their maternity benefit payments at the higher rate.

Different Cases	Maternity Benefit	Tax liability on Maternity Benefit Payment
Case 1 No tax due	€6,812	Nil
Case 2 (taxed at 20%)	€6,812	€1,362
Case 3 (taxed at 41%)	€6,812	€2,793

Additional Voluntary Contributions

81. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Finance if he has considered introducing legislation to allow indebted persons with supplementary private pension coverage early access to a proportion of their retirement savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [4044/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Finance Bill 2013 provides that persons making Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) used to supplement their main scheme retirement benefits can withdraw up to 30% of the value of those contributions. Any amounts withdrawn will be subject to tax at the individual's marginal rate. The option will be available for 3 years from the passing of the Finance Bill. This is a restricted measure which will enable rather than incentivize certain individuals to access part of their pension savings beyond their regular or compulsory pension contributions. I do not wish to damage future pension provision and it is important that individuals continue to provide for their retirement. For these reasons, I have no plans to extend the measure beyond AVCs.

Property Taxation Application

82. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the communications he has had

with local authorities regarding the impact of the property tax on local authority housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5568/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 provides that local authorities will be liable to pay the Local Property Tax (LPT) on their properties in the same way as any other residential property owner, unless the properties are used to accommodate people with special housing needs. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that they are liaising with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government to establish how local authorities will provide the Revenue Commissioners with information in relation to their LPT liability and the timing and manner of the payment of this liability. The recently published Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2013, which provides that where local authority owned properties are not exempt from LPT, the market value of each of these properties will be deemed to fall into the first valuation band, that is €100,000 or less, which represents an LPT charge of €45 per property for 2013. This initial valuation of local authority owned properties will be valid up to and including 2016. It will be a matter for the local authorities themselves to decide whether they will pass on the LPT liability to their tenants in the form of an increase in rent or whether they will absorb the liability without recourse to their tenants. The 2013 Bill also provides that local authorities will have until 1 January 2014 to pay the LPT due for 2013. These changes are of course subject to the Bill being passed by the Oireachtas.

Question No. 83 answered with Question No. 71.

Fuel Rebate Scheme

84. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance if he supports the extension of the fuel rebate for hauliers announced in budget 2013 to bus and coach operators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8548/13]

85. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the measures he will put in place to help bus and coach operators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8564/13]

89. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an update on plans to extend tax rebates on fuel to other industries which rely on road transport and for which fuel makes up a significant part of their overheads. [8577/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 84, 85 and 89 together.

The proposal to introduce an auto-diesel excise duty relief for licensed road hauliers that I announced in the Budget was, initially, confined to licensed and tax compliant hauliers.

However having received a number of submissions from, and on behalf of, private coach operators seeking to have this relief extended to them, Deputies will now be aware that I have extended the relief to the licensed passenger transport sector in the context of the Finance Bill published on February 13th. The maximum amount of the relief will be 7.5 cents per litre and will be price dependent.

Small and Medium Enterprises Supports

86. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance his views that the pillar banks are fulfilling their obligations to the small and medium enterprise sector; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [9087/13]

87. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of new lending to small and medium enterprise by the pillar banks in 2012; if he will outline the value of facilities renewed in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9070/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 86 and 87 together.

The Deputy will be aware that the Credit Reviewer said in his most recent quarterly report that “Both banks have achieved their €3.5bn SME loan sanction targets. Over €8bn was sanctioned in 2012; of which approx. €2.5bn (27%) is new lending drawn down.”

According to the Credit Review Office, the balance of the sanctioned lending represented restructured or refinanced credit to SMEs which the Credit Review Office in the past has noted is important in terms of sustaining the businesses and the associated jobs.

One of the most powerful ways of ensuring that the pillar banks provide credit to viable is the availability of the Credit Review process. The Credit Review Office can review decisions by the pillar banks to refuse, reduce or withdraw credit facilities, including applications for restructured credit facilities, from €1,000 up to €500,000. The Credit Review Office is currently overturning 55% of the refusal decisions referred to them and anyone who has been refused credit by the banks should avail of the services of the Credit Review Office.

Job Initiatives

88. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Finance the number of jobs that would be created by an annual €1 billion enterprise stimulus; the multiplier effect this investment would have on the economy and the savings to the State. [9063/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The economic and labour market impact of any stimulus depends upon the type of measure involved. Fiscal multipliers vary according to the fiscal instruments used, and the impact on both growth and job creation as a result can differ accordingly.

Ireland is a small, open economy with imports accounting for over three quarters of GDP. As a result, a considerable amount of any stimulus is likely to leak out through a reduction in these imports. For this, and other reasons, the fiscal multiplier in Ireland tends to be somewhat lower than in many other European countries.

When discussing the implications of an additional stimulus package for the Irish economy it is important not to lose sight of the current fiscal position of the State and the opportunity cost of such funds. The Government is acutely conscious that there remains a considerable gap between what we get in revenue and what we spend. This situation is not sustainable over the longer term. In addition to the requirement to bring our deficit to under 3% of GDP by 2015 as per the Excessive Deficit Procedure, it makes sense that we bring balance back to the public finances and stabilise and reduce our debt burden. This is how we will ultimately create growth and jobs on a sustainable basis.

Question No. 89 answered with Question No. 84.

Sale of State Assets

90. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the steps taken to engage with as wide a range of potential purchasers as possible prior to the sale of Irish Life to Great West Lifeco to ensure the maximum return to the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10637/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I can advise the Deputy that a sale process was conducted beginning in mid-2011 in which 51 bidders were contacted about the opportunity to acquire Irish Life. Great-West Lifeco emerged as the preferred bidder for Irish Life following this process. However as a result of fears of a Eurozone break-up on the part of Great-West Lifeco, they withdrew their offer in late November 2011 and the process was suspended.

As the Deputy may be aware, since the bid process was suspended valuation multiples in the life assurance industry have improved, as have Irish bond yields, while the underlying life assurance industry in Ireland remains challenging, as outlined by Mark Burke, Head of Life Insurance Supervision at the Central Bank of Ireland in a speech on 31 January 2013 to a Life & Pension industry conference.

These circumstances allowed the State to recoup in full the investment made by the taxpayer in Irish Life and a valuation which was significantly better than could have been achieved if a sale had concluded early in 2012. A fair value opinion which supported the decision taken by the State was received from our advisors Goldman Sachs. The disposal proposed achieves a good valuation for Irish Life, an asset which the State did not intend to hold for the medium-term as the acquisition itself had been financed with borrowed money.

I believe the sale represents a very good deal for the Irish taxpayer.

NAMA Operations

91. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he intends to increase or in any other way supplement the membership and resources of the National Asset Management Agency advisory board to reflect the impending increase in assets under the control of NAMA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10640/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I would like to remind the Deputy that the NAMA Advisory Group has been set up to advise me in the following areas:

- The strategy of NAMA.
- The appointment of directors to NAMA.
- The remuneration of senior executives in NAMA.
- Any further advice I may seek of them.

The group operates on an informal basis and reports directly to me. Each of the members of the group has specific and significant private sector experience.

I am satisfied that the NAMA advisory board is working effectively and there are no plans to change its composition at this time.

IBRC Liquidation

92. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the reason all the fixed term

deposits related to investment products sold by Anglo Irish Bank were not transferred to AIB at the time of the sale of its deposit book; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10641/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Pursuant to a Transfer Order made by the High Court under CISA on 24 February 2011 (the “Transfer Order”), Anglo Irish Bank transferred the vast majority of its Irish and UK customer deposits to Allied Irish Banks, p.l.c. (‘AIB’) and AIB Group (UK) p.l.c. (‘AIB UK’), together with its NAMA senior bonds and its Isle of Man subsidiary.

As part of this process it was agreed between Anglo and the Transferees that a variety of deposits and accounts would be excluded from the transfer and retained within IBRC in order to retain security and/or as income sweep accounts related to its lending book and also where the nature of the products were difficult to transfer. I have been informed by the Special Liquidators that as far as they are aware all deposits as set out in the Transfer Order were transferred by IBRC.

House Purchase Schemes

93. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether banks are responding adequately to the demand for credit from first-time house buyers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10642/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Demand for credit from first time buyers is an important component of the demand side in the housing market. It is important to the economy as a whole that creditworthy individuals are able to access credit when they decide to purchase a house for the first time. Central Bank figures are published in Table A.1 Summary of Irish Private Sector Credit and Deposits which is available at <http://www.centralbank.ie/pol-stats/stats/cmab/Pages/releases.aspx> . They show that lending to households for house purchase was 1.6 per cent lower on an annual basis at December 2012. Transactions for house purchase declined by €4 million in the month of December 2012.

The IBF/PWC Mortgage Market profile shows new mortgage lending in Q4 2012 at close to €1 billion and that first time buyers are approximately 60% of this lending, by value and volume. The increase in this number over the Q4 figure for 2011 may be partly attributable to the ending of mortgage interest relief for borrowers. However it would appear to show that the banks were able to respond adequately to increased demand when called upon to do so but it is an area of activity in the banking sector that I will be keeping under review.

Questions Nos. 94 and 95 answered with Question No. 64.

NAMA Portfolio Issues

96. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement by the National Asset Management Agency on 21 February 2013 that it expects to realise about €750 million by reversing asset transfers by certain debtors and taking charges over previously unencumbered assets up from a previous estimate of €500 million money realised from these sources will be used to pay down debts owed to the taxpayer; if NAMA can confirm if any of these transfer reversals were made as a condition of approving a business plan; and if so, the volume and value of transfer reversals made under this condition. [10645/13]

97. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement by the National Asset Management Agency on 21 February 2013 that it expects to realise about €750 million by reversing asset transfers by certain debtors and taking charges over previously unencumbered assets up from a previous estimate of €500 million money realised from these sources will be used to pay down debts owed to the taxpayer, if NAMA can confirm the actual volume and value of asset transfer reversals achieved to date; and the basis for the valuation of the asset transfer reversals. [10646/13]

98. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement by the National Asset Management Agency on 21 February 2013 that it expects to realise about €750 million by reversing asset transfers by certain debtors and taking charges over previously unencumbered assets - up from a previous estimate of €500 million money realised from these sources will be used to pay down debts owed to the taxpayer, if NAMA can confirm if any consideration was provided to the developer or the transferee in return for agreement to reverse the transfer. [10647/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 96 to 98, inclusive, together.

NAMA advises that, to ensure that debtors repay their debt to their full capacity, it requires, inter alia, that they provide security over unencumbered assets not previously pledged as loan security, where such assets exist, and the reversal of asset transfers to relatives and others, where they have occurred.

NAMA advises that, in this way, since inception to date it has obtained charges over additional security with an aggregate value of approximately €642 million, and that it is in the process of taking security over further assets identified in the course of its intensive engagements with debtors. In the past week, the NAMA Chairman publicly stated that the Agency expects, after all negotiations have completed, to obtain about €750 million by taking charges over previously unencumbered assets and by reversing assets transfers by certain debtors. NAMA advises that the realised proceeds from these sources will be used to pay down debts owed to the taxpayer by these debtors.

NAMA advises that the granting of charges over additional security, where such security exists, is a required demonstration of a debtor's willingness and capacity to work with the Agency to achieve the best possible outcome for the taxpayer and that debtors receive no consideration for providing such security as their NAMA debt obligations are generally in excess of such amounts provided to NAMA.

Data Protection

99. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an update on the Data Protection Commissioner investigation of the alleged unauthorised removal of confidential data by a former employee of the National Asset Management Agency. [10649/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy can appreciate, it is not my function, as Minister for Finance, to formally monitor cases been taken by the Data Protection Commissioner against individuals and companies. The Minister for Justice and Equality has advised me that the Data Protection Commissioner is independent in the performance of his duties.

Questions - Written Answers
Carbon Tax Exemptions

100. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will amend the Finance Act 2013 to ensure that all registered agricultural contractors and FCI member contractors will be entitled to claim carbon tax relief against their income tax as farmers can currently claim this relief but agricultural contractors can not; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10678/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The carbon tax was increased by €5 per tonne of carbon in Budget 2012 due to budgetary constraints and a requirement to raise revenue to provide for essential public services. Increasing the carbon tax by €5 meant a relatively small increase spread across all fossil fuels rather than larger increases in the excise rates on specific fuels, such as petrol or diesel.

I have no plans to extend the current double deduction for carbon tax in respect of Marked Gas Oil to agricultural contractors.

Economic Data

101. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide, in tabular form, the annual figures on gross capital information here between the years 2000 and 2012 or up to as recently as such figures are available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10730/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Set out below are the annual amounts of gross fixed capital formation from 2000 to 2011, as produced by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The CSO will publish the Q4 2012 National Accounts data in the coming months, at which time the full year figure for 2012 will be available.

Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation at Current Market Prices - €m

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
24,451	26,343	28,306	31,583	36,649	43,566	48,294	48,377	39,324	25,601	18,745	16,112

Source: CSO National Accounts

Further information is available here - <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/economy/2011/nie2011.pdf>

In nominal terms, the level of gross fixed capital formation peaked in 2007, falling thereafter *inter alia* as a result of the sharp fall in house building. A modest recovery is expected in 2013 with a projected increase of 3.2 per cent in real terms from 2012 levels.

Customs and Excise Controls

102. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline the role of the two Customs Cutters; the number of seizures and value of same made by those Cutters in 2010, 2011 and 2012; the costs associated with each of these two vessels respectively in each of the respective years; the number of personnel assigned to each vessel; his future plans for the Customs Maritime Service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10733/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by Revenue that the role of the Maritime Unit, equipped with the two Revenue Customs Cutters, is to exercise respon-

sibility for the customs function around the Irish coast and in territorial waters, up to 12 miles offshore. The primary aim of coastal activity is to prevent, detect and deter smuggling and illegal importation of controlled drugs and other goods. It involves co-operation between land-based Revenue and gardaí, the Maritime Unit and the Navy, and of course international authorities. The Revenue Maritime Unit completes the range of responses now regarded as standard in international anti-smuggling activities.

The use of cutters in Ireland was adopted having regard to the need to fill a gap between land-based resources and the Navy. The choice of robust seagoing vessels was necessary for safe and effective operation in variable weather and sea conditions. Internationally, the use of this kind of vessel is now standard. The benefits are in gathering intelligence, providing a visible customs presence in coastal waters, and widening the scope of Revenue capability. While searches (rummages) are carried out by the cutters, it is most unusual for them to seize more than small amounts of prohibited substances. Seizures are more usually done onshore, at the point of disembarkation, for safety reasons. Their intelligence and expertise have, however, contributed considerably to successful high profile operations, both nationally and internationally.

The range of cutter activities mirrors that of land-based customs officers and includes:

- Patrol of the external frontier to outer limits of Territorial Sea (12 mile limit).
- Monitoring (overt & covert) all vessel movements - Assess, Board, Rummage as required.
- Enforcement of import and export prohibitions and restrictions.
- Identification and securing of outstanding VAT/duty liability on pleasure craft.
- Information/Intelligence management.
- International anti-smuggling operations at sea.
- Managing and monitoring maritime information systems.
- Servicing national and international MOUs and Mutual Assistance requests.
- Supporting national anti-smuggling operations.
- Developing and servicing coastal contacts (Customs Drugs Watch Programme).

The principal costs associated with the operation of the cutters are fuel costs, operational maintenance costs and staffing costs. Each cutter has a crew of six, and is at sea for more than 200 days per annum, with 24/7/365 availability. The fuel and maintenance costs for two cutters was €299,411 in 2012; €337,340 in 2011; and €331,473 in 2010.

As an island nation the provision of customs cutters to police our maritime frontiers is regarded as an essential investment. The cost and adequacy of the present level of provision is continually reviewed. For the moment, Revenue are satisfied that they have an effective service at reasonable cost, that meets their foreseeable needs.

Official Engagements

103. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on discussions held with EU Finance Ministers in Davos, Switzerland, on 24 January; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5484/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I travelled to Davos, Switzerland, to attend the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, from 23 to 25 January. The World Economic Forum annual meeting is attended by political and business leaders and heads of international organisations. The theme of this year's meeting was 'Resilient Dynamism.'

While in Davos I held bilaterals with a number of my counterparts and with leaders of several major multinational firms. I used this opportunity to set out Ireland's EU Presidency priorities and to promote Ireland as a location for international business and investment. I did not arrange any specific bilaterals with EU Finance Ministers as I had met with them in Brussels at Eurogroup/ECOFIN on 21/22 January. I did, however, meet briefly with a few of them in the margins of the conference.

Gas Exploration Revenue

104. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on the declared profits from Kinsale Gas since its commencement; the total tax take to the State and the effective tax rate; if he will provide a breakdown by year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [4597/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that for reasons of taxpayer confidentiality they are not in a position to provide the information sought by the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Data

105. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the number of agency and contract staff currently employed under the aegis of his Department; the mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10983/13]

106. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline the numbers and cost of agency staff under the aegis of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11063/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 105 and 106 together.

My Department does not employ agency staff. In my Department the following are employed on a contract basis: 6 Clerical Officers (1 year temporary contract), 4 Administrative Officers (1 year temporary contract), 1 HR Manager (3 year contract) and, 1 Banking Specialist (1 year contract), 2 Special Advisers (contract is co-terminus with the Minister), 1 Personal Assistant (contract is co-terminus with the Minister), 2 Civilian Drivers (contract is co-terminus with the Minister), I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they do not use employment agencies to employ staff.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they currently employ a total of fifteen (15) Temporary Clerical Officers to assist with peak business activity. These temporary posts are for periods of twelve weeks or less. These staff have been recruited through the Public Appointments Service and under a strictly limited sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Their pay and associated costs are accounted for in Revenue Commissioner's Vote, which is reported on a monthly basis to the Department of Public Expenditure

and Reform.

The position in respect of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General is as follows:

Agency/Contract	Number of Staff	Estimated Cost for 2013
Agency Staff	4	€69,000
**Contract Staff	8	€197,000

**The temporary engagement of qualified accountants to address short term gaps in resources.

Residential Institutions Redress Scheme

107. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the basis on which St. Patrick's mother and baby home, Navan Road, Dublin was added to the institutions covered by the Residential Institutions Redress Scheme by Statutory Order No. 518 of 2005. [10707/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): While the original Schedule to the Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002 included 123 institutions, section 4 of the Act empowered the Minister to add certain additional institutions to the Schedule by Order. St. Patrick's Mother and Baby Home was added to the Schedule on the basis that it operated as a children's home and came within the scope of section 4 of the Act.

School Accommodation

108. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will ensure that a grant for prefabricated rental to a school (details supplied) in County Kerry is not withdrawn in the summer of 2013. [10454/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can confirm that a review of the temporary accommodation at the above school took place in July 2012 as per standard practice when the rental contract was due to expire. My Department advised the school at that time that rental grant aid would continue to be approved until June 2013. Correspondence in this regard has been received recently from the school. My Department will be in direct contact with the school authority shortly in the matter.

School Accommodation

109. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress regarding additional accommodation for a school (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10469/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can confirm for the Deputy that my Department has received an application for additional accommodation from the school to which he refers. The application is currently being assessed and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority shortly.

School Accommodation

110. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress regarding additional accommodation for a school (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10470/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The school to which the Deputy refers has applied to my Department for capital funding for the provision of a sport hall.

Given the current financial constraints within which my Department is operating, the position is that priority is being given to school applications for essential mainstream classroom accommodation. In this regard, the delivery of new schools, together with extension projects to meet the demographic demand, will be the main focus for capital investment in schools in the coming years. It is not possible, therefore, at this time to indicate when a project for the school in question will be progressed.

School Accommodation

111. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress regarding additional accommodation for a school (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10471/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Major Building Project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning. In October 2012, the Department authorised the project to proceed to Stage 2b which includes Planning Permission, Fire Safety Certificate, Disability Access Certificate and the preparation of tender documents. Due to competing demands on the 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 announced last year.

Schools which have not been included in the five year construction programme, but which were announced for initial inclusion in the building programme will continue to be progressed to final planning stages in anticipation of the possibility of further funds being available to the Department in future years. The building project for the school referred to by the Deputy remains available to be considered for progression in this context.

Schools Building Projects Status

112. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a building project for a school (details supplied) in County Tipperary; the timeframe for completion of works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10478/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Major Building Project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an early stage of architectural planning.

The school is currently working with its Design Team on the Stage 2a - Developed Design.

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.

Schools which have not been included in the five year construction programme, but which were announced for initial inclusion in the building programme will continue to be progressed

to final planning stages in anticipation of the possibility of further funds being available to my Department in future years.

The project referred to by the Deputy remains available to be considered for progression in that context.

School Accommodation

113. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a school (details supplied) in County Tipperary that has applied for major capital funding; the timeframe for completion of works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10479/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The school to which the Deputy refers has applied to my Department for capital funding for a major school project involving the provision of a General Purpose Room and ancillary accommodation.

Given the current financial constraints within which my Department is operating, the position is that priority is being given to school applications for essential mainstream classroom accommodation. In this regard, the delivery of new schools, together with extension projects to meet the demographic demand, will be the main focus for capital investment in schools in the coming years.

The current status of all projects on the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's website at www.education.ie and this will be updated regularly throughout the year.

Schools Building Projects Applications

114. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a school (details supplied) in County Tipperary that has applied for large-scale capital funding; the timeframe for completion of works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10480/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has not received any recent application for capital funding from the school referred to. My Department will consider applications by schools for funding for essential mainstream classroom accommodation where necessary to meet immediate enrolment needs. Copy of the application form concerned may be accessed on my Department's website www.education.ie.

Schools Building Projects Applications

115. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application for funding from a school (details supplied) in County Tipperary; the status of the application; when a decision will be reached; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10481/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The school, referred to by the Deputy, has applied to my Department for large scale capital funding.

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.

In light of current competing demands on the Department's capital budget, it is not possible at this time to indicate when a project for the school in question will be progressed.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

116. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when payment of a student grant award from Student Universal Support Ireland will be made to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10483/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy confirmation of course registration has been requested and is awaited from the student's institution in order to process the student's grant payment.

Student Grant Scheme Appeals

117. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reasons for the on-going delay in processing a student grant appeal application in respect of a person (details supplied) with Student Universal Support Ireland; the steps being taken to tackle this delay; when a decision will issue in this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10510/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy, her student grant application was appealed to the appeals officer in SUSI and the original decision was overturned.

The student's application was reassessed and on the 20 February 2013, a revised award letter issued to the student.

School Staffing

118. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will reverse a decision to remove a resource teaching post for the 2013-14 school year at a school (details supplied) in County Kerry; if he will take into consideration the obligation to provide fully for the needs of all pupils in this school [10513/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): 85% of all NCSE approved resource teaching hours in the 2012/13 school year were allocated to schools that had resource base posts. There are some slight changes to the location of these base posts for the 2013/14 school year to further improve the efficiency of these arrangements. The schools that were affected by these changes were those where the posts were not fully utilised for NCSE approved resource hours or where the teacher in the post was predominantly based in a neighbouring school. The full criteria used is set out in the Department's Staffing Circular 0013/2013 which was recently published on the Department website. Base schools are required to co-operate with their neighbouring schools to ensure that any surplus capacity in the (25 hour) resource posts is made available to neighbouring schools to meet their NCSE approved resource hour requirements. If the surplus capacity is fully utilised there are standard arrangements in place for the relevant schools to contact the Department for part-time resource teaching posts.

School Staffing

119. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of teachers in primary schools by gender. [10519/13]

120. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of principals in primary schools by gender. [10520/13]

121. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of deputy principals in primary schools by gender. [10521/13]

122. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of vice principals in primary schools by gender. [10522/13]

123. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of assistant principals in primary schools by gender. [10523/13]

124. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of grade A posts in primary schools by gender. [10524/13]

125. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of grade B in primary schools by gender. [10525/13]

126. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of special duties teachers in primary schools by gender. [10526/13]

127. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of privileged assistants in primary schools by gender. [10527/13]

128. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of principals personal basis in primary schools by gender. [10528/13]

129. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of unpromoted teachers in primary school by gender. [10535/13]

130. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the average annual salary for primary teachers by gender at January 2013. [10536/13]

131. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of teachers in post primary schools by gender. [10537/13]

132. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of deputy principals in post primary schools by gender. [10538/13]

133. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of principals in post primary schools by gender. [10540/13]

134. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of vice principals in post primary schools by gender. [10539/13]

135. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of assistant principals in post primary schools by gender. [10541/13]

136. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of grade A posts in post primary schools by gender. [10542/13]

137. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and

percentage of grade B posts in post primary schools by gender. [10543/13]

138. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of special deputy teachers in post primary schools by gender. [10544/13]

139. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and percentage of unpromoted teachers in post primary schools by gender. [10545/13]

140. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the average salary for post primary teachers by gender at January 2013. [10546/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 119 to 140, inclusive, together.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to teachers in Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools is being compiled and will be forwarded directly to him.

VEC teachers are employees of VECs and are paid on 33 separate VEC payrolls. Accordingly, the Department does not have the information which the Deputy is seeking for teachers in VECs.

Student Grant Scheme Appeals

141. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a Student Universal Support Ireland appeal in respect of a person (details supplied). [10549/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that the student in question appealed the original decision on his grant application to the appeals officer in SUSI and the original decision was overturned.

The grant application was reassessed and a letter issued to the student on 6 February 2013 requesting further documentation. When the requested documentation is returned the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

142. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a student on back to school allowance is entitled to apply to Student Universal Support Ireland for grant assistance and is there any other scheme where such a student can apply for assistance with fees. [10650/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Students in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) can apply to have their eligibility assessed under the student grant scheme to the Student Universal Support Ireland before their closing in the relevant academic year in respect of the cost of the student contribution and where applicable tuition fees.

While the closing date for student grant applications for the 2012/13 academic year expired on 31st January 2013, if an individual has had a change of circumstance since that date which is likely to be permanent e.g. parent or spouse was made redundant, they should contact SUSI for advice on how to make an application to have their eligibility for a grant assessed.

In addition to the student grant tax relief at the standard rate of tax may be claimed in respect of tuition fees paid for approved courses at approved colleges of higher education. Further information on this tax relief is available from the Revenue Commissioners on www.revenue.ie.

School Accommodation

143. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when action will be taken in respect of the future accommodation needs of a school (details supplied) in Dublin 24; if he appreciates the local concerns in the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10674/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is aware that the accommodation in the school to which he refers is not satisfactory. The provision of improved accommodation for the school entails the identification of a suitable site. This process is currently in train and my Department will be in further contact with the school authority as soon as there are developments in this regard.

School Transport Provision

144. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action he will take to ensure that Bus Éireann provides an adequate school bus service from Knocksedan to Swords Manor taking into account that there are 27 children within the estate require this service and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10675/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Under the terms of my Department's Primary School Transport Scheme, children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 3.2 kms from and are attending their nearest national school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Bus Éireann, which operates the scheme on behalf of my Department, 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.

In this regard Bus Éireann has advised that the transport service in question is operating within the above guidelines and no eligible child has to travel more than 2.3kms to the pick up 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.

Student Grant Scheme Payments

145. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a third level student grant will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10693/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Grant payments in respect of maintenance were made to the student in question on the 30th January and the 20th February 2013.

Departmental Staff Data

146. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of agency and contract staff currently employed under the aegis of his Department; the mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10981/13]

148. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline the numbers and cost of agency staff under the aegis of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11061/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 146 and 148 together.

My Department has contracted one temporary Administrative Officer who has been assigned to the International Section of my Department for the duration of the European Union Presidency. In addition to this my Department has a long term contract for services with the National Council for the Blind for the provision of two telephonists.

The following tabular statement gives details of agency/contract staff at bodies under the aegis of my Department.

Monitoring and managing the associated costs is a matter for the respective lines sections at my Department or the relevant body under its aegis.

Bodies under the aegis of the Department of Education & Skills with contract/agency staff as at the 27th, February 2013.

BODY	CONTRACT	AGENCY
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse	4	0
Residential Institutions Redress Board	1	0
Residential Institutions Redress Review Committee	1	0
Education Finance Board	2	0
National Council for Guidance in Education	2	0
State Examinations Commission	0	0.5
Higher Education Authority	0	1
Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FAS)	0	2

Departmental Staff Rehiring

147. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of public sector workers who have retired in the last three years within his Department or any office or body under his aegis that have been re-instated; if he will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10993/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): No members of staff who retired in the last three years have been re-instated to their former positions or to any other positions within my Department.

From time to time, my Department engages retired staff to carry out specific tasks. Such engagements are for once-off or short-duration projects where it is more cost-effective to re-engage retired staff who already have the relevant expertise and experience. As appropriate, re-engagements of retired staff are subject to the abatement principle.

With regard to bodies under the aegis of my Department, matters relating to recruitment and pensions are an administrative matter for the bodies themselves.

Question No. 148 answered with Question No. 146.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

149. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will outline the public services procedure, terms and conditions for offering employees access to the redeployment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10507/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Public Service Agreement 2010-14 (Croke Park Agreement) provides for agreed redeployment arrangements to apply in the Civil Service and in other parts of the public service. Under the Agreement, redeployment generally takes precedence over all other methods of filling a vacancy and supersedes any existing agreements on the deployment of staff. It sets out the agreed redeployment arrangements within the Health, Education, and Local Authority sectors and within and between the Civil Service and Non-Commercial State Sponsored Bodies (NCSSB). It also provides that cross sectoral redeployments will follow the arrangements agreed for the NCSSBs.

The Public Appointments Service (PAS), which has day-to-day operational responsibility for the implementation of redeployment, has put in place a system of Resource Panels of Civil Service and State Agency staff to support the redeployment processes in those sectors agreed under the Croke Park Agreement. Posts to be filled by redeployment are offered in the first instance to the relevant panel or panels. It is a matter for the employer to identify the number and grades of posts to be redeployed in the first instance and to upload the posts onto the PAS panels. Employers can do this early in the redeployment process to maximise the opportunities to place their staff. There is no set time-limit within which individuals awaiting redeployment must be redeployed.

A “Redeployment Toolkit” which gives full details on each stage of the redeployment process has been agreed with the staff unions. It includes a section setting out responses to Frequently Asked Questions and is available on my Department’s website at <http://hr.per.gov.ie/files/2011/09/here28.doc>.

Question No. 150 answered with Question No. 6.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

151. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if, in the context of cost-cutting throughout the public sector arising from the memorandum of understanding entered into by his predecessors, it is possible to take account of those public sector employees who are currently working the longest hours and in some situations under stressful conditions and currently under review in the context of the Croke Park agreement; if cognisance will be taken of the particular needs of such public servants in front-line services

with a view to ensuring the continuity of the service in so far as is possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10708/13]

152. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if in the context of cost-cutting measures arising from the memorandum of understanding entered into by his predecessors, he and his Department will endeavour to maintain the integrity of frontline services throughout the public sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10710/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 151 and 152 together.

The Government is making good progress on achieving all of our targets and priorities, as articulated in the Government Programme. We are bringing public expenditure back to a sustainable level and driving forward the public service reform agenda to ensure that efficiencies and reformed work practices play a full part in contributing to the overall budgetary consolidation effort.

The medium-term expenditure management process began with the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) exercise in 2011, which was carried out by all Departments to identify ways of reducing expenditure, in line with commitments under the Joint EU/IMF Programme of Financial Support for Ireland, while minimising the impact on service delivery.

In recent weeks, extremely difficult and complex discussions have been underway between public service management and public service staff representatives seeking agreement on a series of measures that will secure an additional €1 billion saving from the public service pay and pensions bill by 2015.

Following intensive engagement in recent days between the parties which was facilitated by the Labour Relations Commission (LRC), the LRC has developed and recommended a set of proposals for consideration and agreement that seeks to secure the savings required by the Exchequer while ameliorating the impacts on public service staff to the greatest extent possible.

All sectors of the public service have been asked to make a significant and proportionate contribution to the overall savings. It is very clear that the impact of measures proposed in this Agreement will affect all public service workers and not just front line workers.

Public servants will be able to consider the full set of proposals by the LRC. The public service staff representatives who remained in negotiations have indicated that these proposals will be subject to ballot by members in the coming weeks.

Departmental Staff Retirements

153. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of persons that have left the public service in each of the past five years to date either by way of natural retirement or redundancy; the extent to which the national pay bill has been affected as a result; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10711/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The historical data the Deputy has requested on public service pay and numbers is available on my Department's website (<http://databank.per.gov.ie/>). This data is regularly updated and I would urge all Deputies to utilise this resource.

Questions Nos. 154 and 155 answered with Question No. 19.

Public Sector Reform Implementation

156. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Government Department or bodies under their aegis that have shown the least progress in terms of public sector reform in the past five years; the way this compares with those Departments that have achieved most in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10714/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Government's Public Service Reform Plan, published November 2011, sets out an ambitious range of actions and timescales for comprehensive reform across all areas of the Public Service. In addition, all Departments and major Offices have developed their own high-level Integrated Reform Delivery Plans, which set out the key actions required to ensure the successful delivery of the priority reform initiatives set out in the Programme for Government, the Public Service Reform Plan, the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure and the Public Service Agreement, as well as sector-specific reform initiatives.

Departments and Offices are required to produce regular reports on progress under these plans to the Cabinet Committee on Public Service Reform, via the Reform and Delivery Office in my Department, which is overseeing and driving the reform programme.

I am satisfied with the progress that all Departments, Offices and Sectors are making in this area. This is reflected in the statement of progress on the implementation of the Public Service Reform Plan, published last September, and also in the reports of the Implementation Body overseeing progress on the Public Service Agreement.

Questions Nos. 157 to 159, inclusive, answered with Question No. 19.

Sale of State Assets

160. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which the sale of State assets is proposed as a means of achieving budgetary targets in the coming year; if any such sales will have due regard for the need to preserve the integrity of the respective sectors in the national interest; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10718/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As I have previously informed the House, none of the potential receipts from the State assets disposal programme are to be used as a means of achieving the budgetary targets set for 2013. Instead, it has been agreed with the Troika that all of the Government's proceeds from the programme will be available, in one shape or another, to support job creating initiatives in the economy. Half of the proceeds will be available to fund employment enhancing projects of a commercial nature. The other half, while destined eventually to pay-down debt, will, in the first instance, be constituted as a fund to underpin additional lending into Ireland, for example by the EIB, in support of further investment in job-creating initiatives.

In framing its proposals on State asset proposals, the Government has also taken great care to protect the integrity of the industrial sectors affected: In the case of the electricity and gas sectors, the integral transmissions and distribution systems are to be retained in State owner-

ship; In the case of forestry, it has been made clear that Coillte's land holdings will not be sold; In the case of Aer Lingus, the Government has indicated that it will not support any offer that would significantly undermine connectivity or competitiveness for Ireland.

Question No. 161 answered with Question No. 19.

Departmental Expenditure

162. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which insurance and procurement costs can be adjusted with a view to the maximisation of benefit and budgetary reduction for the benefit of the Exchequer over the next two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10720/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As I indicated to the Deputy in my reply to his Parliamentary Question on this subject on 10 October 2012, I agree that Departments and Offices should make every effort to contain and reduce all administrative costs including both insurance and procurement costs. This approach is in line with Government's overall reform and efficiency agenda. In light of the need to accelerate the reform agenda, my Department published the Public Service Reform Plan in November 2011. This plan identified procurement reform as a key instrument that can assist the public service to deliver services in an efficient manner.

The reform plan includes specific measures to ensure that:

1. aggregated procurement arrangements are utilised across the public service;
2. public bodies have appropriately trained staff to implement reform and to ensure the State is getting value for money; and
3. greater emphasis will be placed on analysing what the State purchases in order to assess other savings that can be made through more efficient procurement methods.

Since its establishment in 2009, the National Procurement Service (NPS) has put in place a number of national arrangements designed to secure better value for money from leveraging the public service's buying power in relation to a range of goods and services that are commonly purchased across the public service. These national arrangements have benefits that include: cash savings; administrative savings from reduced duplication of tendering; greater purchasing expertise; improved consistency; and enhanced service levels. In some instances the take up of the NPS arrangements has been low. In order to increase the usage of the NPS arrangements and thereby secure best value for money, the Government decided that it should be mandatory for public service bodies to use specified national procurement arrangements.

The NPS has reported procurement savings to the end of 2012 under its frameworks of €93.1m, comprising of €7.5m in 2010, €46.5m in 2011 and a further €39.1m for 2012, which include administrative savings. A breakdown of these procurement savings is not readily available by sector. The NPS has established a Working Group to develop the saving methodologies and reporting of procurement savings in the future.

Circular 06/12 implements the Government decision by making it a mandatory requirement that public service bodies avail of specified national arrangements put in place by the NPS. The list of categories subject to national procurement arrangements includes: electricity; natural gas; stationery and office supplies; paper; ICT consumables; managed print services; print media advertising; and, motor vehicles. These national arrangements will secure best value for money

and facilitate contracting authorities to deliver services within their budgetary constraints.

It is estimated that €9 billion is spent by public bodies annually on the public procurement of supplies and services. This is a very significant portion of overall spending and it is essential that the Public Service is achieving maximum value for money and operational efficiency in its approach to public procurement. It is for this reason that public procurement is one of the major pillars of key strategic importance under the Government's Public Service Reform Plan.

In order to ensure that the necessary elements are in place to implement these ambitious reforms, my Department engaged Accenture to undertake a capacity and capability review of the central procurement function to identify the actions required to realise substantial savings in public procurement in the short and medium term. Of the estimated €9 billion annual spend on public procurement of supplies and services, there is procurement addressable spend of approximately €7 billion. The review estimates that implementation of its recommendations, over a three-year period, could yield potential annual savings in the range of €249 million to €637 million, depending on the approach taken. The final report on this review is available on my Department's website.

Following the review, proposals were recently submitted to Government. These proposals represent a new consolidated and integrated approach to public procurement that includes integrating procurement policy, strategy and operations in one office through the establishment of a National Procurement Office (under the aegis of my Department) which will be headed by a Chief Procurement Officer; strengthening spend analytics and data management; examining the specifications set out for goods and services; evaluating demand levels to assess how demand (volume) can be reduced; and strengthening vendor and category management.

These proposals have now been agreed by Government and the Chief Procurement Officer is preparing a Procurement Reform Implementation Plan, which will be submitted to Government by the end of Q1 2013.

These reforms will lead to reductions in the cost of goods and services; better procurement services at lower cost; introduction of technical standardisation; greater attention to contract management and better problem resolution; greater levels of professionalism among staff responsible for procurement; and better performance management of the central procurement function.

Question No. 163 answered with Question No. 19.

Planning Issues

164. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will expedite the transaction with Kerry County Council regarding provision of a site for proposed new cemetery on the grounds of the Derrynane Abbey; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10732/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The conveyancing of the property at Derrynane from the Commissioners of Public Works to Kerry County Council has been a complex legal process. The key issue is establishing title documentation. I understand that the matter has progressed significantly in conjunction with the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO) and I am informed that draft contract documents have now been prepared by the CSSO. As soon as the Office of Public Works has received these contracts they will receive immediate attention in order to conclude matters as quickly as possible.

Flood Relief Schemes Funding

165. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the funding available for homes that are flooded due to river flooding through the Office of Public Works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10734/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The Office of Public Works does not provide direct financial assistance to individual households affected by flooding.

Households experiencing exceptional financial distress as a result of flooding can apply for Humanitarian Aid which is administered by the Department of the Social Protection. Details on Humanitarian Aid and Urgent Needs Allowances are available on that Department's website www.welfare.ie.

The focus of the OPW's work is to manage flood risk both at the strategic level, through the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme, and more directly, through its flood relief capital works investment programme.

Details of the CFRAM programme can be found at www.cfram.ie.

The OPW, in partnership with local authorities, undertakes or funds both major and minor flood relief capital works throughout Ireland. Under the Government's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Medium Term Exchequer Framework 2012-2016, a total allocation of €225 million has been made for the flood relief capital investment programme over the 5 year period of the framework. The major flood relief schemes funded under the programme, such as in Mallow and Clonmel for example, provide protection to a large number of households and commercial properties and are designed to protect against the 1 in 100 year flood event.

In addition, under the Minor Works scheme, the OPW funds smaller scale, more localised flood relief works and measures carried out by local authorities in their administrative areas. Local authorities may apply for funding assistance, subject to meeting the criteria for the scheme and the availability of funds.

Employment Appeals Tribunal

166. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if a person (details supplied) in County Cork will be paid moneys by their former employer following a ruling by the employment appeals tribunal in their favour; if a State redundancy payment or assistance may become available to them in the event that such moneys will not be forthcoming; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10534/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): This case came before the Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) by way of an appeal for implementation of a Rights Commissioner decision under the terms of the Unfair Dismissals Acts, 1977 to 2007. The EAT heard the appeal on 2 December, 2011.

The EAT being satisfied that the decision under the terms of the Unfair Dismissals Acts, 1977 to 2007, had not been carried out by the respondent, the time for bringing an appeal against the recommendation had expired and no such appeal having been brought, made an order to the like effect as the decision of the Rights Commissioner (Ref No: UD94885/10/MR refers). The EAT awarded €10,400.00 to the appellant under the terms of the Unfair Dismissals Acts, 1977 to 2007. The determination issued to all parties on 23 December, 2011.

As this company is in liquidation claims against the company including the payment of this award should be made in the first instance to the liquidator (address provided above). The liquidator may then seek to have payment of the award made from the Social Insurance Fund. The Social Insurance Fund is now administered by the Department of Social Protection. The claim will be processed upon receipt from the liquidator, by that Department and if appropriate, payment will be made to the liquidator on behalf of your constituent.

If having communicated with the liquidator your constituent requires further information with regard to the payment of his award he should contact the Department of Social Protection as follows: Insolvency Payments Section, Floor 3, Department of Social Protection, Block C, The Earlsfort Centre, Lower Hatch Street, Dublin 2. Telephone: 01 6734501

Job Expansion Fund

167. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding financial assistance for employers who wish to take on new employees; the assistance available to help them to take on employees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10688/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): In general, the supports provided by my Department's agencies are designed to support business development through a range of start-up and expansion programmes. In relation to the recruitment of employees, Enterprise Ireland provides grant support up to a maximum of €15,000 per job towards the recruitment of new employees under its Job Expansion Fund. This scheme applies to SMEs which have been trading for at least two years with 10 or more full time employees, in manufacturing and/or high-growth potential traded services. Companies must be looking to recruit a minimum of three new employees per application. Enterprise Ireland can also provide partial funding towards the cost of recruiting a key manager with skills that are crucial to the future growth of client companies, but this is not intended to be a general recruitment subsidy.

Financial assistance for employers who wish to take on new employees is more generally available through Revenue's Job Assist scheme and the Employer Job (PRSI) Incentive scheme operated by the Department of Social Protection.

Under Job Assist, an employer who recruits a person who has been on the Live Register for 12 months or more is entitled to a double write-off of the person's wages and employer's PRSI for three years.

Under the Employer Job (PRSI) Incentive scheme, employers are exempt from the payment of employer's PRSI contribution for 18 months if they recruit a person who has been on the Live Register for six months or longer.

The take-up of these two schemes has been quite poor, in spite of increased promotion of the schemes under the Action Plan for Jobs 2012. Under the 2013 Action Plan for Jobs, therefore, the Government has announced the introduction of a new single simplified scheme to replace Job Assist and the PRSI Incentive scheme from the middle of this year.

The new JobsPlus scheme will provide a fixed grant payment to businesses for each new employee recruited from the Live Register who has been unemployed for 12 months or more. In order to target the scheme in favour of the more long term unemployed, the value of the incentive will be set at two levels: €7,500 in respect of recruits unemployed for more than 12 months but less than 24 months; and €10,000 in respect of recruits unemployed for more than 24 months.

It is proposed that the new incentive will be payable on a monthly basis, in arrears, over a two year period.

The JobsPlus scheme will be operated by the Department of Social Protection. Pending its introduction, Revenue Job Assist and the Employer Job (PRSI) Incentive scheme will continue to operate.

Departmental Staff Data

168. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of agency and contract staff currently employed under the aegis of his Department; the mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10985/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): There are no agency or contract staff currently employed in my Department except for the following staff appointed by me and the Ministers of State at my Department: two special advisers, one personal assistant in each Minister's office, one personal secretary in each Minister's office and two civilian drivers for each Minister.

Staff who occupy the posts listed above are paid an annual salary which is outlined in their respective contracts and agreed with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. As this is a day to day matter for the agencies, I have asked the agencies under the aegis of my Department to respond directly to the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

169. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of public sector workers who have retired in the past three years within his Department or any office or body under his aegis who have been reinstated; if he will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10997/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): In my Department the reappointment of one former Assistant Principal post was sanctioned for the period 25/10/12-31/7/13 in connection with Ireland's Presidency of the EU. The post is sanctioned at the first point on the Assistant Principal scale and the total cost to my Department for the period of the reappointment is €51,856.69. During this time, the pension normally paid to the individual in question is abated and this results in savings to the Exchequer.

Staffing of the Agencies under the auspices of my Department, is a day to day matter for the agencies concerned. I have asked the Agencies to respond directly to the Deputy.

Youth Unemployment Measures

170. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to address youth unemployment in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10682/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The 2011 Census provides the most recent statistics on the youth population in Kerry. According to the Census, there were some 16,300 young persons (aged 15-24) in Kerry in 2011, which represents 14% of the popu-

lation (aged 15 and over).

There were 2,559 persons under 25 on the Live Register in County Kerry in January 2013, down 7.6% on the same month last year.

Young people, typically, suffer disproportionately from job losses in recessions as they tend to have entered employment more recently, are more likely to hold temporary contracts and to be employed in cyclically sensitive industries than older workers.

In the first instance, the Government's primary strategy to tackle youth unemployment is to create the environment for a strong economic recovery by promoting competitiveness and productivity. Economic recovery will underpin jobs growth. Past experience suggests that youth unemployment, which tends to rise relatively rapidly in a downturn, can be expected to fall relatively rapidly during the recovery.

In addition to promoting economic recovery, the Government recognises the need for interim measures to support the young unemployed and keep young jobseekers close to the labour market. There are five main approaches being taken to tackle youth unemployment: education, training, job search assistance/guidance, work experience, and encouraging job creation. These actions range across a number of Departments and Agencies. These initiatives are being rolled out in all areas across the country including Kerry. Details of these initiatives have already been outlined in earlier PQs relating to youth unemployment policies at the national level.

There are some programmes specific to Kerry that are also being run. FÁS provides a training course in Tralee, Deciding Your Future, which targets young unemployed clients from RAPID areas. Employment Services in Kerry provide school briefing services where they meet with schools/students who request their services on an annual basis to provide them with an overview of services available. The Mentor Project runs out of the Kerry Diocesan Youth Service (KYDS) in Tralee and provides a mentoring service for early school-leavers who have re-engaged in training with the Leaving Cert Applied in the KDYS, Community Training Centre in Monavalley and Youthreach/Transforum Alley (funded by Kerry Education Service). Clients (aged under 21) who are coming off these programmes are met on a one-to-one basis and provided with career guidance and referral services.

Job Initiatives

171. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection the plans she has in place to address long-term unemployment in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10686/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In January of this year, there 16,825 persons signing on the Live Register in Kerry, of which 36% (5,983) were long-term registrants.

Long-term unemployment is a primary focus of the Government's activation policy both in Kerry and nationally. In the first instance, the Government's primary strategy to tackle long-term unemployment is to create the environment for a strong economic recovery by promoting competitiveness and productivity. Economic recovery will underpin jobs growth, thus reducing unemployment.

In addition to promoting economic recovery, the Government recognises the need for interim measures to support the long-term unemployed and keep jobseekers close to the labour market. These initiatives are being rolled out in all areas across the country including Kerry.

Details of these initiatives have already been outlined in answers to earlier Parliamentary questions relating to long-term unemployment policies at the national level.

With regard to specific initiatives for the long-term unemployed in Kerry, North Kerry employers have recently been invited to a Business Breakfast organised by DSP to be held in Tralee on Wednesday March 13. An event in Killarney, for South Kerry Employers will follow at a later date.

During this initiative, employers will be provided with information on Government initiatives, existing and newly announced in the Action Plan for Jobs. This will include information on incentives available to encourage employers recruit from the pool of long term unemployed claimants.

This Business Breakfast will brief Employers and Employers Representatives in order to overcome any previous lack of knowledge of incentives for employers to recruit long-term unemployed, and in particular, the recently announced JobsPlus initiative, which will replace Revenue Job Assist and the Employers PRSI Exemption scheme in the second half of this year.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

172. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reasons for the disparity in the decision of the appeals officer to disallow an appeal in respect of a person (details supplied), while the appeal of another person, whose circumstances were similar to that of the first person, was upheld; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10446/13]

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, including that adduced at the oral hearing, disallowed the appeal of the person concerned (Constituent A)

Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of the Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed by the Appeals Officer in the light of new evidence or new facts.

Following the submission of additional evidence the Deputy Chief Appeals Officer agreed to review both cases of the constituents concerned, both of which followed oral hearings. The Deputy Chief Appeals Officer noted that in the case of constituent B, far more substantial level of evidence was presented which was not available to the Appeals Officer's in constituent A's case.

I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that the Deputy Chief Appeals Officer having fully considered all the new evidence adduced in the in the case of constituent A as to the nature and de facto nature of the contact, revised the decision and allowed the appeal of constituent A by way of summary decision. The person concerned was notified of the Appeals Officer decision on 19 December 2012

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.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

173. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if urgent attention and assistance can be given to a rent allowance claimant (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if she

will make a statement on the matter. [10498/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In January 2012 the rent supplement limit for the family size of the person concerned was set in legislation as €825.00 in accordance with S.I. 412 of 2007, Part 3, Article 9, 2 (i) (iii), wherein it is stated that rent supplement shall be awarded on condition that “the rent payable by the claimant is just and proper having regard to the nature, character and location of the residence...” As is standard practice, the person concerned was given 13 weeks in which to either negotiate a reduction in rent or source alternative accommodation. This period was extended for a further month until 31st August 2012.

However she presented herself as homeless on 5th September 2012 and she and her family were assigned to the Sunnybank Hotel which is a reputable premises used by both my Department and Dublin City Council to house homeless persons in temporary accommodation. Dublin City Council which has the responsibility for the provision and standard of emergency accommodation carry out regular checks of the premises.

The person concerned is in receipt of one parent family payment from my Department and I understand currently resides at her mother’s address. I am informed that there are adequate suitable accommodations within the above rent limit in that area Should she source rented accommodation and her circumstances remain the same she may be entitled to receive a rent supplement from my Department and she should contact the local Community Welfare Office.

Departmental Expenditure

174. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 415 of 12 February 2013, if she will compile and provide an approximate estimate of the cost per annum of means testing individuals for various welfare benefits; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10501/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Estimates for the Department published on Budget day provides for expenditure of €20.257 billion on schemes, services and administration in 2013. Of this, just under €595 million or 2.9% of total estimated expenditure will be spent on administration.

My Department operates a range of means tested schemes and these schemes, including the means testing elements, are administered through a network of local and central offices.

Means testing is an integral part of the administration process to decide if a person has an entitlement to a payment or a continuing entitlement to a payment and the amount of that payment for the following schemes: Jobseeker’s allowance, one parent family payment, widows/widowers/surviving civil partners non-contributory pension, deserted wife’s allowance, basic supplementary welfare allowance, farm assist, pre-retirement allowance, back to work allowance, back to education allowance, disability allowance, blind pension, carer’s allowance, family income supplement and back to school clothing and footwear allowance. In addition there is a means testing element to determining entitlement to an increase for a qualified adult and qualified child as well as the fuel allowance for social insurance schemes.

The main components of workflow in the department’s processing sections are claim processing, maintenance, control activity and dealing with enquiries. Means testing is just one aspect of the process. The means of a claimant where required are established following an assessment of the claimant’s financial position. This may be carried out at the relevant scheme office and, in some cases, may involve referral to a Social Welfare Inspector/Community Welfare Officer to carry out a home visit. The means are determined by the Deciding Officer/

Designated Person and as appropriate are used to adjust the amount of the payment, if any; a claimant will receive, subject to all the other conditions of the scheme being satisfied.

The Department's administration processes are supported by shared infrastructure and IT systems. These systems support various aspects of claim processing, including means assessment.

For the reasons outlined above it is not possible to disaggregate the specific administration costs relating to means testing as it forms just one element of determining entitlement to a specific payment and, in many cases, the staff who administer these schemes in Social Welfare Offices or as part of the Departmental Inspectorate are also simultaneously administering other schemes, including schemes which are not means tested.

Question No. 175 withdrawn.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

176. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an invalidity pension will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10512/13]

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 available evidence allowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of summary decision. The person concerned was notified of the Appeals Officer's decision on 25 February 2013.

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

177. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress to date in respect of an appeal for invalidity pension in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; when the appeal will reach a conclusion; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10530/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 31st January 2013, 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 Applications

178. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the refusal of application for disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in

County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10532/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned applied for disability allowance on 13 June 2012. The application based upon the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds and the person was notified in writing of this decision on 3 December 2012.

The person submitted further medical evidence in support of her claim and a review of his application is underway. Once a decision is made on this review the person will be notified of the outcome.

Rural Social Scheme Applications

179. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans for the rural social scheme for 2013 and 2014; if she will provide a guarantee that this scheme will be continued in its current form. [10533/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The rural social scheme provides income support for farmers and those engaged in fishing who have an entitlement to specified social welfare payments. Participants are engaged for 19½ hours per week to provide certain services of benefit to rural communities. The scheme currently provides work opportunities for around 2,600 participants and 130 supervisory staff. The funds allocated for 2013 amount to €45m, which should enable the scheme to continue as in previous years but does not allow for the recruitment above the numbers stated above. Allocation levels in 2014 will be determined as part of the annual budget process. The Department of Social Protection has recently published a review of employment support schemes which, together with the outcome of the focussed policy assessment of the RSS which the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has indicated it intends to conduct this year, will inform future policy developments of the scheme.

Question No. 180 withdrawn.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

181. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on an appeal for domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; the delay in processing same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10636/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received on 19 June 2012. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who considered that the child was not medically eligible for DCA. A letter issued on 7 August 2012 outlining the decision to refuse the allowance. The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against this decision. As part of the appeal process, the case has been forwarded to another of the Department's Medical Assessors for further consideration, including a review of any new information supplied. Upon receipt of the Medical Assessor's opinion, the case will be further examined and allowed or forwarded for consideration by the Appeals Office.

Job Initiatives

182. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will assure participants on jobs initiative programmes that there is no change to the programme; her views on the future of the scheme; the enhancements to the scheme, if any, she plans to implement to the jobs initiative scheme this year. [10652/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Job Initiative (JI) scheme was launched in 1996. The Job Initiative programme initially provided three years full-time employment for people who - on entry to the scheme - were 35 years of age or over, unemployed for 5 years or more, and in receipt of social welfare payments over that period. In November 2004 the then Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment decided to allow those already on the programme to remain until retirement age (at 66). Further recruitment onto the scheme was also halted from that date.

A stakeholder conference was held on 18 February to consider the recommendations made in the Review of Employment Support Schemes including Job Initiative, published by this Department in November 2012. The conference provided stakeholders with the opportunity to debate the issues raised. Further consideration will now be given to the recommendations made over the next number of months.

Family Income Supplement Applications

183. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for family income supplement in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10654/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The family income supplement (FIS) is designed to provide support for people with families who are on low earnings. The person concerned made a first time application for FIS on 18 October 2012. As part of an application for FIS applicants are required to enclose their most recent payslips along with their latest P60, in order that their average net assessable earnings can be determined. When the application of the person concerned was examined these documents were outstanding. Accordingly she has been requested to supply them. Once received, a decision will be made on the entitlement to FIS of the person concerned and they will be notified directly of the outcome.

Question No. 184 withdrawn.

One-Parent Family Payment Appeals

185. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress made to date in the determination of an application for one parent family payment in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10662/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case. Every effort will be made to hear the case as quickly as possible and the appellant will be informed when arrangements have been made. 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 Correspondence

186. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she has dealt with correspondence dated 18 January 2013 from the South Dublin County Partnership, raising concerns regarding the Tús programme; if she appreciates the need for action; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10672/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The correspondence referred to by the Deputy was received by my department on 31 January 2013 and concerns matters raised by Dublin based local development companies delivering Tús, the community work placement initiative, on the application of changes with respect to PRSI introduced as part of Budget 2013. A written response was issued by the Department on 12 February 2013 setting out the current position regarding the application of the tax and PRSI situation to payments made in respect of the Tús initiative.

Community Employment Schemes Review

187. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Social Protection the financial consideration that is given to community employment scheme sponsors that entered contracts with suppliers prior to the reduction of the materials grant in order to allow them to fulfill the terms of the contracts. [10683/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An extensive review of the expenditure requirements of Community Employment (CE) schemes was carried out in 2012 as part of the CE Financial Review. A majority of all CE schemes reviewed fell within the €500 - €1,000 per place per year funding requirement bracket with the remainder requiring less than €500 per year. The outcome of the Review permitted the Department of Social Protection to meet what was considered the essential costs of scheme sponsors in delivering the Community Employment Programme for 2012. Some flexibility was allowed for CE schemes who incurred eligible costs prior to the reduction in budget, where operations continued into the budget year of 2012. At the same time, the Department achieved a budget reduction in 2012 of approximately 30% on materials/training expenditure for 2011.

Community Employment Schemes Funding

188. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Social Protection the criteria under which a community employment scheme sponsor may qualify for a top-up materials grant, as announced by her in 2012. [10684/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The top-up materials grant to which the Deputy refers was only applicable in 2012 pending publication of the CE Financial Review. At that point, the scheme budgets were finalised based on the detailed discussions between Department officials and the Community Employment (CE) Sponsors.

Community Employment Schemes Review

189. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will give consideration to any measure which could reduce the cost currently circa €1,500 of annual audits to community employment scheme sponsors, which are limited companies. [10685/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A financial review of the CE schemes was carried out by Department officials last year. One of the findings was that the requirement that an annual audit be conducted for each scheme without any limit being placed on the amount allowable for audit costs, had in certain cases resulted in value for money not being secured. A comparison of audit fees indicated that there was a wide variation in costs (minima €20, maxima €9,500). The level of reimbursement of audit fees has now been capped at €1,000 from the overall materials grant, which is considered to be adequate.

Unemployment Levels

190. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the unemployment level in Newcastle West, Kilmallock and Limerick city in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [10687/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The number of persons on the live register as published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), in Newcastle West, Kilmallock and Limerick City, at the end of each of the years 2009 to 2012 and at the end of January 2013 is detailed in the tabular statement.

Live register as published by the CSO at the end of December in each of the years 2009 to 2012 and at the end of January 2013.

Area	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Kilmallock	2762	2707	2650	2563	2549
Newcastle West	3521	3484	3376	3161	3178
Limerick City	15092	14779	14313	13504	13577

Source - www.cso.ie

Community Employment Schemes Funding

191. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection the provisions being made for community employment scheme sponsors to avail of assistance in meeting the cost of rent of premises; her views on whether the cessation of rent payment under materials claims is putting the future of many schemes in jeopardy; if she will outline the circumstances in which rent can be paid; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10723/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Rental costs are not an eligible expenditure under the CE materials grant except in exceptional circumstances with the written approval of the Department. The CE Financial Review carried out in 2012 revealed that for the majority of cases rental costs were to enable the delivery of services of the sponsor body rather than to provide specific accommodation for the CE scheme. To provide an equitable solution to the situation it was proposed that where rental costs had been allowed, they would continue to be funded in 2012 from the materials budget under specific conditions:

1. Details of when the building was acquired/rented and details of current square footage usage and any additional income being received through room rental.
2. Invoices to be on a 3rd party invoice with Employer/Individual Tax number.
3. A copy of the Lease Agreement and Tax Clearance Cert or PBRT registration number.

Departmental Staff Data

192. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of agency and contract staff currently employed under the aegis of her Department; the mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10986/13]

194. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will outline the numbers and cost of agency staff under the aegis of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [11065/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 192 and 194 together.

In March 2012, one member of staff in the Department, the Chief Medical Advisor, was re-hired on a temporary contract on a payscale of €93,197 to €113,503. Payment of his pension is abated pending the termination of his temporary contract. 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.

There are currently 262 temporary clerical officers employed in the Department. Temporary clerical staff are recruited to cover absences of permanent staff on maternity leave, long term sick leave, other statutory leave and also to provide cover for some staff availing of the shorter working year scheme. They are also recruited to alleviate work pressure in certain areas, and to assist in the roll out of the Public Service Card project. Temporary contracts are offered for a specific timeframe or fixed purpose and the term can vary according to the purpose of the contract. The contracts are kept under review by the HR Division and are terminated when the purpose for the contract has ceased. Some of the costs involved in the recruitment of temporary staff can be offset, for example, where permanent staff avail of certain unpaid statutory leave such as the shorter working year scheme or unpaid leave; or where staff on long-term sick leave are on a reduced salary.

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) currently has five temporary clerical officers assigned to provide general mortgage information and advice. The costs of their salaries are being met by the mortgage lenders. The CIB also has one agency staff member (0.5 full time equivalent) on an annual salary of €16,158.

The Office of the Pensions Ombudsman currently has one temporary clerical officer assigned.

The Pensions Board currently has seven staff members employed on fixed term contracts, all of which will expire in the last quarter of 2014. In addition, the board currently has one temporary member of staff covering a staff absence.

Temporary clerical officers are paid on a weekly pay scale ranging from €421.92 to €680.62 for staff employed in the public service prior to 1/1/2011 or €379.72 to €612.56 for new entrants employed from 1/1/2011.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

193. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of public

sector workers who have retired in the past three years within her Department or any office or body under her aegis who have been reinstated; if she will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [11000/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In March 2012, one member of staff in the Department, the Chief Medical Advisor, was re-hired on a temporary contract on a payscale of €93,197 to €113,503. Payment of his pension is abated pending the termination of his temporary contract. 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.

As an exception to the current moratorium on recruitment, my Department has limited sanction to recruit temporary clerical officers to cover critical staff absences and to assist with the roll-out of the new Public Service Card. Three of these temporary staff are retired civil servants. They are on a payscale of €22,016 to €35,515 and were recruited from open competitions run by the Public Appointments Service. Abatement of pension applies, if applicable, pending the termination of their temporary contracts. Following an open competition for staff with investigative skills, the Pensions Board, which is under the aegis of my Department, employed two people on temporary contracts who were previously employed by An Garda Síochána and who are in receipt of Garda pensions. The salary scales for the two staff are €46,081-€58,294 and €65,185-€80,678.

Question No. 194 answered with Question No. 192.

Heritage Council Funding

195. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide an update regarding the inequitable cuts to the Heritage Council which have resulted in grants programme not being available for 2013, to the detriment of funding for local heritage projects; if this deficit will be compensated for in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10694/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The level of funding allocated from my Department's vote to the Heritage Council will be set out in the revised estimate volume which is due to be published shortly. I also hope to be in a position to provide some funding to the Council from my Department's share of the Environment Fund. It will be a matter for the Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports in 2013 and future years having regard to competing priorities for limited resources.

The scope to provide additional funding for the protection, conservation and development of the State's heritage is constrained by the current national economic difficulties and the significant reduction in the public finances. Between 2008 and 2011 the level of funding from voted expenditure to the Heritage Council was reduced by 55%. However, my Department will continue to provide funding for the protection, conservation and development of our built and natural heritage, in so far as resources allow. The allocation to the Heritage Council in 2014 will be subject to the normal budgetary processes.

Hedge Cutting Season

196. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will extend the hedge cutting season to allow farmers cut their hedges (details supplied). [10474/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Under Section 40 of the Wildlife Acts, the cutting, grubbing, burning or destruction by other means of vegetation growing on uncultivated land or in hedges or ditches is prohibited during the nesting and breeding season for birds and wildlife, from 1 March to 31 August subject to certain specific exceptions. Hedgerows are an important reservoir of biodiversity and habitat for birds, insects, wild flowers and other wildlife during the summer breeding season. The purpose of these provisions is to protect bird life during the nesting season, to prevent forest fires, and to protect vegetation and wildlife habitats during the months of growth and reproduction. I have no current plans to extend the period for hedge cutting.

While hedgerows and scrub are important as wildlife habitats, they need to be managed in the interests of both farming and biodiversity. Accordingly, I included a commitment in the National Biodiversity Plan 2011-2016 to review the overall policy in this area. The commitment is to review, in co-operation with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, both hedgerow and scrub regulation with a view to producing guidelines to encourage best practice for hedgerow and scrub management for wildlife. As part of that review, the potential for setting the relevant dates by statutory instrument, rather than in primary legislation as is the position currently, will be examined.

Íocaíochtaí Deontas

197. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an ndéanfaidh sé liosta a sholáthar de na hirisí agus de na nuachtáin a fuair cúnamh deontais ó Roinn na Gaeltachta, Bord na Gaeilge, Foras na Gaeilge nó Údarás na Gaeltachta ó 1980; agus an ndéanfaidh sé faisnéis a sholáthar i bhfoirm tábla maidir leis an dá bhliain dheireanacha a raibh foilseacháin i gcló lena linn, nó leis na blianta 2011 agus 2012 i gcás foilseacháin atá fós i gcló, is faisnéis i dtaobh cén deontas a fuair na foilseacháin sin, cad é líon na ndaoine a bhí fostaithe leo, cad é líon na gcóipeanna a díoladh i siopaí de réir an eagráin (go laethúil, go seachtainiúil, go míosúil nó de réir cibé minicíochta foilsitheoireachta a bhí acu) agus cad é líon na gcóipeanna a cheannaigh sintiúsóirí de réir an eagráin (go laethúil, go seachtainiúil, go míosúil nó de réir cibé minicíochta foilsitheoireachta a bhí acu). [10586/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Mar is eol don Teachta, is ar Fhoras na Gaeilge atá an príomhchúram i ndáil le foilsitheoireacht na Gaeilge, ar a n-áirítear cúnamh a chur ar fáil do nuachtáin nó irisí atá á bhfoilsíú trí Ghaeilge. Tuigtear dom ón bhForas go bhfuil cúnamh curtha ar fáil do nuachtáin agus irisí mar seo a leanas ó bunaíodh é i mí na Nollag 1999: *Lá, Lá Nua, Foinse, Gaelscéal, Comhar, An Sagart, An Timire, NÓSmag, Feasta* agus *An tUltach*. Maidir leis na sonraí atá iarrtha ag an Teachta, tuigim ón bhForas go gcuirfean an t-eolas cuí le chéile agus go seolfar é go díreach chuig an Teachta a luaithe agus is féidir. Maidir le hÚdarás na Gaeltachta, níor thug agus ní thugann an tÚdarás fóirdheontas reáchtála d'aon fhoilsitheoirí nuachtáin nó irisí. É sin ráite, tuigtear gur chuir an tÚdarás cúnamh i leith fostaíochta agus oiliúna ar fáil ón mbliain 1980 do chomhlachtaí áirithe foilsitheoireachta nuachtáin agus irisí Gaeilge i ndáil le poist a cruthaíodh sna comhlachtaí sa Ghaeltacht. Tá an t-eolas ábhartha sa tábla thíosluaite.

Foilsitheoir	Foilseachán	Deontas	Tréimhse
Móinéar Teo	Foinse	€72,223	1996-2001
Foilseacháin an Phobail Teo.	Cuisle	€19,046	1998-1999

Foilsitheoir	Foilseachán	Deontas	Tréimhse
Foilseacháin na Ríochta Teo.	Anseo sa Ríocht agus ar fud na Tíre	€12,697	1999
Preas na Gaeltachta	Lá	€49,600	2004-2006

Maidir le mo Roinn féin, aistríodh an fhreagracht maidir le nuachtáin agus irisí go dtí Foras na Gaeilge nuair a bunaíodh é i 1999. Ní bheadh teacht ar na sonraí atá iarrtha ag an Teachta don tréimhse ó 1980 go 1999 gan chuardach a dhéanamh ar bhonn forleathan sna comhaid ábhartha atá curtha i dtaisce i stóras seachtrach. Ní léir dom an tairbhe a thiocfadh as an dua suntasach a bheadh i gceist chun é sin a dhéanamh.

Departmental Staff Data

198. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of agency and contract staff currently employed under the aegis of his Department; the mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10977/13]

200. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will outline the numbers and cost of agency staff under the aegis of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11057/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 198 and 200 together.

Information in respect of the numbers of contract/agency staff employed in bodies/agencies funded from my Department's Vote Group in 2012 is set out in the table below. There has been no change to these numbers thus far in 2013. As the Deputies will be aware, my Department and the bodies under its aegis (other than North South Implementation Bodies) are subject to the moratorium on public sector recruitment and have been directed to achieve a progressive reduction in payroll costs staffing numbers through the implementation of an Employment Control Framework (ECF) over the period 2010-2015. Progress in this regard is subject to regular review in consultation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Body	Staff engaged on fixed term contracts as at 31/12/2012	Agency staff numbers as at 31/12/2012	Agency staff employed during 2012	Cost of agency staff in 2012
Arts Council	2	3	3	€180,129
Ulster-Scots Agency*	1	0	0	0
Irish Film Board	2	2	2	€43,320
Chester Beatty Library	2	0	0	0
Crawford Art Gallery	4	0	0	0
Foras na Gaeilge*	6	0	0	0
Heritage Council	1	0	0	0
Irish Museum of Modern Art	1	0	0	0
National Concert Hall	1	1	4	€30,376
National Library of Ireland	5	1	1	€29,487
National Museum of Ireland	3	0	1	€38,216
Údarás na Gaeltachta	1	0	0	0
Waterways Ireland*	1	4	25	€517,171
National Gallery of Ireland	16	1	2	€ 46,810

Body	Staff engaged on fixed term contracts as at 31/12/2012	Agency staff numbers as at 31/12/2012	Agency staff employed during 2012	Cost of agency staff in 2012
Total	46	12	38	€885,509

**North South Implementation Bodies are not subject to the moratorium on recruitment or the ECF framework.*

Departmental Staff Rehiring

199. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of public sector workers who have retired in the past three years within his Department or any office or body under his aegis who have been reinstated; if he will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10989/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As I have previously advised the House, Údarás na Gaeltachta employed two former members of staff on a temporary basis during 2012. A retired solicitor is currently engaged on a contract which is due to end on 30 April 2013 at a salary of €55,214 over fourteen months. The former CEO of Údarás na Gaeltachta was also engaged as interim CEO of that body at a salary of €20,916 for a four month period which ended on 30 April 2012. I am advised that the abatement principle was applied in both cases. Other than the two cases referred to above, neither my Department nor any other body under its aegis has re-instated retired members of staff in the last three years.

Question No. 200 answered with Question No. 198.

Energy Schemes Issues

201. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the reasons an insulation grant was refused by Sustainable Energy Ireland to a person (details supplied) in County Limerick. [10550/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) administers the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme under the Better Energy Programme. The Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme delivers a range of energy efficiency measures to households that are vulnerable to energy poverty. The scheme is delivered through a combination of SEAI appointed Community Based Organisations (CBOs), augmented by a panel of private contractors in order to ensure national coverage and via an area based approach. Measures available include draught proofing, attic insulation, lagging jackets for hot water tanks, low energy light bulbs and cavity wall insulation and are free of charge to the customer. My Department has been informed by the SEAI that a surveyor was allocated to the home in question but the homeowner was not able to provide proof of eligibility for the scheme at the time. The scheme is available to homes which meet the following criteria:

- Owner occupied non-Local Authority homes
- Constructed before 2002
- The owner is in receipt of one of the following: Fuel Allowance as part of the National Fuel Scheme; Job Seekers Allowance for over six months and with children under seven years of age; or Family Income support.

If the homeowner is eligible for the scheme they would be welcome to reapply. However, the homeowner will need to provide proof of eligibility. Queries in relation to individual applications are an operational matter for the SEAI and a dedicated hotline can be reached at 1800 250 204. In addition, the SEAI has established a specific email address for queries from Oireachtas members, which can be sent to oireachtas@seai.ie and will be dealt with promptly.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Scheme

202. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he intends to establish a registration scheme for oil installers and service technicians, similar to RGII, which regulates professionals permitted to work on gas systems, and RECI, which registers those permitted to work with electricity; the steps he has taken to date, if any, to establish this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10450/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I assume that the Deputy is referring to the potential dangers that may result from faulty installations, especially carbon monoxide gas, which would be dangerous to people in their homes and at their places of work. In that regard, I was pleased to launch the first Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week on 24 September 2012. The Awareness Week saw a sustained, multi-media publicity campaign to alert people to the dangers posed by carbon monoxide and to give them advice as to what they should do to be safe. The issue was widely reported on television, on national and local radio and in both national and local press. In respect of the possibility for a mandatory registration scheme for oil technicians, similar to those in place for the gas (RGII) and electricity (RECI) industries, I have asked my officials to meet with industry representatives to discuss the matter and I await the outcome of such discussions.

Renewable Energy Incentives

203. **Deputy Paudie Coffey** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in the interests of sustainability and the development of renewable energy, the incentives that exist or are proposed, that will facilitate business installing renewable energy infrastructure; if he will outline any proposals that will facilitate the sale or the export of this renewable energy electricity to the national grid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10555/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The REFIT support system was introduced to support renewable sources of electricity in Ireland. The current REFIT reference rates are as follows:

Technology	Price (Euro/MWh)
Large wind	= 69.235
Small Wind	= 71.664
Hydro	= 87.455
Biomass/Landfill Gas	= 85.026

Approximately 1900MW of renewable generation is currently connected to the Irish grid and almost 19% of electricity consumed in 2012 is estimated to have come from renewable sources.

Under the current implementation of REFIT only energy exported to the grid is eligible for support from the REFIT scheme. REFIT is a market support scheme which incentivises electricity suppliers to enter so called Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with generators of renewable electricity. To be accepted into REFIT both planning permission and a grid connection are required. Under a PPA, the supplier undertakes to purchase all the output from a selected new renewable energy plant at contract prices which are fixed between the renewable electricity producer and the supplier at the commencement of each individual contract for 15 years. Since January 2012 there is a VAT refund for the purchase of microgeneration equipment for farmers/agricultural businesses. EirGrid is responsible for planning and development of the transmission grid. Grid 25 is EirGrid's comprehensive strategy for developing the grid over the coming years to meet our increasing renewable energy needs. Through Grid 25 and the implementation plans for the different regions under that strategy, EirGrid has marked out the path for grid development to ensure that we can meet our renewable obligations. More information can be found here: <http://www.eirgridprojects.com/>.

The behaviour of the power system will change with increasing levels of variable non-synchronous generation on it out to 2020. The DS3 programme is EirGrid's response to these issues and involves the development of the appropriate new system operational policies and tools, and the identification of the capabilities and characteristics required from the conventional portfolio to meet the system needs out to 2020. In terms of autogeneration for businesses, policies to support this include CER Decision 09/99, which provides for small renewable and low carbon generators, including autoproduction, to connect to the grid outside of the normal Gate process.

Renewable Energy Generation Issues

204. **Deputy Paudie Coffey** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources what the micro-generators of renewable energy infrastructure, both domestic and commercial, may expect for price per KWH unit when exporting electricity to the national grid; the way this compares to other EU States; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10556/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Electric Ireland has been offering a 9c/kwh feed in tariff, on a commercial basis, to domestic microgenerators since February 2009. No other electricity supply company has to date chosen to enter the market and to offer a microgeneration feed-in-tariff on a commercial basis, although the Commission for Energy Regulation invited them to do so. No company has opted to offer, on a commercial basis, a feed-in-tariff for microgeneration to the commercial and industrial sectors. Previously, a joint ESB/Electric Ireland microgeneration support scheme for the domestic sector offering a total of 19c/kwh (comprising 10c/kwh from ESB Networks combined with the 9c/kwh from ESB Customer Supply (now Electric Ireland)) ran for 3 years (February 2009-February 2012) and had a take up of between 500 and 600 installations. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has been asked to provide my Department with analysis of other means through which the microgeneration sector could be supported, apart from through a feed-in-tariff funded from the Public Service Obligation. In 2009, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) initiated a pilot microgeneration programme. This involved 42 installations of various microgeneration technologies. A final monitoring report on the performance of the installations and learning from the programme is awaited from SEAI. This will inform future policy development. In view of falling technology costs, the Department has also asked SEAI to update analysis on the costs of varying levels of support for microgeneration technologies, with a view to considering how the sector could be supported in the future.

Renewable Energy Generation Issues

205. **Deputy Paudie Coffey** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the average lead time for the connection of new micro renewable generation infrastructure to the national electricity grid where there is an existing electrical connection to a business or domestic dwellings; the way that compares to other EU states; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10557/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): My Department have been in contact with ESB Networks (ESBN) regarding micro renewable generation. When a micro-generator has been installed and ESBN have received payment for the import/export meter along with the necessary Electro-Technical Council of Ireland (ETCI) electrical certification, ESB Networks will install import/export metering. ESBN have informed us that the average connection time is 10 days approximately. There is no charge to connect a micro-generator to the Distribution Network provided it complies with EN50438. The draft European standard EN 50438 outlines the requirements for the connection of micro-generators in parallel with public low-voltage distribution networks and defines micro-generation as a source of electrical energy and all associated equipment designed to operate in parallel with the low voltage system, rated up to and including:

- 25A at low voltage[230V], when the network connection is single phase, or
- 16A at low voltage [230/400V], when the network connection is three phase.

After the meter has been installed the customer must contact their electricity supplier regarding payment arrangements for any electricity that is exported to the grid. The customer will need to have an agreement with their electricity supplier to purchase the electricity exported and to supply the electricity imported. Both import and export must be with the same supplier. The approach to supporting micro-generated electricity production in Ireland is not out of line with other EU States.

Energy Schemes Issues

206. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if the energy efficiency fund can potentially be accessed by local authorities to allow them secure alternative sustainable energy supplies for their operations, including from micro-generation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10679/13]

207. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the way the energy efficiency fund, recently established by Government, will operate; the agency that will be charged with administering the fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10680/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 206 and 207 together.

The Energy Efficiency Fund (the Fund) will be established with the aim of providing finance to energy efficiency initiatives in the public and private sectors. The aim is to attract matching funding from the private sector, such that the overall amount available for investment is greater than €70 million.

The Fund will be managed by an independent third party, not by a Government agency. Government will be represented in its capacity as an investor in the Fund, on the same basis as

other investors in the Fund.

NewEra has been asked by Government to coordinate Government activities in ensuring that the Fund is established and appropriately managed, and has been meeting with sector participants and parties with experience in making and managing investments in the energy efficiency sector.

While renewable energy can play a part in energy efficiency projects it is not envisaged that projects that are solely renewable energy based (without seeking, at the same time, to reduce energy consumption) will be financed by the Fund.

The Fund will be supported by the creation of a National Energy Performance Contracting Policy Framework, which will standardise energy performance contracting in Ireland and provide a robust process for establishing the investment-ready projects. Work on the Framework is well advanced with a public/private group established late last year.

I intend to launch the details of the Fund alongside the second National Energy Efficiency Action Plan tomorrow. As part of the launch I will also issue a call for exemplar projects to test the Framework.

Departmental Staff Data

208. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of agency and contract staff currently employed under the aegis of his Department; and the mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs. [10979/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): My Department currently employs a full time equivalent of 10 staff on fixed term contracts. These staff are employed in the Private Offices of the Minister and Minister of State and the number includes four civilian drivers. Their pay and associated costs are accounted for in the Department's Vote, which is reported on a monthly basis to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

In addition, my Department discharges a limited number of specialist functions which are provided on an outsourced 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.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

209. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of public sector workers who have retired in the past three years within his Department or any office or body under his aegis who have been reinstated; if he will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10991/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I can confirm that two former members of staff, who have retired from within my Department,

were reinstated for a very short period following their retirement for specific projects, which required their previous expertise and experience. One has not yet sought payment for his brief employment on a translation project. The other was employed in 2012 as a petroleum affairs expert at a cost of €1,600.

In addition and on a very limited basis, retired former staff, from other parts of the public service, are re-engaged from time to time by my Department in areas where specific expertise is required for a short fixed period, and these 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 payments as appropriate.

I have asked the Agencies under the aegis of my Department to supply the requested information, where relevant, in respect of those Agencies, directly to the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Data

210. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will outline the numbers and cost of agency staff under the aegis of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11059/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): My Department does not employ any agency staff.

Local Authority Housing Repossessions

211. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of houses repossessed by each local authority in 2011 and 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10458/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Repossession remains extremely rare for local authority borrowers, with only 128 repossessions across all local authority areas carried out between 2005 and 2010. Where repossession does occur it is only as a last resort.

Data on local authority mortgage repossessions broken down by local authorities are provided in tabular format below for 2011. Data in relation to 2012 are currently being collated.

2011 Repossessions

County Councils	Forced	Voluntary
Carlow	0	0
Cavan	0	0
Clare	0	0
Cork	0	7
Donegal	0	0
DL/Rathdown	0	0
Fingal	0	0
Galway	0	1
Kerry	0	1

County Councils	Forced	Voluntary
Kildare	20	0
Kilkenny	0	2
Laois	2	8
Leitrim	0	0
Limerick	0	0
Longford	0	0
Louth	0	0
Mayo	0	0
Meath	0	1
Monaghan	0	0
North Tipperary	0	1
Offaly	0	2
Roscommon	0	0
Sligo	0	0
South Dublin	4	0
South Tipperary	1	1
Waterford	0	0
Westmeath	3	4
Wexford	0	2
Wicklow	0	2

2011 Repossessions

-	Forced	Voluntary
City Councils	0	0
Cork	0	0
Dublin	16	2
Galway	0	0
Limerick	0	0
Waterford	7	0
Borough Councils	0	0
Clonmel	0	0
Drogheda	0	0
Kilkenny	0	0
Sligo	0	0
Wexford	0	1
Town Councils		
Ballina	0	0
Bray	0	0
Athlone	0	0
Longford	1	14
Nenagh	0	0
Dundalk	0	0
Total	54	49

Social and Affordable Housing Expenditure

212. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total cost of social housing leasing initiatives for the years 2011 and 2012 respectively; and the projected cost for 2013. [10485/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Expenditure on the Social Housing Leasing Initiative since it was introduced in 2009 came to just over €47.45 million to the end of January 2013. This includes an amount of €8.35 million, under the Capital Advance Leasing Facility, in repayable advances to Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs). I have detailed below the cost per year to date. The estimated cost of leased units in 2013 (both existing units and new supply) is €29 million. Spending on CALF in 2013 will be dependent on project delivery.

Year/Type	SHLI	CALF	Overall
2009	642,178		642,178
2010	3,774,920		3,774,920
2011	13,817,464	401,850	14,219,314
2012	20,814,526	7,955,646	28,770,172
2013 Jan	49,057		49,057
TOTAL	39,098,145	8,357,496	47,455,641

Planning Issues

213. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the options open to him to initiate an investigation into a planning decision by a local authority or An Bord Pleanála where he feels the decision was not in accordance with good planning and development or where he may have other grounds to suspect that an investigation is warranted. [10548/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): While under Section 255 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2012 I may initiate a review of procedures and systems employed by a planning authority in the performance of its functions under the Acts I am precluded, under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, from involvement in relation to any particular case, including an enforcement matter, with which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is or may be concerned.

Planning Issues

214. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will clarify the meaning of guidelines regarding waivers in relation to change of use requests in planning applications (details supplied). [10665/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The adoption of individual development contribution schemes is a reserved function of the locally elected members of each planning authority. It is a matter for the members to determine the level of contribution and the types of development to which they will apply. It is my understanding that Dublin City Council’s development contribution scheme was adopted before the final guidelines were published but that it is very substantially in accordance with the content of the draft guidelines published by my Department for public consultation in July 2012.

Local Authority Services

215. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and

Local Government if he will contact the management of South Dublin County Council and offer assistance to the council in the quest for funding to restore the playground at Tymon Park, Tallaght, Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10673/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department does not provide funding to individual local authorities for playground facilities. The matter as raised is one for the local authority.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

216. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which he will publish the second investigation report into the compulsory purchase order at a location (details supplied); and if he intends to refer this report to the public accounts committee for discussion. [10697/13]

217. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will agree to the request for a meeting by three members of Wicklow County Council to discuss irregularities involving substantial public funds within that council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10698/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 216 and 217 together.

I appointed Mr Seamus Woulfe SC to carry out an independent review of the compulsory acquisition of land at Charlesland, Co Wicklow, by Wicklow County Council following representations made by three Wicklow County Councillors. I have now received Mr Woulfe's report which is being examined. I intend shortly to send the report to the Wicklow County Council and the three county councillors who made the representations and to make the report available publically. This report follows from a review carried out last year by Mr Woulfe into the management by the Department of an application by Wicklow County Council for loan approval in respect of the above mentioned compulsory purchase following representations made by the Councillors in regard to the Department. The report fully exonerated the Department.

The three Councillors have also been in correspondence with Minister of State Jan O'Sullivan seeking a meeting. Minister O'Sullivan has replied fully to the Councillors in relation to matters within the Department's remit. There has been no further correspondence in the matter with the Councillors since the middle of last year.

Property Taxation Exemptions

218. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the list of houses in certain unfinished developments has been finalised for the local property tax yet; the way the estates are being qualified for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10725/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The list of unfinished housing estates to be prescribed for purposes of a waiver from the local property tax is currently being prepared. The list is being compiled by local authorities and will utilise the categorisation in place in respect of the household charge, updated by reference to the National Housing Survey 2012. My Department will collate the data from local authorities in the coming weeks and I will then prescribe and publish the list of qualifying estates.

Water Meters Installation

219. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that one of the conditions for inclusion on the subcontractor panel for water metering work is a minimum annual turnover of €400,000; his views on whether this threshold is too high and will deny small scale operators the opportunity to apply for work; if he will ensure that this threshold is substantially reduced which would ensure a better distribution of contracts both to smaller scale operators and on a geographic basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10726/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): 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 domestic water metering programme and for the collection of water charges from households.

The procurement process for the sub-contractor panel has been developed by my Department, in consultation with Bord Gáis Éireann, to ensure that SMEs have an opportunity to compete for contracts. The tender criteria have been developed to ensure that sub-contractors have the capacity to carry out the scale of work involved to the necessary high standard. The approach being taken for the sub-contractor panel is consistent with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines on facilitating SME participation in public procurement (that Department's Circular 10/10 refers). SMEs can submit their application for inclusion on the panel at any stage up to 30 June 2013.

It is expected that the successful regional management contractors will be utilising the resources of the pre-qualified sub-contractors for the purpose of delivering the meter installation works. As the procurement process is currently underway it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Departmental Staff Data

220. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of agency and contract staff currently employed under the aegis of his Department; the mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10982/13]

222. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline the numbers and cost of agency staff under the aegis of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11062/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 220 and 222 together.

My Department collects quarterly data on the numbers employed in State bodies under the aegis of my Department. The number of persons employed on a contract basis in the State bodies under the aegis of my Department at the end of December 2012 was 8.5 (WTE). The provision of services by agency staff to State bodies is a procurement issue and is a matter for each State body as part of day to day management and operations.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

221. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of public sector workers who have retired in the past three years within his Department or any office or body under his aegis who have been reinstated; if he will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10994/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): No former staff, who retired from my Department in the last three years, have been re-instated. The information in respect of bodies under the aegis of my Department is not currently available but will be compiled and forwarded to the Deputy.

Question No. 222 answered with Question No. 220.

Garda Investigations

223. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on the Garda Síochána investigation of the alleged unauthorised removal of confidential data by a former employee of the National Asset Management Agency. [10648/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that An Garda Síochána received a complaint in relation to the alleged unauthorised removal of confidential data by a former employee of the National Assets Management Agency. I am further informed that the matter is under investigation and a file will be submitted to the Law Officers upon completion of the investigation. As this matter is under investigation it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this stage.

Criminal Law Review

224. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will consider introducing reforms to the area of public prosecutions to facilitate plea bargaining by those considered to have committed a crime; the legal obstacles presently to this approach; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10465/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Plea bargaining and the factors that might be relevant to its operation in this jurisdiction were reviewed by the Law Reform Commission in its 1996 Report on Sentencing. The Commission decided against making any recommendations on legislation in the area of plea negotiations.

The current practice is set out in the Director of Public Prosecutions' Guidelines for Prosecutors. I refer the Deputy to chapter 10 of those Guidelines. These Guidelines are available on the Director of Public Prosecution's website.

The criminal law already makes a limited allowance where the defendant enters a guilty plea. Section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 1999, together with some more specific provisions such as section 27(3D)(b) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977, provide that an early plea of guilty should, as a general rule, be taken into consideration by the court when determining the appropriate sentence (in cases other than where the sentence is fixed by law). I have no plans for legislation to alter the current arrangements.

Criminal Law Review

225. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason persons are still being imprisoned for non-payment of fines; the reason their fines are not being deducted at source by either the Revenue Commissioners or the Department of Social Protection; and the way he intends to end the situation where significant numbers of prison places are taken up by fine-defaulters. [10467/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): There is no legislative provision for the deduction of fines either by the Revenue Commissioners or the Department of Social Protection, nor does the Government have any plans to legislate to allow for such deductions to be made.

Instead, as the Deputy will be aware, the Government recently approved the drafting of the Fines (Amendment) Bill 2012, the Scheme of which is available on my Department's website (www.justice.ie). The Scheme provides, inter alia, for the introduction of attachment of earnings to recover unpaid fines from a person's earnings. The Scheme also recasts a number of the key provisions in the Fines Act 2010, including those relating to the payment of fines by instalments (section 15). Whereas under the 2010 Act, a person had to apply to the court to be permitted to pay a fine by instalments, the Scheme provides that this will become an automatic right. Given this significant change to the nature and scope of the instalment provisions in the Act, it is not my intention to commence section 15 until after it has been amended. I hope that it will be possible to enact the Fines (Amendment) Bill during 2013.

I can also advise the Deputy that the number of persons in custody at any one time for non-payment of fines is but a fraction of the overall prisoner population. To illustrate this point, on 25 February 2013, 22 people (0.05%), out of a prison population of 4,261 in custody that day fell into this category.

I am also committed to pursuing alternatives to custody. The Criminal Justice (Community Service) (Amendment) Act 2011 requires judges when considering imposing a sentence of imprisonment of 12 months or less to first consider the appropriateness of community service as an alternative to imprisonment. It is expected that these measures, taken together, will all but eliminate the need to commit persons to prison for non-payment of fines.

Business Regulation

226. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the efforts he has undertaken to reduce service costs such as legal on business. [3242/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Legal Services Regulation Bill 2011, which has completed Second Stage and is due to commence Committee Stage during this Session, gives legislative expression to the commitment in the Programme for Government to "establish independent regulation of the legal professions to improve access and competition, make legal costs more transparent and ensure adequate procedures for addressing consumer complaints". Furthermore, as a sectoral objective under the EU/IMF/ECB Troika Memorandum of Understanding, it supports the objectives of structural reform, national competitiveness and early economic recovery, building on the relevant recommendations of the Legal Costs Working Group and the Competition Authority. The Bill is, therefore, a key component of the Government's strategy to reduce legal costs in this country by way of increasing our competitiveness, both sectorally and nationally.

The Legal Services Regulation Bill makes extensive provision, particularly in Part 9, for a new and enhanced legal costs regime that will bring greater transparency to how legal costs

are charged along with a better balance between the interests of legal practitioners and those of their clients. The Bill sets out, for the first time in legislation, a series of Legal Costs Principles. These are contained in Schedule One and enumerate the various matters that may be taken into account if disputed costs are submitted for adjudication. These cost transparency measures will apply to barristers as well as to solicitors.

Under the Bill it will no longer be permissible to set fees as a specified percentage or proportion of damages payable to a client from contentious business. It will no longer be permissible to charge Junior Counsel fees as a specified percentage or proportion of Senior Counsel fees. Legal practitioners will be obliged to provide more detailed information about legal costs from the outset of their dealings with clients. This will be in the form of a Notice written in clear language which must be provided when a legal practitioner takes instructions. Among other things, the Notice must, as set out in Section 90 of the Bill, disclose the costs that are involved, or, where this is not practicable, the basis upon which such costs are to be calculated. A cooling-off period is to be allowed for the consideration of costs by the client. When there are any significant developments in a case which give rise to further costs the Bill provides that a client must be duly updated and given the option of whether or not to proceed with the case in question.

The Bill also provides that a new Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicator will deal with disputes about legal costs - at present these are dealt with by the Office of the Taxing-Master. The new Office, headed by a Chief Legal Costs Adjudicator, will modernise the way disputed legal costs are adjudicated with greater transparency. The Office will be empowered to prepare Legal Costs Guidelines. It will establish and maintain a publicly accessible Register of Determinations which will include the outcomes and reasons for its determinations about disputed legal costs. Two new Taxing-Masters have been appointed by public competition under the enhanced qualification criteria of Part 14 of the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 to prepare the way for these modernisation measures.

Taking account of developments and the pressures being experienced by legal practitioners in other open common law jurisdictions the Bill seeks to address the danger of Irish law firms and legal practitioners operating at a cost disadvantage. Several types of new alternative business structure models have been, or continue to be, rolled-out in England and Wales, Scotland, Australia, Germany, Netherlands and parts of Canada in direct competition with Irish legal service providers - for example, solicitors, accountants and insurers practising as one business or “multi-disciplinary practice” providing their complementary services in a pooled and more cost-effective setting. In other provisions the Bill lifts existing restrictions on direct professional access to a barrister and on barristers who share premises or costs from advertising themselves as such a group. The Bill also allows that a barrister in employment may provide legal services for his or her employer. The Bill, therefore, contains numerous measures aimed at opening up the provision of legal services to more responsive and more competitive legal service models building on the enormous advances that have been made in supporting business technologies.

Through its extensive legal costs transparency provisions and its provision for modern and more competitive business alternatives, the Legal Services Regulation Bill is providing an opportunity to ameliorate the cost to business and other consumers of legal services while also creating new business opportunities for the legal services sector. I am confident that this concerted approach to reducing legal costs will be of lasting benefit to all consumers of legal services and contribute to our early national economic recovery.

Equality Issues

227. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views regarding section 37 of the Employment Equality Act and section 7(3)(c) of the Equal Status Act 2000, as to whether they are the cause of inequality of access within the education system here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10664/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act 1998 is not relevant to access to education. However, I refer the Deputy to my reply below to Parliamentary Questions No. 54456 of 4 December 2012, No. 2999 of 22 January 2013 and No. 4077 of 5 February 2013. The position is unchanged since then.

“The Government has undertaken in its Programme for Government to ensure that people of non-faith or minority religious backgrounds and publically identified LGBT people should not be deterred from training or taking up employment as teachers in the State.

I have previously expressed concern about the potential impact of section 37 of the Employment Equality Acts on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. This section is designed to allow schools and other institutions to maintain their religious ethos. It was examined by the Supreme Court in 1996 when the Employment Equality Bill of 1996 was referred to it under Article 26 of the Constitution. The Supreme Court found that it is a reasonable balancing in legislation of the different rights involved, including chiefly the right to earn a living and the rights to freedom of religion and association. I am concerned however that, in practice, the balance is not a fair one and that in practice this provision can operate in a way that is unfair to LGBT persons. I consider that an extensive consultative process and formal assessment of the options should be undertaken. It is therefore my intention to ask the new Irish Human Rights and Equality Commissioners to examine the issue as a priority and to report on their views and recommendations to the two Ministers centrally concerned, the Minister for Education and Skills, Deputy Quinn and myself as the Minister for Justice and Equality and to the House. I am committed to bringing forward Government proposals for any necessary anti-discrimination amendment to this provision once this consultation process is completed.”

Concerning Section 7(3)(c) of the Equal Status Act 2000, I refer the Deputy to my reply below to Parliamentary Question No. 53036 of 27 November 2012. My position remains unchanged.

“Equal status legislation aims to strike a necessary and appropriate balance between the right to the free profession and practice of religion, recognised by the Constitution and the principle of equality and has done so by providing a qualified exception, of limited scope, in Section 7(3) of the Equal Status Act 2000. A denominational primary or post-primary school may, under this provision, admit pupils of one religious denomination in preference to others and may refuse to take someone who is not of that denomination if this is essential to protect its religious ethos. Application of this provision is, moreover, subject to review by a court or tribunal, such review being on an objective basis and having regard to the need to reconcile the various constitutional rights involved. I have no plans at present to amend these provisions of the Equal Status Act.”

Visa Applications

228. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on the application for a partnership visa in respect of a person (details supplied); the average timeframe for a review to take place; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [10668/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by officials in the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the person concerned submitted an application for a residence card under the provisions of the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2006 and 2008 (the “Regulations”), as the partner of an EU citizen.

The person concerned was informed by letter dated 12 February, 2013 of the decision to refuse the application for a residence card under EU Treaty Rights. The person concerned was given 15 working days from 12 February, 2013 to seek a review of this decision, and no request for a review has been received to date. I am further informed that the current time frame for consideration of reviews under EU Treaty Rights is approximately six months.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the 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 the INIS is, in the Deputy’s view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Visa Applications

229. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has received an application for resident status here under the immigrant investor programme from a person (details supplied); the current status of this application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10677/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Immigrant Investor Programme operates on the basis of strict confidentiality during the application process and in line with the rules approved by the Government for its operation communication can only be conducted with the applicant or his/her legal or financial representative. The Deputy will therefore appreciate that it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the status of an application or indeed on whether such an application has been made.

Gambling Legislation

230. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the monetary limits in respect of stake and payout set out in the Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956 will be amended by way of statutory instrument or other ministerial prerogative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10696/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am considering alterations to the maximum prize funds for lotteries coming within sections 27 and 28 of the Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956. Section 33 of the National Lottery Act 1986 sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of the alterations to those sections, i.e. they are to be made by Statutory Instrument.

Apart from the situation mentioned above, I have no plans to amend any other provision in the 1956 Act relating to stakes or prizes. However, I remind the Deputy of my intention, announced in September 2011, to introduce a comprehensive new Bill on gambling. The General

Scheme of the new Bill is at an advanced stage of development in my Department and I expect to bring it to Government soon, for approval to have a Bill drafted. The new Bill will entail the repeal of existing legislation on gambling, including the 1956 Act, and its replacement by the new Bill.

Magdalen Laundries Issues

231. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the Magdalen laundry redress mechanism will be placed on a statutory footing. [10700/13]

232. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the Magdalen laundry redress mechanism will include an independent appeals mechanism. [10701/13]

233. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if surviving women wishing to avail of legal representation, for example, women who wish to remain anonymous, that this will be allowed within the Magdalen laundry redress mechanism. [10702/13]

235. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if it is his intention to withhold access to redress from surviving women of the Magdalen laundries who have previously received supports from the Residential Institutions Redress Board for abuses suffered whilst in an industrial school. [10704/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 231 to 233, inclusive, and 235 together.

The Government is putting a comprehensive scheme of supports in place to underpin a process of healing and reconciliation for the women who were admitted to and worked in a Magdalen Laundry, and including the laundry operated at Stanhope Street Training Centre.

This scheme, the detail of which is being examined by retired High Court Judge and current President of the Law Reform Commission, Mr Justice Quirke, will be established soon. Judge Quirke has been asked to examine how, taking into account the McAleese Report, the Government might best provide supports (including health services such as medical cards, psychological and counselling services and other welfare needs) for the women who need such supports as a result of their experiences.

Judge Quirke has also been asked to advise on identifying the criteria and factors to be taken into account (such as work undertaken in the Laundries for no remuneration). He will advise on the operation of the Fund and, in particular, the nature and amount of payments to be made out of the Fund. A decision will be made on its detailed operation when he reports back in 3 months time.

Women who have already received payments under the Redress Scheme are not being excluded. There is one small area of possible overlap. Under the Redress Scheme, women who went straight from an industrial school to a Magdalen laundry may have received a redress payment for the period in the Magdalen laundry up to the age of 18. Judge Quirke has been asked to keep this in mind.

Magdalen Laundries Issues

234. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reasons the Magdalen laundry review terms of reference refer only to women who are now resident in

Britain; and if surviving women who now reside outside Ireland and Britain will be able to access the Magdalen laundry fund. [10703/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The terms of reference for Mr. Justice Quirke's work extends to women who were admitted to and worked in a Magdalen Laundry and in the Laundry operated in the Training Centre at Stanhope Street Dublin. The terms of reference do not refer to where these women are resident now.

The terms of reference specify an examination by Justice Quirke of the effect, if any, of the making of an ex gratia payment to a person who is resident in the UK and how best the making of such payment should be structured so as not to adversely affect their existing entitlements to benefits and supports.

The largest group of women who have been in a Magdalen Laundry represented by an organisation are those affiliated to the Irish Survivors Advice and Support Network (ISASN) in Britain and are UK based. This fact has been reflected in the terms of reference which do not exclude women living in other countries.

Question No. 235 answered with Question No. 231.

Magdalen Laundries Issues

236. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the formal action he will take to ensure the religious orders are brought to account for their role in the Magdalene laundries abuse. [10705/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): If the Deputy is aware of any incidents of abuse which indicate that a criminal offence has been committed these should be reported to the Gardaí who will ensure that the matter is fully investigated and prosecutions, where warranted, ensue. The Deputy will be aware that there is no statute of limitations in this jurisdiction for serious criminal offences.

Magdalen Laundries Issues

237. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will include the survivors of Bethany Home in the Magdalen laundry redress mechanism noting the principle of due diligence which provides that where State authorities knew of actual human rights abuses by non-State actor, as recorded, for example, during State inspections of Bethany under the Registration of Maternity Homes Act, and failed to take appropriate steps to prevent the violations or investigate and punish the perpetrators then the State bears the responsibility for the violations. [10706/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): One of the original charities associated with Bethany Home was established to assist women recently released from prison, hence my Department's interest. While we do not have full details, we have reason to believe that women prisoners on release from prison did go there. It would also appear that women convicted of criminal offences might agree to reside there as an alternative to a term of imprisonment. It was designated under section 108 of the Children Act 1908 for female, non Catholic children under 17 years, charged with criminal offences who might be remanded there or ordered to be kept there for a period not exceeding one month.

Bethany Home was not a prison and did not have any of the restrictions normally associated

with such an institution. From the 1930s it was based in a house in Orwell Road, Rathgar. My Department has not received any complaints regarding the treatment of any of the females who were there and who had links with the criminal justice system. If the Deputy has any evidence of specific abuses with relation to this category of people, I would be happy to receive it.

While this aspect of their work with women from the criminal justice system continued after the establishment of the Bethany Home, it would appear that the vast majority of its work (over 90%) related to maternity cases and acting as a home for infants up to three years old. There were a significant number of Mother and Baby homes including the Bethany Home operating in the State at the time.

However Mother and Baby homes do not have any of the characteristics associated with a Magdalen Laundry - that is women working without pay in a laundry in an enclosed institution. Magdalen Laundries did not accept pregnant women or young infants. I understand that the Bethany Survivors Group do not argue that their situation is identical to that of the Magdalen Laundry survivors.

The question of the inspection of maternity homes falls to the Department of Health.

If the Deputy has any information that criminal offences having been committed, she should report the matter to the Gardaí for investigation.

Financial Services Regulation

238. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to reform the statute of limitations so that claims can be made against financial institutions that mis-sold financial products. [10722/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The mis-selling of financial products is a matter of ongoing public concern. It has been raised by consumer groups and by the media, as well as in successive reports of the Office of the Financial Services Ombudsman, which has previously noted:

“The current economic climate has affected many consumers across the range of complaints received, however it is most pointedly seen in the complaints regarding investments products. The main area of complaint with regards to investments is the alleged mis-selling of these policies. This complaint type accounted for over 37% of investment complaints for the period 2007-2010. The majority of complaints relate to the consumers’ contention that they were sold unsuitable products.”

More recently, in its biannual review for July to December 2012, the Office of the Financial Services Ombudsman again highlighted the mis-selling of financial products, noting that “Payment Protection Insurance (PPI) complaints, representing 32% of all insurance complaints in 2012, have increased by 216% on 2011 figures”, from 405 in 2011 to 1,280 in 2012, and that, “in general, the main feature of the complaints concern the suitability of PPI for the consumer and the consumer’s knowledge or lack thereof that they agreed to and paid for the product in the first instance”. I am also aware that the Central Bank has sought a review by banks of the sale of PPI and the refund of customers who could never claim under that insurance as purchased.

While it is not under the aegis of my Department, the Financial Services Ombudsman was established under the Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland Act 2004 and became operational on 1 April 2005. It is a statutory body funded by levies from the financial service providers. The Financial Services Ombudsman can investigate, in an impartial and

independent manner, complaints from individual customers and small businesses who have unresolved disputes with Financial Service Providers who are either regulated by the Financial Regulator or are subject to the terms of the Consumer Credit Act 1995. Under current law, the Financial Services Ombudsman may not investigate a matter which occurred more than six years before the complaint is made. This is in line with the limitation period for most civil claims in the courts, including contract. This limitation period is provided for under section 57BX of the Central Bank Act of 1942, as amended by section 16 of the Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland Act 2004. The relevant provision states:

- “(3) A consumer is not entitled to make a complaint if the conduct complained of—
- (a) is or has been the subject of legal proceedings before a court or tribunal, or
 - (b) occurred more than 6 years before the complaint is made, or
 - (c) relates to a matter that is within the jurisdiction of the Pensions Ombudsman, or
 - (d) is of a class prescribed by Council.”

I would also point out that the statutory functions of the Financial Services Ombudsman Council include the keeping under review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Office of the Ombudsman and advising “the Minister for Finance, either at the Minister’s request or at its own initiative, on any matter relevant to the Ombudsman’s operation”. It would seem, therefore, open to the Council to make any relevant recommendations concerning the current limitation period that it considers appropriate to the Minister for Finance, who will be best placed to inform the Deputy whether or not such matters have so come to his attention. I am aware that a different approach has been taken to this issue in the United Kingdom. While consumers in that jurisdiction must bring complaints to the Financial Ombudsman Service within six months of the final response letter from the business concerned, no limitation period applies to the matters on which the complaints are based. The Law Reform Commission has made recommendations in relation to enhancing the coherence of the broader limitation of actions regime in its Report on the Limitation of Actions of December 2011 and in relation to the limitation period applicable to contract law which could have a bearing on the matters of concern to the Deputy. I will be happy to take account of these recommendations and of the Deputy’s concerns in any proposals for legislation that I may develop on periods of limitation in the future, while also taking account of any relevant developments in policy that may take place between the Office of the Financial Services Ombudsman, its Council, and the Minister for Finance.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

239. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of public sector workers who have retired in the past three years within his Department or any office or body under his aegis who have been reinstated; if he will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10998/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): With one exception, I am not aware of any other staff member who retired from my Department or any agency under its auspices in the last three years (from 28 February 2010 to 27 February 2013) who has been reinstated. One staff member, who was a Governor in the Prison Service, has been re-employed in the Prison Service as Campus Governor on a fixed-term contract to meet pressing operational and transformation requirements. In line with pension abatement rules, the individual is not receiving their pension for the duration of the contract. The annual cost of this contract which commenced in March 2012 is €120,542.

Defence Forces Personnel

240. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Defence if he will address the concerns regarding the Army Medical Corps raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10452/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am making inquiries about the matter raised by the Deputy. As soon as these inquiries have been completed, I will write to the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Data

241. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Defence the number of agency and contract staff currently employed under the aegis of his Department; the mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10980/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Some 5.5 nursing positions at various military installations are filled by agency staff. The Department employs a total of eight civilian employees under fixed-term contracts to work in military installations. In addition, a personal assistant to the Minister and two civilian drivers for the Minister of State, Deputy Kehoe, are employed on temporary contracts. These appointments are coterminous with the terms of office of the Minister in the case of the personal assistant, or the Minister of State in the case of the civilian drivers. Agency or contract staff are only utilised as required and when there are compelling reasons to engage such staff on an urgent or temporary basis.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

242. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Defence the number of public sector workers who have retired in the past three years within his Department or any office or body under his aegis who have been reinstated; if he will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10992/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): In the last three years, one former public sector worker was reinstated on a part-time temporary basis on an annual salary of €37,072 in their former position following their retirement. The contract of the person in question has now expired.

Departmental Staff Data

243. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Defence if he will outline the numbers and cost of agency staff under the aegis of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11060/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): There are a total of 5.5 nursing positions at various military installations that are currently filled by agency staff at a total cost during 2012 of approximately €290,000. Agency staff are only employed where there are compelling reasons to engage a person on either an urgent or temporary basis.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

244. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a disadvantaged area scheme 2012 payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10472/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named is one of a number of applicants under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, whose cases were impacted by the requirement to have had a minimum stocking density on their holding of 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare in 2011 and who applied for and were refused derogation in this regard. The person named subsequently availed of the option to appeal to the independently chaired DAS Appeals Committee. The Committee is currently adjudicating on this appeal and the person named will be notified of the outcome, in writing, once this adjudication is completed.

Horticulture Sector Issues

245. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if there will be a grant scheme for horticulture, including mushrooms, for 2014 following the close of the NDP funded scheme. [10473/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector, funded under the 2007-2013 National Development Plan, provides grant aid for horticultural growers who are making capital investments in specialist plant and equipment.

The main objectives of the scheme are to improve the quality of products, to facilitate environmentally friendly practices and promote diversification of on-farm activities in response to market demand. Apart from improving the quality of products, investments under the scheme have also significantly extended the growing season for Irish produce.

During the period 2008-2012, €16.1 million was allocated to 528 projects. The grant aid covers all areas of the horticultural industry and assisted in funding investments of approximately €40.3 million during the period.

The present Scheme expires at the end of this year. In addition the Scheme also requires approval from the EU Commission under EU State Aid Rules. The EU Commission's current approval to operate the Scheme expires on 31 December 2013.

A decision has not yet been taken on whether a similar scheme will continue to operate in 2014.

The closing date for receipt of applications under the 2013 round of the Scheme was 15 February 2013. My Department is currently processing these applications with a view to issuing approvals to successful applicants. A budget of €3.25 million has been allocated to the Scheme in 2013. This should facilitate specialist capital investment of circa €8m by growers in the current year.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Applications

246. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason

a person (details supplied) in County Clare has not been facilitated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10487/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named registered 12 animals for the 2011 Suckler Welfare Scheme. When initially applying to participate in the Scheme in 2008, applicants undertook to carry out and notify my Department of relevant measures carried out in respect of their animals for the full 5 year duration of this Scheme. In August 2011, applicants were informed of the requirement to notify details of such measures within one year of birth. In this particular instance, all 12 animals were born between February and June 2011 and data in relation to the measures carried out on these animals was not received until 18 December 2012.

In order that the case may be considered further, it will be necessary for the person concerned write to the Review Officer, Suckler Welfare Scheme, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Government Offices, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, setting out the circumstances surrounding the late submission of the data, and providing any supporting medical evidence.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

247. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an agri-environment options scheme payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10500/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Agri-Environment Options Scheme from the person named was received in my Department on 22 November 2012.

The initial processing of the applications has been completed and acknowledgement letters have issued to all applicants. The detailed actions listed in each application are currently being recorded and all applications will be ranked and selected according to the predetermined selection criteria. This process is expected to take several weeks and letters will issue to all applicants informing them of the outcome of the selection process in due course. In the event that any queries arise on the application of the person named during this process officials in my Department will be in direct contact with the person named.

Food Labelling

248. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will take steps, at Irish and EU level, to ensure, in view of the current food packaging crisis, that processed meat products, including those which have undergone a substantial transformation, would state clearly on them whether or not the meat is Irish, and not just because it was packaged here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10505/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In 2011 the European Union passed a new Council Regulation on Food Information for the Consumers (FIC), Regulation 1169/2011, which has updated the requirements for consumer information and labelling in a number of areas including; country of origin or place of provenance including the origin labelling for meats other than beef, voluntary labelling of all foods and the mandatory labelling of meat as an ingredient. These requirements will have to be implemented by way of EU Commission implementing regulations and it is expected that they will come into force between 13 December 2013 and the end of 2014.

The question of how to label processed meat products that are made from raw material imported from one country but “substantially transformed” in another country will be part of the discussions in relation to the country of origin labelling of meats other than beef and the voluntary and mandatory labelling of other foods and meat as an ingredient.

In considering this matter account has to be taken of the need to ensure that Irish meat continues to be exported for further processing to other EU and third countries as this is vital to the maintaining out livestock industry and the 80,000 who have a livestock enterprise. In addition regard must be had to the many Irish companies (and their employees) who process both Irish and other raw material into value added products for consumption on the domestic and overseas market and who are an important part of our agri-food industry.

However I am acutely aware of the concerns of consumers and their need to be informed as to the source and content of the processed meat products they are consuming. In this context acting in my capacity as Chairman of the Agriculture Council, I recently arranged with the Member States and the EU Commission for an EU wide coordinated programme to be implemented which will include additional DNA testing of meat, to establish the extent of the mislabelling problem across the EU.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

249. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in issuing an agri-environment options scheme payment to a person (details provided) in County Cork. [10635/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from the 1 September 2011.

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 an overclaim was discovered in respect of the claimed area on the Traditional Hay Meadow action. Officials in my Department are now finalising the application of the person named and arrangements are being made to issue payment for 2011 as soon as possible.

Payments in respect of the 2012 Scheme year are subject to a similar administrative checking process which includes verification of capital investments through checks on receipts. These checks have now been completed and following the payment for 2011, the payment in respect of 2012 will be finalised.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

250. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an application for disadvantaged area scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon. [10666/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, holdings of eligible applicants are required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of six consecutive months, in addition to maintaining an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the

twelve months of the scheme year.

While the holding of the person named was confirmed as having bovines from 17 July 2012, this is not a sufficient period to satisfy the six month minimum requirement and to date my Department has no details of any additional livestock on the holding. Therefore, as of now, no payment is due under the 2012 Scheme.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

251. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in the issuing of disadvantaged area and single farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10669/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Following a death in the family concerned, it was necessary that the legal processes be completed and the resultant amendments made to my Department's records, on foot of legal documentation submitted. These processes have been completed and payments under both the Single Payment Scheme and the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme have issued respectively in December 2012 and January 2013 to the legal representatives. The payments issued to the bank account nominated to my Department.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

252. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will be issued payment under the 2012 disadvantaged area scheme; the reasons for the delay in payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10727/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, holdings of eligible applicants are required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of six consecutive months, in addition to maintaining an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year.

While the holding concerned has been confirmed as having bovines and equines during calendar year 2012, requisite information in relation to sheep, to demonstrate compliance with the stocking requirements, is outstanding. My Department has been in contact with the applicant in this regard and on receipt of additional information, the case can be progressed.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Application Numbers

253. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding farm payments in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10731/13]

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 1 September 2010 and full payments totalling €1,567.05 and €4,999.96 issued in respect of 2010 and 2011 respectively.

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. The application of the person named was selected for a ground inspection which took place on 5 December 2012. The Inspection process is now being finalised with the intention of an early resolution and payment in respect of 2012.

Departmental Staff Data

254. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of agency and contract staff currently employed under the aegis of his Department; the mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10976/13]

256. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will outline the numbers and cost of agency staff under the aegis of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11056/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 254 and 256 together.

My Department, from time to time, employs staff from agencies to provide certain services when such proves to be more cost effective and Department staff are not available. Such expenditure is based on competitive tendering with extensive use of Central Government and Department specific frameworks which continue to drive costs down.

Details are provided in the following table:

Name of Agency	Service	Cost of Service in 2012	Number of Staff (FTEs)
Farm Relief Services (FRS)	Ancillary services to support Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Programme	€2.686m	103
Farm Relief Services (FRS)	Cow Monitoring Scheme as part of the Brucellosis Eradication Scheme. This involves the blood sampling of culled cows in Meat Plants and assists in the detection of brucellosis reactors in a herd. With effect from 1 January 2013 the task of taking blood samples has been taken over by Department staff.	€0.559m	24
Backweston Laboratories Facilities management contract drawn up with OPW. Costs are apportioned between State Labs and DAFM labs in the ration 1:2	Facilities Management monthly contract fee for: DAFM Labs Longtown Farm	€1,641,144 ex. VAT €297,384 ex. VAT Total €1,938,528	265
Matthew Griffin Building Contractor*	Dingle GO hire	€49,084	1
Whitty Construction Ltd.*	Safety and maintenance at Dunmore East	€53,995	1
Deloitte & Touche	ERS (Electronic recording system for fishing activity) GCPS (generic Claims processing system) IFIS (integrated Fisheries Information system)	€120,447 €116,545 €113,871 Total €350,863	2†
IT Alliance	AFIT (inspection system) CCS (customer information management system) ERS Operations (database/infrastructure administration)	€250,038 €81,905 €261,331 €337,142 Total €930,416	6.5†

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Name of Agency	Service	Cost of Service in 2012	Number of Staff (FTEs)
Version 1	AFIT AHCS (animal health monitoring system) AIM (animal movement and identification system) ERS SPS (single payment system) IFIS IMAP (geographical data management) RDP (rural development programme)-GCPS REPS (rural environment protection scheme)	€331,178 €741,470 €265,937 €131,573 €253,423 €218,825 €36,568 €8,610 €139,842 Total €2,127,426	18†
System Dynamics	AFIT DAS (disadvantaged areas scheme) DEP (Dairy Efficiency Programme) ERS FORESTRY IFIS IMP NOT (import notifications) RDP-GCPS SUCKLER	€279,681 €192,187 €62,896 €151,242 €57,232 €97,221 €123,910 €123,984 €116,514 Total €1,204,867	9.6†
Accenture	ERS SPS RDP-GCPS	€102,819 €1,130,562 €244,607 Total €1,477,988	10†
Vantage Resources	IT AFIT AIM ERS FORESTRY RDP-GCPS AFIT-RDC	€131,098 €543,917 €118,031 €203,055 €70,609 €78,897 Total €1,145,607	10.4†
Sogetti	AFIT-RDC RDP-GCPS	€20,056 €119,335 Total €139,391	2†
SMX	SAP (payments system)	€430,293 Total €430,293	2.4†
The ICON Group	ERAD (animal disease management) GIS (geographical data)	€2,541 €123,777 Total €126,318	0.8†
Compass Informatics	GIS	€16,254 Total €16,25	0.4†
Client Solutions	SAP	€174,945 Total €174,945	1†
IT Force	E-GOV	€244,893 Total €244,893	3†
CPL	E-GOV	€94,693 Total €94,693	1†
CTRL	OPERATIONS	€113,560 Total €113,560	1†
SMDT	OPERATIONS	€70,065 Total €70,065	2†
Sabeo Technologies	OPERATIONS	€154,332 Total €154,332	1†
Janix	SSO (single sign on system...authentication for multiple corporate systems) Operations	€73,376 €391,379 Total €464,755	3†
IBM Ireland	Operations	€46,127 Total €46,127	0.1†

*Construction contractors supplying service as distinct from an employment agency.

† The number of full time equivalents quoted below for IT contractors is as of 31/01/2013. This number is subject to some fluctuation as requirements change.

No. of Agency Staff	No. of Contract Staff (FTE)	Service	Mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs
NIL - recruited directly by this Department	3	To carry out work associated with the National Forestry Inventory	Cost controlled by agreeing a fixed term and cost contract; Contract staff engaged for a two year period, on a salary scale similar to the first point of the 'Forestry Inspector Grade 3' salary scale

Departmental Staff Rehiring

255. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of public sector workers who have retired in the past three years within his Department or any office or body under his aegis who have been reinstated; if he will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10988/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A retired Assistant Secretary was re-engaged by my Department on a contract basis which is due to expire at the end of the EU Presidency on 28 June 2013. His current contract involves a total cost of €63,553.50.

A retired Senior Research Officer was re-engaged by my Department on a contract basis for a limited period which is due to expire on 1 March 2013. Since his re-engagement in March 2012, the cost to my Department is €34,956.73.

The parallel information in respect of the State Bodies under the aegis of my Department is a matter for the Bodies themselves.

Question No. 256 answered with Question No. 254.

Foster Care Policy

257. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide an update on the rules regarding the age that children leave foster care (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10699/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Under Section 3 of the Child Care Act, 1991, the Health Service Executive has a duty to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care or protection. Where a child is taken into the care of the state, the policy of the HSE is to place him/her in care settings, preferably in foster care, as close as possible to their home and community. The age for all young people to leave the care of the state is 18 years, unless they leave care prior to turning 18 years of age.

As regards separated children seeking asylum (SCSA), their immediate and ongoing needs, as well as their application for refugee status are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive (HSE) in accordance with the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) and the Child Care Act, 1991. Where children are identified by An Garda Síochána, at the point of entry as unaccompanied minors, the circumstances are investigated and if there are any concerns about the welfare of the child, they are placed into the care of the HSE. Young children are always placed with foster carers, and older young people are either placed with a private foster company or, by their own preference, in dedicated children's residential accommodation. On reaching 18 years of age, or on completing their second level education during their 18th or 19th year, they are then referred by the HSE to the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). The Reception and Integration Agency arranges for their transfer to adult accommodation and service provision in the

direct provision system.

The HSE and the RIA have an agreed policy in relation to the accommodation of separated children seeking asylum who reach the age of 18 years and there is regular liaison between the two agencies. I am advised by the Department of Justice that detailed discussions take place between the Separated Children's Team in the HSE and RIA, to ensure the best RIA centre match for the young adult concerned. RIA provides these young adults with full board and accommodation in a direct provision centre. In practice and with the agreement of the Department of Justice, the HSE has retained young adults in after care for various durations and in very exceptional circumstances, for example where there is severe disability or serious mental or physical health issues. In addition, the HSE is committed to ensuring continuity of care for all young people who are undertaking their leaving certificate and therefore interprets "18th birthday" as the end of a school year/leaving certificate year following their 18th birthday. Any change of placement would only be in exceptional circumstances and in the young person's best interests.

Foster Care Provision

258. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the action she is taking on foot of the Health Information and Quality Authority report inspection of the Health Service Executive Dublin north west local health area fostering service in the Health Service Executive Dublin north east region; and the way she proposes to ensure that the action plan is fully implemented. [10728/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): HIQA undertakes inspection of foster care services against the National Standards for Foster Care, under Section 69 of the Child Care Act 1991. The purpose of foster care inspections is to review compliance with regulations and standards for all children. HIQA's inspection methodology includes interviewing HSE managers and social workers, a sample of children, carers and birth parents and review a range of files, including complaints.

Foster care services in HSE Dublin North West Area have been inspected by HIQA on three occasions since September 2009, the most recent of which took place in October 2012. Some progress was noted particularly in the area of foster carer assessment, approval and training with all general foster carers approved and significant improvements in the area of relative foster carers. Some 96 % of children in foster care had been visited by a social worker within the preceding six months.

Notwithstanding such progress, I was concerned to note that inspectors found that some deficits identified previously had not been rectified. Inspectors found that there were inadequacies in systems to assess risk and to investigate and take timely action in response to concerns. File keeping, data collection and analysis were also found to be lacking.

The inspection found that sufficient foster carers have not been recruited within the area and this has provided difficulties in making placements and matching children with particular needs with the most suitable carers. Recruitment of foster carers is of concern more generally and it is intended to conduct a national recruitment campaign in the coming months.

There were 38 complaints or allegations about 27 foster carers reviewed by HIQA. 34 complaints were investigated and 4 were underway. Ten concerns relating to child welfare and 7 related to physical abuse were confirmed. Investigations were underway in the remaining cases.

An Action Plan to address the weaknesses identified was prepared by HIQA. In order to

ensure that the Action Plan is fully implemented, I have requested that the HSE set up a high level oversight process to be lead by the Head of Quality Assurance to ensure implementation of all the HIQA recommendations. I intend that this oversight process will provide regular updates to both me and HIQA on the implementation of the Action Plan. Yesterday I met with Mr Gordon Jeyes Chief Executive Designated of the Child and Family Support Agency to review the actions underway to address the critical issues identified.

An important finding in this inspection report is that many foster carers were providing high quality care and children's needs were being met. Foster carers were committed and child centred in their approach. They saw themselves as advocates on behalf of the child and availed of every opportunity to promote the child's best interests to achieve better outcomes.

Foster Care Policy

259. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 572 of 22 January 2013, the target date for the finalisation of a national register of foster parents who are deemed unsuitable and no longer have children placed with them. [10729/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the HSE that each local areas holds their own register of approved carers. A national register for foster carers is currently under development by the HSE. The HSE plans to pilot a register towards the end of 2013 in a number of sites across the country and subject to the findings of the review of the pilots, it is expected that the national register will be finalised in 2014 .

Departmental Staff Data

260. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of agency and contract staff currently employed under the aegis of her Department; the mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10978/13]

262. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will outline the numbers and cost of agency staff under the aegis of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [11058/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 260 and 262 together.

I presume the Deputy is enquiring about the use of agency or contract staff engaged to meet a short-term service need or where some flexibility in staffing a service is required. In that regard, I can confirm that my Department, the Family Support Agency, the Adoption Authority of Ireland or the Children Detention Schools do not presently engage such services.

The National Educational Welfare Board has advised that it has a contract for services in place to provide data operators for inputting school return data and that two such staff are currently being used. The cost to date in 2013 has been €8,745.

The engagement of persons under contacts for services or on an agency basis is subject to strict public procurement controls and costs are kept under constant review.

The information requested relating to the Office of the Ombudsman for Children is not read-

ily available in my Department. I have requested the Ombudsman to provide the information directly to the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

261. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of public sector workers who have retired in the past three years within her Department or any office or body under her aegis who have been reinstated; if she will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10990/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): No public sector workers who have retired in the last three years from my Department or Body under the aegis of my Department have been re-instated.

Question No. 262 answered with Question No. 260.

Health Insurance Regulation

263. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans to make a capital injection into the VHI this year to comply with the ruling of the EU Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10638/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy is aware, the European Commission took a case against the State regarding the VHI's derogation from the EU Non-Life Directives. In September 2011, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) found that Ireland had failed to fulfil its obligations under the Directives by exempting VHI from being regulated (i.e. holding authorisation) by the Central Bank of Ireland.

The Government has agreed that the VHI should make an application for authorisation to the Central Bank. The Government will make a decision on recapitalisation of the VHI when the Central Bank has determined the amount of any capital requirements and the EU Commission has approved a capital injection under State aid rules.

Officials from my Department and the VHI have been engaging regularly to progress issues relating to VHI's authorisation and have also met with Central Bank officials.

Croke Park Agreement Review

264. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which the context of the review of the Croke Park agreement or other discussions, it might have been found possible to identify the needs of public sector workers currently working in excess of the statutory working week with a view to minimising on them the impact the extent to which cost-cutting measures arising from the implementation of the memorandum of understanding entered into by his predecessors particularly for those working in frontline or stressful situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10709/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The circumstances of workers in all sectors, including those working in excess of the statutory working week, were taken into account in the review of the Public Service Agreement and are reflected in the agreement reached.

The Government is committed to achieving compliance with the European Working Time Directive, and related Irish legislation, in respect of NCHDs by 2014. I have emphasised to the Health Service Executive the high priority the Government and I attach to this issue.

In January 2012, a detailed plan for the achievement of compliance by NCHDs with the Working Time Directive was submitted to the EU Commission. The plan affirmed Ireland's commitment to achieving compliance with the Directive over a three-year time period. It committed to implementing the measures necessary, including new work patterns for medical staff, transfer of work undertaken by NCHDs to other grades and the organisation of hospital services to support compliance.

The HSE's National Service Plan 2013 states that there will be a particular focus in the acute hospital service on the achievement of compliance with the European Working Time Directive amongst the non-consultant hospital doctor workforce. National Standards for reducing NCHD hours, which will be used to assess progress on a site by site basis, have recently been drawn up and issued to hospital managers and clinical directors. The HSE has also recently established a national group chaired by a senior executive to bring a clear and urgent focus to implementation of the Directive, assessment of performance and site by site accountability for change.

Ambulance Service Provision

265. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding future plans for the Kerry ambulance service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10459/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The National Ambulance Service (NAS) is not a static service. The Service deploys its resources in a dynamic manner and works on an area and national, rather than a local, basis. The dynamic deployment of ambulance resources ensures that the nearest appropriate resource is mobilised to the location of any incident.

The NAS has been taking a number of steps to improve response times. These include development of a Performance Improvement Action Plan, an Intermediate Care Service, the control centre reconfiguration project and a trial emergency aeromedical service. Following a referral to the Labour Court under the Public Service Agreement, the HSE National ambulance Service is currently progressing a number of efficiencies arising from LCR 20313, including the issue of removal of overtime built in to rosters. New rosters are now in place and are operating successfully. In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Tobacco Control Measures

266. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of population that smoke; the percentage of under 25 year olds who smoke; the reduction in the percentage of persons that smoke following the introduction of smoking ban and the abolishing of ten cigarettes packs. [10461/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy is aware, the smoking ban was introduced in 2004 and the sale of cigarettes in packets of less than 20 was banned in 2007.

The Slán Survey 2007 states that 29% of respondents reported being current smokers. Smoking was found to be more common among younger adults; 35% of those aged 18-29. The previous Slán Survey in 2002 found that 27% of people reported being regular smokers, with 34%

of those aged 18-34. The Survey does state, however, that comparisons across the years are reported with caution because of the different survey methods utilised. The Irish Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Survey, 2010 found that the number of children (aged 10-17) currently smoking fell from 18% to 12% from 2002 to 2010. This may be attributable in part to the tobacco control measures in place.

The Department is planning for the establishment of a new rolling health and wellbeing survey to provide data on the health status and other health related behaviours of the Irish population, including tobacco prevalence data. This will assist in monitoring the impact of health promotion and tobacco control measures on smoking rates.

Tobacco Control Measures

267. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he held any discussions with the Department of Finance with a view to securing a percentage of excise duty raised through the sale of tobacco towards the education of young persons regarding the negative effects of smoking. [10462/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Tobacco Policy Review Group is examining a number of areas which need to be developed or enhanced in order to reduce smoking prevalence in Ireland. The Group's report will also examine how to develop our cessation services in order to support those people who want to stop smoking. The Group is considering the introduction of a tobacco industry levy to be ring fenced to fund health promotion and tobacco control initiatives.

The Report of the Tobacco Policy Review Group is nearing completion in my Department and the Groups recommendations will be discussed with other Government Departments.

Hospitals Capital Programme

268. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the reason the acute hospital budget for hospitals in the south east is significantly lower than the budgets in all other regions which stands at just €565 per capita compared to an average per capita spend of €691; the basis on which the acute hospital budget allocation is made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10482/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter,

Health Services Provision

269. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health the amount per year that has been allocated by the special delivery unit in each year since it was set up; the amount that remains to be allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10484/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The detailed information requested by the Deputy is currently being compiled in my Department and I will arrange to have it forwarded to her as soon as possible.

Symphysiotomy Report

270. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will support the survivors of symphysiotomy in 2013 in obtaining justice for the suffering the survivors have endured (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10499/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My first priority is to ensure that the women who have had a symphysiotomy 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.

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. The researcher is currently finalising the report based on the consultation and it is also planned to have a peer review process. It is hoped that the report will be published early in 2013. It is intended that the awaited report will inform the Government's overall consideration of this matter, including the consideration of any actions or legal implications that may be required. 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 Provision

271. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health the efforts being made to develop clear clinical pathways for people living with chronic pain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10516/13]

272. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide details of the investment and development of infrastructure to improve the treatments available for chronic pain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10517/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 271 and 272 together.

In relation to the particular queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in these matters.

Drugs Payment Scheme Administration

273. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 676 and 692, under the DPS scheme, no individual or family pays more than €144 per calendar month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines, therefore, if one member of a family has a medical card on medical grounds and that member pays the €1.50 per item in the medical card prescription up to a maximum of €19.50 per month and the rest of the family pay the €144, surely that family is entitled to a refund of the €19.50 per month under the DPS scheme, otherwise the family pays more than the €144 per calendar month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines. [10529/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The General Medi-

cal Services (GMS) Scheme and the Drug Payment Scheme (DPS) are separate schemes with separate qualifying criteria. Under the GMS Scheme, medical card holders are required to pay a €1.50 charge per item for medicines and other prescription items supplied to them by community pharmacists, subject to a cap of €19.50 per month for each person or family. Prescription charges do not apply to children in the care of the HSE or to methadone supplied to patients participating in the Methadone Treatment Scheme.

Under the DPS, no individual or family pays more than €144 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 assessment 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. There is no provision for a family in the circumstances mentioned by the Deputy to claim a refund of the prescription charge from the DPS because, as advised from the outset, the GMS Scheme and the DPS are separate schemes with separate qualifying criteria.

Prescription Charges

274. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if patients are entitled to request a quarterly prescription from their general practitioner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10658/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): A repeat prescription facility was introduced to the General Medical Services (GMS) Scheme in March 1991. Under this facility, prescriptions for certain drugs and medicines may be renewed on a three monthly, rather than a monthly, basis. Patients who are stabilised on their medication do not need to visit their General Practitioner (GP) every month in order to have their prescriptions renewed. The facility to change prescriptions from monthly to quarterly for suitable patients provides efficiencies for GPs and patients, by reducing unnecessary consultations and journeys to the surgery and pharmacy. In addition, Regulation 7(5) of the Medicinal Products (Prescription and Control of Supply) Regulations 2003 as amended provides that prescriptions for medicinal products are valid for a period of six months from the date specified on the prescription. Prescriptions for Controlled Drugs, which are listed in Schedule 2 and 3 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1988 as amended, are valid for fourteen days from the date on the prescription.

Primary Care Centres Provision

275. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the progress being made with regard to the provision of a primary health centre in Rowlagh, Dublin 22; if a site has yet been identified for this centre; if any public private partnership agreement has yet been finalised; if he will provide an indicative time frame for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10676/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Rowlagh/North Clondalkin was one of the 35 primary care centres announced under the infrastructure stimulus package in July 2012. Approximately 20 will be offered to the market subject to a) agreement between the local GPs and the HSE on active local GP involvement in the centres and b) site suitability and availability.

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.

The HSE is also engaging with the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) as required to progress Primary Care Centre Public Private Partnership. The NDFA as a centre of expertise will be responsible for the delivery of the Primary Care PPP programme on behalf of the HSE, including the management of the procurement phase and the provision of financial advice including a Value for Money assessment. It has been reviewing the processes involved in procurement of PPP projects with a view to streamlining the process and delivering projects more quickly. The preparatory work for the primary care centre project which precedes signing of any PPP agreements is well underway. While it is not possible, at this time, to give start and completion dates for any of the individual 20 potential locations, the best estimate is that these primary care centres will be completed by late 2016.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

276. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health if he will supply a more suitable wheelchair to a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10690/13]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

277. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for an MRSI scan at the Midlands Regional Hospital, Tullamore, County Offaly or Mullingar, County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10695/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to waiting list management in general, the National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2013*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, recently been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists. In relation to this particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Departmental Staff Data

278. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of agency and contract staff currently employed under the aegis of his Department; the mechanism in place for monitoring and managing the associated costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10984/13]

280. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline the numbers and cost of agency staff under the aegis of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11064/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 278 and 280 together.

The Department has a number of contractual arrangements with private sector providers of services such as cleaning companies, canteen, IT technical support where the staff providing the services are not employees of the Department. Other services are procured through consultancy contracts in line with procurement guidelines. Four former staff of my Department (2.2 whole time equivalents) are currently re-engaged on a temporary contract basis in line with a Government Decision on the arrangements for dealing with our EU Presidency requirements. In addition Ministerial appointments in such roles as special advisor, personal assistant, personal secretary and civilian driver have been made on a contract basis. The total number involved in those two categories is eighteen staff (15.86 whole time equivalents). All of these appointments were subject to the sanction of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the provision of Excluding Orders from the Commission for Public Service Appointments in accordance with the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004.

Grade	Number of Staff (Headcount Basis)	Payscale
Special Advisor	2	€80,051-€92,672
Personal Assistant	3	€43,715-€56,060
Personal Secretary	3	€23,820-€47,755
Civilian Driver	6	€32,964 (one point scale)
Principal Officer	1	€81,132-€97,417
Assistant Principal Officer	3	€65,185-€75,934

The pensions of retired staff who were re-engaged are subject to pension abatement rules.

The information in respect of the Non-Commercial State Agencies is currently being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available. With regard to the Health Service Executive, they have been asked to collate the data sought as soon as possible and it will be provided directly to the Deputy by them when available.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

279. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the number of public sector workers who have retired in the past three years within his Department or any office or body under his aegis who have been reinstated; if he will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10996/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Four Public Servants (2.7 wholetime equivalent) who retired in the last three years are currently employed in my Department and are on the payroll.

Three former members of my Department were rehired on a temporary basis in line with a Government Decision on the arrangements for dealing with our EU Presidency requirements. In addition to this Minister of State Alex White appointed one retired Public Servant as a Civilian Driver.

For ease of reference I have set out below the information requested by the Deputy in tabular format.

Grade	Current Annual Salary Rate
1 Principal Officer (50% of full time)	€40,025
1 Assistant Principal (50% of full time)	€30,983
1 Assistant Principal (70% of full time)	€43,376
1 Civilian Driver	€32,965

The pensions of these staff are subject to pension abatement rules.

The information in respect of the Non-Commercial State Agencies is currently being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available. With regard to the Health Service Executive, they have been asked to collate the data sought as soon as possible and it will be provided directly to the Deputy by them when available.

Question No. 280 answered with Question No. 278.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

281. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reasons an application for funding under the sports capital grant could be made invalid; where these conditions are published; the way an application can be deemed invalid for reasons that they were not made aware of prior to submission of the application and for reasons that were not published with the application form; the appeals process available where an application is deemed invalid for unfair reasons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10451/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): Under the 2012 Sports Capital Programme an application could have been deemed invalid for the following reasons:

Reasons	Reasons
Insufficient own funding	No evidence of freehold/leasehold/letter from landlord
No evidence of required amount of own funding	No evidence of planning application
No supporting documentation supplied	No quotations/estimates submitted
Insufficient sporting content	Amount sought unrealistically high and project cannot be broken down
School application not meeting requirements	Private/commercial club
No feasibility study (where required)	No evidence of non-discrimination
Work on project already started	Amount being sought over €300,000 for local project

All applicants who made an invalid application have received a letter indicating the reason(s) why their application was deemed invalid.

It is my view that applicants were given extensive information to complete the application form and provide the necessary supporting documentation to make a valid application. All of the reasons set out above relate in one way or another to conditions and guidelines where were given to all applicants.

As all of the €31m available for the 2012 programme has been allocated there is no appeals process under the Programme.

All valid applicants signed a statement stating that "I/we understand that decisions on allocations are final".

Public Transport Provision

282. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will return the maximum numbers of carriages on the DART at peak times (details supplied). [10553/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann in conjunction with the National Transport Authority 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

283. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the next sports capital programme will open for applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10659/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): No decision has been taken on the timing of the next round of the Sports Capital Programme.

Road Network

284. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to proceed with the Newlands Cross upgrade; the schedule to be followed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10671/13]

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.

Driving Licence Issues

285. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 791 of 19 February 2013, if he will establish with the Road Safety Authority the tendering process which was used to award the contract to the National Driver Licence Service; and the reason pharmacies were excluded from this process. [10681/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Following a Government decision in May 2011, the driver licensing service has been centralised under the Road Safety Authority (RSA). With effect from 12th January 2013, the RSA is now the sole driver licensing authority for the State. The RSA has decided to operate this function under the title National Driver Licence Service.

The service will be provided through three service contracts and by the establishment of a

specialist unit within the RSA. The three contracts will provide for a card production facility, a 'back-office' processing service and a 'front-office' customer interface. The RSA has awarded these contracts following open, competitive tendering processes conducted in accordance with national and EU procurement rules.

I understand that the issue of photo identification formed part of the specifications for the 'front-office' tender.

Road Network

286. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the proposed N4 Mullingar to Longford, Roosky, motorway project; the consultants engaged for the project; if the project will go ahead within the next two years; if not, if the restrictions will be lifted from the farm of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath which is located in the route area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10691/13]

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.

The scale of the reductions in the allocations to the NRA under the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Framework 2012-2016 means that I do not expect any major new projects directly funded by the Exchequer to commence construction in next few years. The key priority is the protection of the existing investment in road infrastructure as against major new expenditure on road building.

As the detailed information sought by the Deputy in relation to the current status of planning and design work on this project is a matter for the NRA 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.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

287. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of public sector workers who have retired in the past three years within his Department or any office or body under his aegis who have been reinstated; if he will provide details on the pay rates they are receiving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11001/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): No retired staff member has been reinstated permanently in my Department since the change of government.

A number of retired staff members and former public servants were rehired in the past three years on a contractual basis or engaged to undertake a specific task. Of these there is currently only one rehired public servant working for the Department with the remainder having completed their work. The one remaining individual is employed in connection with the preparation and attendance at the State's defence of High Court proceedings due to their specialised knowledge of the legislation concerned.

Of the others, five Radio Officers were rehired to fill essential vacancies in the Coast Guard

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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 contracted to carry out specific short term exercises. These have all completed their work and are no longer employed in the Department.

The details of rehired staff and their remuneration are set out in the table. The salaries are gross amounts and before taxation, etc.

Grade	Amount
Secretary General	€9,950
Inspector of Air Accidents	€38,302.11
Radio Officer Grade III	€29,687.80
Radio Officer Grade III	€32,578.36
Radio Officer Grade III	€19,806.99
Radio Officer Grade III	€12,953.52
Radio Officer Grade III	€10,385.76
Principal Officer	€1,256
Assistant Secretary	pro bono
Principal Officer	€607
Principal Officer	Abatement principal

I have asked the State Agencies under the aegis of my Department to provide the Deputy with the information requested. If you do not receive a reply from the agencies within ten working days, please advise my private office.