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 17, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 18 to 73, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 74 to 83, inclusive, answered orally.

Local Government Reform

84. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the timeframe for the implementation of Putting People First; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12682/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First, which was published in October 2012, following Government approval, sets out Government decisions on a range of measures relating to the reform and development of local government structures, functions, funding, governance and operational matters. Implementation of the Action Programme is a high priority for Government as a key element of the overall reform agenda. This involves a substantial body of legal and other work to ensure that the necessary measures are in place ahead of the 2014 local elections.

In order to meet that timeframe, work has been advancing quickly in a number of areas including in relation to local authority mergers in Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford; an independent review of local electoral areas by a statutory committee; integration of local micro-enterprise support service with local government through Local Enterprise Offices; the introduction of the local property tax to replace the household charge; continuing implementation of Local Government Efficiency Review measures, a Workforce Planning process, and implementation of the Steering Group report on the alignment of local/community development with local government.

Comprehensive, wide-ranging and detailed legislation will be required to provide for the range of measures in the reform programme, and I am firmly committed to ensuring that it will be brought forward for enactment in good time before the 2014 local elections.

Local and Community Development Programme Expenditure

85. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline a county breakdown of the local development budget; the total

administration costs per local authority and the total county spend on each local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12679/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The objective of my Department's Local and Community Development Programme, or LCDP, is to tackle poverty and social exclusion, through partnership and constructive engagement between Government, and its agencies, and people in disadvantaged communities. The Programme, worth €49m in 2013, is managed by Pobal on behalf of my Department and delivered at a local level by the nationwide network of Local Development Companies and a small number of alternative delivery structures. The services delivered by Local Development Companies cross Local Authority and County boundaries. It is not possible, therefore, to provide a county breakdown of the LCDP budget on the basis requested in the question. I will circulate the Programme budget allocations for each Local Development Company for 2013 and their respective Programme administration costs with the official report. In addition, a further €1.44 million has been allocated for the delivery of LCDP services in the Gaeltacht Areas and €700,000 for the Dublin Inner City area. Administrative costs charged against the Programme are currently capped at 33% with the objective of reducing that figure to 25% by 2014. In addition, Companies are expected to achieve further savings in overhead and operating costs including, where possible, sharing Local Authority facilities.

Appendix 1

2013 Allocation to Local Development Companies under the Local and Community Development Programme

LOCAL AUTHORITY	BUDGET
Avondhu/Blackwater Partnership Limited	€419,374
Ballyfermot/Chapelizod Partnership Company Limited	€635,116
Ballyhoura Development Limited	€444,994
Ballymun/Whitehall Area Partnership	€739,693
Blanchardstown Area Partnership Limited	€907,555
Canal Communities	€875,475
Bray Area Partnership Limited	€839,483
Breffni Integrated Limited	€741,784
Carlow County Development Partnership Limited	€536,428
Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teoranta	€1,020,227
Clare Local Development Company Limited	€855,341
Comhar Chathair Chorcai Teoranta	€1,211,826
Comhar na nOilean Teoranta	€527,272
County Kilkenny Leader Partnership Company Limited	€607,813
County Sligo Leader Partnership Company Limited	€690,262
County Wicklow Community Partnership Limited	€584,686
Donegal Local Development Company Limited	€966,071
Fingal Leader Partnership Company Limited	€363,686
Forum Connemara Limited	€233,227
Galway City Partnership Limited	€765,644
Galway Rural Development Company Limited	€896,437
Inishowen Development Partnership	€644,728
IRD Duhallow Limited	€387,147

LOCAL AUTHORITY	BUDGET
Laois Community and Enterprise Development Company Limited	€564,064
Leitrim Integrated Development Company Limited	€618,509
Longford Community Resources Limited	€603,076
Louth LEADER Partnership	€1,390,383
Mayo North East Leader Partnership Company Teoranta	€562,019
Meath Community Rural and Social Development Partnership Limited	€346,264
Monaghan Integrated Development Limited	€668,578
North & East Kerry Leader Partnership Teoranta	€1,161,327
North Tipperary Leader Partnership	€518,561
Northside Partnership Limited	€1,119,336
Offaly Integrated Local Development Company Limited	€738,314
PAUL (Limerick) Partnership	€1,460,828
Rathmines Pembroke Community Partnership Limited	€694,278
Roscommon Integrated Development Company Limited	€645,992
South and East Cork Area Development Partnership Limited	€463,152
South Dublin County Partnership Ltd	€2,044,785
South Kerry Development Partnership Limited	€585,585
South Tipperary Development Company Limited	€603,889
South West Mayo Development Company Limited	€418,276
Southside Partnership DLR Limited	€1,101,669
Tolka Area Partnership Limited	€1,064,149
Waterford Area Partnership Limited	€785,742
Waterford Leader Partnership Limited	€365,171
West Cork Development Partnership Limited	€453,322
West Limerick Resources Limited	€617,196
Westmeath Community Developments Limited	€806,542
Wexford Local Development	€1,837,245

Appendix 2

Local and Community Development Programme Administration Costs. Please note that these include: all overhead costs, salary costs of the CEOs and Finance Administrators and other Administrative Support salary costs relating to the management, implementation and co-ordination of the Programme.

Local Development Company	2012 Administration
Avondhu/Blackwater Partnership Limited	29%
Ballyfermot/Chapelizod Partnership Company Limited	33%
Ballyhoura Development Limited	30%
Ballymun/Whitehall Area Partnership	33%
Blanchardstown Area Partnership Limited	33%
Bray Area Partnership Limited	28%
Breffni Integrated Limited	33%
Canal Communities Partnership	32%

Local Development Company	2012 Administration
Carlow County Development Partnership Limited	33%
Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teoranta	33%
Clare Local Development Limited	29%
Clondalkin Partnership	33%
Comhar Chathair Chorcaí Teo	26%
County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership Company Limited	32%
County Sligo Leader Partnership Company Limited	32%
County Wicklow Community Partnership Company Limited	33%
Dodder Valley Partnership Limited	32%
Donegal Local Development Company Limited	29%
Fingal LEADER Partnership Company Limited	33%
Forum Connemara Limited	28%
Galway City Partnership Limited	29%
Galway Rural Development Company Limited	27%
Inishowen Development Partnership	29%
IRD Duhallow Limited	30%
Laois Community and Enterprise Development Company Limited	33%
Leitrim Integrated Development Company Limited	31%
Longford Community Resources Limited	19%
Louth Leader Partnership	24%
Mayo North East Leader Partnership Company	32%
Meath Partnership	33%
Monaghan Integrated Development Limited	35%
North & East Kerry Leader Partnership	33%
North Tipperary Leadership Partnership	33%
Northside Partnership Limited	30%
Offaly Integrated Local Development Company	28%
PAUL (Limerick) Partnership	27%
Rathmines Pembroke Community Partnership	29%
Roscommon Integrated Development Company Limited	29%
South & East Cork Area Development Limited	33%
South Kerry Development Partnership	30%
South Tipperary Development Company	32%
South West Mayo Development Company	33%
Southside Partnership	31%
Tolka Area Partnership	29%
Waterford Area Partnership	33%
Waterford Leader Partnership	24%
West Cork Development Partnership	27%
West Limerick Resources Limited	31%
Westmeath Community Development Limited	33%
Wexford Local Development	28%

86. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of RAPID co-ordinators employed full time by local authorities on the RAPID programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12710/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) covers urban areas designated as disadvantaged by reference to a range of socio-economic criteria including the levels of early school leaving; the proportion of one parent households; the unemployment rate; the proportion of social housing; and the age dependency rate. The RAPID programme aims to ensure that priority attention is given to tackling the spatial concentration of poverty and social exclus ion in RAPID areas nationally. The programme has made substantial progress in identifying the needs of disadvantaged communities and in bringing forward appropriate local projects in response to those needs.

My Department's funding for 2013 includes an indicative allocation of more than €2 million for RAPID, which will be used to meet the Department's existing contractual commitments on RAPID projects throughout the country, mainly Sports Capital top-ups a nd CCTV systems, jointly funded with the Departments of Transport, Tourism and Sport and Justice and Equality respectively.

My Department is not in a position separately to meet the salary costs, for 2013, of RAPID coordinators, who are local authority employees , and information on the current number of coordinators employed by local authorities is not available to me. In 2011 and 2012 Local Authorities received funding for 50% of the salaries of 46 RAPID co-ordinators, totalling €1.58m in 2011 and €1.62m in 2012. The Local Government Fund continues to provide significant general purpose funding to local authorities to assist in meeting day-to-day operational costs. The RAPID programme like other community development programmes will now be taken forward in the context of alignment of Local Government and Local Development in the context of the Local Government Reform Programme Putting People First .

Housing Adaptation Grants Funding

87. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the action he is taking to ensure that adequate funding is provided to local authorities to deal with the demand for the housing aid for older persons scheme, the mobility aids housing grant scheme and the housing adaptation grant for persons with a disability; and if he will outline any eligibility and or benefit changes that will be made to these schemes in 2013. [12777/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I have referred earlier to the challenges we face in delivering on housing need and the rationale used in apportioning the housing capital budget across the various measures under my Department's housing programme for 2013. None of these important measures, whether it is the regeneration of seriously disadvantaged communities, the provision of special needs accommodation, retrofitting of older houses or the adaptation or improvement of private houses, can be stood down. My objective is to ensure that our scarce resources are used to best effect in areas where need is most acute.

This year I am allocating 12.4% of the housing budget, some €34.2 million in all, to the grant schemes compared to 13.2% in 2012. I n allocating the available funding across all 34

city and county councils I did so in as transparent and as fair a way as possible. This year's allocations give first priority to those people who have already been approved for grants. This accounts for some €18 million of the €34.2 million available to me. After setting aside a contingency figure of around €2 million, I allocated the balance on the basis of each authority's share of the applications on hand in January 2013. I believe this is a fair way of apportioning the funding. In the event that particular difficulties may arise in some local authorities in the course of 2013, I will use the reserve I have held to consider applications from local authorities for a supplementary allocation once the initial allocation has been exhausted.

I am currently reviewing the way the grant schemes are structured with a view to achieving more with the budget we have and ensuring that the maximum numbers of households are supported. My priority is to spread the benefits as widely as possible and to ensure fairness and value for money in the operation of the grant schemes. My intention is that the new grant structure will apply from 2014 onwards.

Proposed Legislation

88. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he expects to bring forward the foreshore and marine area development Bill, in order to ensure that ports and harbours are better positioned to plan their development into the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12340/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department recently conducted a public consultation exercise on A New Planning and Consent Architecture for Development in the Marine Area. Over 200 responses were received and are currently under consideration. The results of this exercise will inform the drafting of the general scheme of a Bill to update the consent system for developments on the foreshore. I hope to bring the general scheme of this Bill to Government in the near future, with a view to publication later in the year. The Bill will seek to integrate the existing foreshore consent system within the planning system operated by the local authorities and An Bord Pleanála.

Ports strategy is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, who has recently undertaken a major review of ports policy. The new policy is designed to provide a coherent framework for all the State-owned ports and allow for their future development in a manner that suits their individual circumstances. My Department was consulted on a range of issues, including the foreshore consent process, during the drafting of the policy. I understand that the new policy will be published as soon as possible following consideration by Government.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

89. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a county breakdown of the number of properties identified by the National Asset Management Agency for social housing provision; the number accepted as suitable by local authorities; the number transferred from NAMA to local authorities or to housing associations to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12675/13]

391. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a breakdown by county of the number of properties identified by the National Asset Managment Agency for social housing provision; the number accepted

as suitable by local authorities; the number transferred from NAMA to the local authority or housing association; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12865/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 89 and 391 together.

To date 3,949 properties have been identified by NAMA as being potentially suitable for social housing purposes. Demand has been confirmed by local authorities for 1,314 of these units, for 637 of which discussion/negotiation has begun. Housing authorities have been assessing the suitability of the units identified with regard to location, local demand, the nature and type of the accommodation and sustainable communities' principles.

At the end of 2012, 179 properties had been delivered from the NAMA portfolio for social housing purposes. 57 properties were bought directly by local authorities with another 57 properties purchased directly by Approved Housing Bodies (AHB) through the Capital Assistance Scheme. A further 65 properties were secured by AHBs through a variety of leasing arrangements. These properties were sourced in the following housing authority areas -

Cork County Council - 53

Drogheda Borough Council - 27

Dublin City Council - 27

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council - 34

Galway City Council - 30

Kildare County Council - 4

Westmeath County Council – 4.

My Department, the Housing Agency and NAMA continue to work together with housing authorities and approved housing bodies towards bringing suitable NAMA units into social use. It will continue to be my Department's objective in 2013 to maximise the delivery of social housing using all of the resources available.

Household Charge Collection

90. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the compliance rate for household charge payments on a county basis; the total national figure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12699/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011 provides the legislative basis for the Household Charge. Under the Act, an owner of a residential property on the liability date is liable to pay the Household Charge, unless otherwise exempted or entitled to claim a waiver. It is a matter for an owner of a residential property to determine liability and pay the Charge. The Local Government Management Agency is administering the Household Charge system on a shared service/agency basis for all county and city councils. I understand, from data provided by the Agency, that as of 6 March 2013 the number of registrations, including waiver registrations, for the Household Charge is 1,167,332. I will make a table available, with the official record, detailing the total number of payments and waivers registered for the Household Charge nationally and by local authority area. The figures are also presented as a percentage of the

estimated total number of liable properties nationally and per local authority area.

Overall, compliance continues to grow and now stands at over 72%. The compliance rate from local authority to local authority varies considerably, however, from 87% in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown to 61% in Donegal. It is a matter for each individual local authority to use the provisions of the legislation, combined with their local knowledge and judgement, to increase compliance. I expect that local authorities will use the available compliance avenues to the fullest to assist in funding the essential local services which are important for the well-being of every household and community.

I urge all liable persons who have not paid the Charge to visit www.householdcharge.ie or contact their local authority as a matter of urgency. Residential property owners who are unsure of their liability should also contact their local authority.

Under the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, Household Charge arrears for 2012 , including penalties and interest, will be capped at €130 if paid by 30 April 2013. Outstanding Household Charge liabilities will, on 1 July 2013, be increased to €200 and will be come a Local Property Tax liability collectable by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

County/City Council	Estimated number of liable properties	Total registered (paid + waivers)	Registrations as a % of total estimated liable properties
Carlow	18,257	13,131	72%
Cavan	25,611	18,165	71%
Clare	45,786	34,982	76%
Cork City	41,649	29,043	70%
Cork County	143,887	99,452	69%
Donegal	65,331	39,719	61%
Dublin City	190,685	142,373	75%
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	74,390	64,739	87%
Fingal	90,286	64,821	72%
Galway City	27,086	21,481	79%
Galway County	62,851	44,776	71%
Kerry	58,792	45,061	77%
Kildare	68,215	48,075	71%
Kilkenny	32,067	22,889	71%
Laois	26,185	17,445	67%
Leitrim	13,069	9,639	74%
Limerick City	20,380	14,592	72%
Limerick County	46,473	33,288	72%
Longford	12,928	9,620	74%
Louth	41,176	26,771	65%
Mayo	51,363	41,631	81%
Meath	60,652	40,590	67%
Monaghan	20,176	14,583	72%
North Tipperary	24,839	18,865	76%
Offaly	25,224	16,455	65%
Roscommon	23,888	18,030	76%

County/City Council	Estimated number of liable properties	Total registered (paid + waivers)	Registrations as a % of total estimated liable properties
Sligo	25,281	19,299	76%
South Dublin	81,822	54,494	67%
South Tipperary	30,368	21,735	72%
Waterford City	15,753	11,059	70%
Waterford County	24,777	17,271	70%
Westmeath	29,872	21,245	71%
Wexford	56,030	38,812	69%
Wicklow	45,665	33,201	73%
National	1,620,814	1,167,332	72%

Question No. 91 answered with Question No. 81.

Priory Hall Development

92. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he expects to receive a report from Mr. Justice Finnegan on all outstanding issues at Priory Hall, Dublin; his plans, if any, to meet Priory Hall residents as soon as the Finnegan resolution process has concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12508/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The resolution process in respect of this development, which I understand is on-going, arose in the context of legal proceedings which were adjourned to afford relevant parties the opportunity to work together, under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Finnegan (retired President of the High Court), to identify a way forward in relation to the complex problems at Priory Hall . Given that the matter is before the courts it would be inappropriate for me to comment further other than to continue to urge all concerned to afford Mr. Justice Finnegan the opportunity to complete the task which he is undertaking.

Dublin City Council is the designated authority with powers to enforce the statutory requirements arising under the Fire Safety Act, the Building Control Acts and the Planning and Development Acts, all of which are at issue in relation to Priory Hall. The Council is also the designated Housing Authority under the Housing Acts. Neither I nor my Department has a direct role or responsibility in relation to the exercise of these statutory responsibilities. I am aware of the significant efforts that have been made by the Council, with assistance from my Department, to provide for the needs of residents to date and I understand that the Council will continue to work proactively on behalf of the residents towards achieving the much needed resolution of the issues at Priory Hall.

Question No. 93 answered with Question No. 83.

Water Services Funding

94. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the funding provided for waste water treatment plants outside urban centres of more than 500 population since 1992 and the funding provided for the construction of sewer networks, long sea outfalls and other sewage infrastructure outside urban centres of more than 500 population since 1992. [12781/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP) is a multi-annual investment plan for the provision of major water and sewerage schemes. The current plan, Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013, is available in the Oireachtas library, and sets out the plans for investment in, *inter alia,* major wastewater projects. These projects are generally in respect of works in agglomerations of in excess of 500 p.e. Funding for smaller schemes is provided under my Department's Rural Water Programme.

I will circulate with the Official Report a tabular statement setting out expenditure under the WSIP since 1992 on wastewater infrastructure, including wastewater treatment plants, construction of sewer networks, long sea outfalls and other sewage infrastructure.

Year	WSIP Spend	Wastewater	
	€m	€m	%
1992 *	92	n/a	
1993 *	147	n/a	
1994	118	77	65%
1995	125	61	49%
1996	140	70	50%
1997	181	120	66%
1998	206	139	67%
1999	317	244	77%
2000	380	295	78%
2001	453	376	83%
2002	435	351	81%
2003	375	287	77%
2004	314	231	74%
2005	299	209	70%
2006	335	239	71%
2007	367	246	67%
2008	391	240	61%
2009	412	255	62%
2010	407	285	70%
2011	350	220	63%
2012	268	148	55%

*details of the split in expenditure on Wastewater and Water Supply is not available for 1992 & 1993

Leader Programmes Funding

95. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the expected percentage of projects approved under the LEADER pro-

cess that will not be completed and draw down any money under the programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12703/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the replies to Questions Nos. 77, 80 and 82 on today's order paper. Axes 3 4 (LEADER) of the Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013 (RDP) , for which my Department has responsibility , are delivered using a "bottom up" or community led approach. Decision-making with regard to project approvals and project completions rest s with the 35 Local Development Companies who are contracted by my Department to deliver the LEADER elements of the RDP. All projects that are approved are expected to be completed, but timing and progress are matters for the companies and the project promoters.

The rules of the RDP require a full assessment of the viability and sustainability of any project applying for RDP funding and each project must satisfy these requirements prior to receiving formal approval. However, it is not possible to be definitive at this stage about the percentage of projects that may not ultimately reach completion in the current programming period.

Child Care Services Provision

96. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if all community child care groups will have their premises exempt from payment of commercial rates; if so, the basis for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12337/13]

116. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to exempt registered private child care facilities from commercial rates on the basis of their educational function; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12338/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 96 and 116 together.

I refer to the reply to Questions No. 443 and 444 of 26 February 2013. The position remains unchanged.

Social and Affordable Housing Expenditure

97. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of local authorities that allow for a pro-rata change in the shared ownership rent subsidy during a current year in the event that a recipient household suffers financial difficulties under the terms of Circular HRT 10/91; if he will issue an updated circular to all local authorities informing them that recipients of the shared ownership subsidy may avail of this facility; if he will consider changing the regulations to allow for a mandatory consideration of recipients' changed circumstances at any point in a year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12643/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department does not collate the information sought. The Government's 2011 housing policy statement announced the standing down of all affordable housing schemes, including the shared ownership scheme, as part of the review of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

That review is now almost concluded and I have also asked the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency to provide me with a standalone analysis of the shared ownership scheme, including identification of the main difficulties and recommendations for mitigating measures.

Any future changes to legislation governing affordable housing schemes, including the shared ownership scheme, will be made in the context of both pieces of work and I expect to make announcements in this regard in the coming months.

Wind Energy Guidelines

98. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on whether the current guidelines for the installation of wind turbines are sufficiently robust; and his further views that the existing planning process promotes sustainable energy and protects the rights of residents and their communities. [12810/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Wind Energy Development Guidelines (June 2006) provide guidance to planning authorities on catering for wind energy through the development plan process. The guidelines are also intended to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development and the treatment of planning applications for such developments.

To ensure that Ireland continues to meet its renewable energy targets and, at the same time, that wind energy does not have negative impacts on local communities, my Department, in conjunction with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and other stakeholders, is undertaking a targeted review of certain aspects of the Wind Energy Guidelines 2006.

This focused review will examine the manner in which the Guidelines address key issues of community concern such as noise, proximity and visual amenity and any other potential impacts, as considered appropriate, as well as ways of building community support for wind energy development.

The press notice - issued on 30 January 2013 – marks only the initial stage in that review process. It is essentially a pre-draft consultation intended to inform the preparation of revised draft guidelines. This early consultation allows for the public and other stakeholders to input into the process at an early stage. Other stakeholders that will be consulted include the Environmental Protection Agency and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland.

All statutory planning guidelines issue first in draft form for public consultation over a period of a couple of months. Once the consultation period is closed the submissions received on the draft guidelines are considered and taken into account in the final form of the guidelines. The draft guidelines will – like all other new or revised guidelines – go out for extensive public consultation for a period of 6 weeks to 2 months. The indicative timetable for the publication of the draft guidelines is Quarter 4 2013.

Planning legislation provides for extensive public notification of proposed development at the development management stage, including proposed development for wind energy purposes. For example, article 17 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 – 2010 requires an applicant to erect a site notice in order to lodge a valid application for planning permission. Article 19 of the Regulations requires that this notice must be placed in a conspicuous position on or near the main entrance from a public road to the land or structure concerned, so as to be easily visible and legible by persons using the public road. Alternatively, if the land or structure

does not adjoin a public road, the site notice should be placed so as to be easily visible and legible by persons outside the land or structure. The site notice must contain the date on which the site notice is erected and state that the planning application may be inspected or purchased at the offices of the planning authority and that a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing, on payment of the prescribed fee, within the 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the planning authority of the application. The applicant must erect the site notice no sooner than 2 weeks before making the application for permission in order to facilitate third party inspection of the application. Where it appears to a planning authority that any notice does not comply with these requirements, it may require the applicant to give further notice and evidence in relation to compliance with such a requirement.

Article 18 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2006 also provides that a notice be published in a newspaper approved for this purpose. Each planning authority must decide which newspapers should be included on its approved list of newspapers to ensure that the newspapers used for the purpose of such notices have a sufficiently large circulation in its functional area.

In addition the planning authority must, under section 34(3) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, have regard to any observations or submissions received concerning the proposed development in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Any person who makes a submission to the planning authority may appeal the decision of the planning authority to An Bord Pleanála. The Board in some instances, at its own discretion, holds oral hearings in relation to cases being considered by it, further adding to the opportunities to participate in the decision-making process.

Leader Programmes Funding

99. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of project money approved to date under the LEADER programme; the total amount of money available under this programme for projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12708/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to priority Question No. 77 on today's order paper which sets out the position in this matter.

Proposed Legislation

100. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is concerned that the production of a climate change Bill that does not have carbon emission targets for both 2020 and 2050 may end up, under the EU 2009, costing the State €300 million in carbon credits. [12811/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In releasing the outline Heads of the Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development Bill on 26 February 2013, I made a statement in which I addressed greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, with a view to putting the record straight on this critical issue. In that statement, a copy of which is available on my Department's website (www.environ.ie), I pointed out that Ireland already has a challenging greenhouse gas mitigation target for 2020, which is binding under EU law. Compliance with that target is not an option; it is absolutely paramount and any ambition we set at a national level must, and will, respect compliance with this fundamental

mitigation commitment and future increases in ambition. As can be seen in Head 3 of the outline Heads of the Bill, the legislation being developed by Government will be unequivocal on compliance with existing and future obligations of the State under EU law and any international agreement to which the State becomes a party.

Overall, the outline Heads reflect a strongly progressive approach to the fundamental challenge of greenhouse gas mitigation, having regard to Ireland's distinctive greenhouse gas emissions profile and the challenges it presents for the agriculture and food sectors, in particular. Looked at in isolation, the formal construct of Head 4 for legal drafting purposes may not convey the true extent of the ambition being set by Government. However, when looked at in the broader context of all proposed provisions, particularly those in Head 5, and the parallel advances in policy development, the progressive and highly ambitious agenda now proposed by Government is clear. The proposed provisions in Head 5 would place a statutory obligation on Government to adopt and implement national and sectoral plans to enable the State to transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in the period to 2050.

In anticipation of the planned legislation, work on the development of key sectoral mitigation plans has already been initiated. In the update on progress on the development of national climate policy and legislation which I issued on 28 December 2012, I announced that Departments with responsibility for key sectors in the transition to a low carbon economy had already been tasked with the preparation of individual 2050 low-carbon roadmaps. This step in the overall policy development process provides an opportunity for the Departments concerned, who are best placed in terms of ownership and understanding of their sectors, to lead the process of framing the low-carbon vision/objective for their sectors and to undertake the evaluation that is necessary to develop a robust and cost-effective policy platform for delivery of that vision in their area.

The key sectors are energy/built environment, transport and agriculture. While near zero carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions in 2050 should set the context for the energy/built environment and transport sectoral roadmaps, generally reflecting the ambition at EU level, carbon neutrality is considered to be the more appropriate approach in the case of the agriculture sector.

The objective is to finalise these sectoral roadmaps – including a reasonable period of public consultation in the fourth quarter of this year. These sectoral roadmaps are an essential first step towards development of an overall national 2050 roadmap to a low-carbon society with a competitive low-carbon economy being finalised by my Department in early 2014.

Consistent with the Government commitment to Ireland's obligations under EU Decision 406/2009/EC and its progressive approach to the development of national climate policy, the focus for securing compliance with EU law in the period to 2020 will be on domestic mitigation rather than the purchase of additional carbon credits.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

101. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the specific measures he will take to ensure that Ireland will not exceed emissions limits laid out under the EU effort sharing decision in 2015 as is projected in the EPA CCRP report (details supplied); if he will accept that mitigating actions are required immediately to address this matter and cannot wait until the passage of the proposed climate action and low carbon development Bill if such actions are to have any measurable impact; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12820/13]

114. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on sectorial targets for climate change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12686/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 101 and 114 together.

I refer to the reply to Question No. 258 of 14 February 2013.

In issuing the Review of National Climate Policy in November 2011, I announced that a three-pronged approach would be undertaken in order to develop the necessary policy mix to support an ambitious but realistic national mitigation agenda. In addition to policy analysis by the Secretariat to the National Economic and Social Council and the public consultation which I undertook in 2012, I stated very clearly that the third pillar of the approach would be the pursuit of sectoral mitigation progress through the Cabinet Committee on Climate Change and the Green Economy, based on positive engagement with the relevant Departments in whose sectoral areas progress must be made if we are to meet our binding targets under EU law.

Significant moves forward have been made under this third pillar of the policy development agenda. In the update on progress on the development of national climate policy and legislation which I issued on 28 December 2012, I specifically addressed the sectoral challenge. Responding to the strong case made by the NESC Secretariat for the national climate challenge to be reframed – moving beyond a sole compliance approach, and re-focussing on a whole-of-government and societal agenda – I announced that Departments with responsibility for key sectors in the transition to a low carbon economy had already been tasked with the preparation of individual 2050 low-carbon roadmaps. This step in the overall policy development process provides an opportunity for the Departments concerned, who are best placed in terms of ownership and understanding of their sectors, to lead the process of framing the low-carbon vision/objective for their sectors and to undertake the evaluation that is necessary to develop a robust and cost-effective policy platform for delivery of that vision in their area.

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Local Authority Housing Waiting Lists

102. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will set out his plans to deal with a shortage of local authority housing; if he intendeds to address the issue of the 100,000 plus families on local authority housing lists in a planned fashion by way of a direct building programme or by way of local authority loan scheme; if cognisance will be taken of the double economic benefit of such a proposal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12729/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Government's housing policy statement, published in June 2011, clearly identifies that the priority for Government will be to meet the most acute

needs of households applying for social housing support.

I am determined to ensure that the social housing programme optimises the delivery of social housing and the return for the resources invested. To achieve this, it is essential that we tailor the use of available Exchequer supports to prevailing conditions and explore the full range of solutions to address housing needs. The social housing capital budget has been reduced from €1.535 billion in 2008 to €332.7m in 2012, with an anticipated outturn of some €299m for 2013, and the financial parameters within which we will be operating for the coming years rule out a return to large capital funded construction programmes. The Government is committed to responding more quickly and on a larger scale to social housing support needs through a variety of mechanisms, including through increased provision of social housing. In spite of the challenging circumstances within which local authorities are forced to operate, the projected outcome for 2012 is expected to be in the region of 4,000 to 4,500 housing units. Given the current volatility of the market and different challenges to the channels of supply, it is difficult to estimate the likely output of new units for social housing this year. However, it is provisionally estimated that in the region of 5,000 units will be provided for social housing in 2013.

Delivery of social housing will be significantly facilitated through more flexible funding models such as the Rental Accommodation Scheme and leasing, but the Government is also committed to developing other funding mechanisms that will increase the supply of permanent new social housing. Such mechanisms will include options to purchase, build to lease and the sourcing of loan finance by approved housing bodies for construction and acquisition. There is also obvious potential, across a range of housing programmes, for the Government's objective of sourcing and providing suitable residential units for use as social housing to be aligned with the commercial objectives of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA). My Department and the Housing Agency are engaged with NAMA to ensure delivery of housing units for social purposes.

Pyrite Remediation Programme Issues

103. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the services to be provided in the expenditure of up to €50 million in the pyrite resolution process will be decided by competitive tender. [12784/13]

117. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that during house surveys carried out to inspect damage caused by pyrite that non-pyrite related damage to houses and significant non-compliance with Building Regulations Fire Safety has been found in housing units which had been approved by the structural guarantee company Homebond and that complaints based on these failures have been made to local authority building control; and if he will confirm that no personnel from the Homebond company will be employed in the management of the Pyrite Resolution process. [12782/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 103 and 117 together.

The Building Control Acts 1990 and 2007 provides a clear statutory framework for construction activity based on legal enforceable minimum standards as set out in the Building Regulations and in detailed Technical Guidance Documents (TGDs). Responsibility for compliance with the Building Regulations rests with the owner of a building and with the builder/developer who carries out the construction works.

Enforcement of the Building Regulations is primarily the responsibility of the 37 local Building Control Authorities who have strong powers to serve enforcement notices for non-compliance or to institute proceedings for breaches of regulatory requirements within a period of five years from the date the building has been completed. Building Control Authorities have successfully used such powers to achieve compliance. However, my Department has no direct involvement in these matters.

Homeowners and indeed their public representatives should report any concerns about non-compliance with the Building Regulations to the local Building Control Authority.

Remediation of defects is a matter for resolution between the parties concerned, namely the owner and the builder/developer and their insurers. In the event that a satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved through dialogue and negotiation the option of seeking a civil legal remedy can be considered.

I have recently established the Pyrite Resolution Board under the chairmanship of Mr. John O'Connor, former Chairman of An Bord Pleanála, to oversee and ensure the effective implementation of a pyrite remediation programme for homeowners who have no alternative avenues for redress. I am confident that the Board will require compliance with normal procurement procedures. I have also appointed four other Board members, who together with the Chairman, have the particular range of skills and experience to ensure that the public interest, and the interest of the affected homeowners, will be well served. The Board will be working closely with the not-for-profit entity, which will be established by the Construction Industry Federation, the Irish Concrete Federation and HomeBond to deliver an efficient and effective remediation scheme.

Work is underway by the Pyrite Resolution Board on developing the scope and detail of a pyrite remediation scheme. Issues in relation to testing for pyritic heave, eligibility criteria for homeowners, public procurement, certification, warranties and other key concerns will be considered by the Board in the context of its work.

Traveller Accommodation

104. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding the recent underspend of €50 million by local authorities on Traveller accommodation in view of the latest European Commission report against racism and intolerance regarding Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12780/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller accommodation programmes, designed to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers, rests with individual housing authorities. My Department's role is to ensure that there is an adequate legislative and financial system in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation.

My Department provides 100% capital funding to housing authorities for the provision of new and refurbished Traveller-specific accommodation, such as halting sites and group housing schemes. Traveller families are also accommodated in local authority social housing dwellings, which are funded through the main local authority social housing programme. The most recent Housing Needs Assessment has shown that the vast majority of Travellers have opted for standard housing. Nevertheless, Traveller-specific accommodation continues to be provided by

housing authorities, and funded by my Department, to meet the accommodation needs of those Travellers who opt for such accommodation.

Between 2007 and 2012, €170 million was allocated by my Department to local authorities for the provision of Traveller-specific accommodation. Funding under the Traveller Accommodation Programme is allocated annually to housing authorities based on the programmes submitted to my Department for the year in question. It is then a matter for housing authorities to progress those projects for which an allocation was provided and to arrange for the appropriate and timely drawdown of the funding from my Department.

My Department carefully monitors the drawdown of expenditure and progress generally under the Traveller Accommodation Programme. Concerns have been raised with housing authorities regarding the drawdown of allocations in recent years. While my Department will continue to monitor the drawdown of expenditure this year to ensure that the maximum return is achieved from resources provided, it must be acknowledged that overall responsibility for the progression of schemes and the efficient and effective drawdown of allocations lies with housing authorities.

Dormant Accounts Fund Grants

105. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the details of the new schemes or programmes he intends to fund in 2013 out of the dormant accounts fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12705/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Disbursement Plan of 2009, put in place by the Dormant Accounts Board, will be replaced by a new disbursement scheme to be created in 2013 in accordance with the Dormant Accounts (Amendment) Act 2012. My Department will consult with relevant Government Departments, and such other persons as appropriate, in relation to drafting the disbursement scheme, specific details of which are not yet available. The new scheme must be approved by Government and laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas which then have 21 days to consider it.

The legislation also provides for the preparations of an action plan each year following the making of a scheme. The plan, which will also be subject to consultation, must indicate the programmes or types of projects that may apply for disbursement and the maximum funds available. Different amounts may be specified in the plan in relation to a particular class or classes of programme or project. Once the plan is adopted, a copy must also be laid before each House of the Oireachtas, where it may be considered within a 21 day period. Provision is made, in addition, for adopting or not adopting a plan and for not proceeding to invite applications under a plan, if appropriate in particular circumstances. Any decision not to proceed must be approved by Government.

Environmental Regulations

106. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to review regulations in relation to environmental impact assessments in view of the decision of a company (details supplied) to surrender its foreshore licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12836/13]

111. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Lo-

cal Government the discussion that took place between his Department and a company (details supplied) that led to the company surrendering its foreshore licence to drill an exploratory well in Dublin Bay, including details of the elements of the EU, EIA directive that were apparently not transposed correctly into Irish law in 1999; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12835/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 and 111 together.

In the context of a judicial review of the grant of a foreshore licence to Providence Resources plc, my Department and the Office of the Attorney General met the company and their legal representatives on 12 February 2013. As that meeting was held in the context of and with regard to the judicial review, the discussions are confidential and privileged.

The Company announced its intention to surrender the foreshore licence in question. The surrender was not made at the request of my Department, no conditions were attached to the surrender, and neither were any commitments or assurances given to the company.

Compliance with EU legislation is a matter the State takes very seriously and there has been significant improvement in this area in recent years. In order to ensure full compliance with the Directive in question, the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, my Department has initiated a review of the relevant legislation and will introduce amending regulations as required.

Forestry Sector

107. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has raised any concern with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine in relation to the effect the proposed sale of the forest crop could have on rural recreation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12706/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I have not had discussions with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, or his Department in relation to the effect the proposed sale of the forest crop could have on rural recreation. My Department is currently considering the various issues associated with the proposal and the potential impacts on rural recreation.

RAPID Programme

108. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the latest date on which the national monitoring committee for the RAPID programme met; when its next meeting is scheduled; if he intends being present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12709/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The National Monitoring Committee for the RAPID programme met on 6 October 2010. My Department last met with RAPID Chairs and Coordinators at a conference in February 2012 as part of an extensive consultation process in the context of the development of local government reform proposals. As part of my continuing engagement with both the local development and local government sectors, I have met with many of the Chairs and Coordinators at different times and in various fora. No meeting of the National Monitoring Committee is scheduled at present. However in implementing local government reform decisions, my Department will

continue to consult as necessary with the relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, Local Development Companies, RAPID Area Implementation Teams and others.

Local Authority Boundaries

109. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the local government boundary review will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12687/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I established a Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee on 15 November 2012 to review and make recommendations on the division of each council area, other than Cork City, into local electoral areas, and to make recommendations on the number of members of each council to be assigned to each local electoral area.

The Committee was requested to submit its report as soon as possible and, in any event, not later than 31 May 2013.

Motor Tax Collection

110. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update on discussions taking place between the CCMA and his Department on the retention of some of motor tax funding in the Local Government Fund in order to maintain existing levels of general purpose grant allocations. [12813/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I assume that the Question refers to general purpose grants from the Local Government Fund. The principal source of revenue for the Local Government Fund in 2013 is the proceeds of motor tax which are being re-distributed on an equalised basis to local authorities within the context of the annual allocations of General Purpose Grants.

My Department continues to work closely with the County and City Managers Association on all matters impacting on the local government sector, including funding issues.

Question No. 111 answered with Question No. 106.

Building Regulations Application

112. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied that the housing units-apartments constructed during the past ten years comply with fire safety regulations. [12785/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Since 1 June 1992, all new, extended or materially altered buildings must be built in compliance with the requirements of the Building Regulations. The requirements of the Building Regulations are set out in 12 parts (classified as parts A to M) addressing the legally enforceable performance standards which a completed building must achieve. My Department publishes a Technical Guidance Document (TGD) to accompany each part of the regulations outlining how the legal requirement may be achieved in practice. Part B/TGD B addresses the requirements in relation to Fire Safety.

Primary responsibility for compliance with the requirements of the Building Regulations rests with the designers, builders and owners of buildings. Implementation of enforcement measures is a matter for the local building control authority. Local authorities have extensive powers of inspection and enforcement as Building Control Authorities under the Building Control Acts 1990 to 2007, and as Fire Authorities, Planning Authorities and Housing Authorities under other Acts relevant to the built environment. I am aware that local authorities have used such powers on a number of occasions where circumstances have given rise to concern and I expect local authorities to continue to use all of the powers currently available to them to address serious building defects.

Neither I nor my Department have any function in relation to assessing, checking or testing compliance, or otherwise, of specific works or developments under the Building Control Acts or the Fire Safety Acts.

My Department is currently engaged in a review of Part B/TGDB. The question of the appropriate future regulatory requirements for all buildings, including housing units, will be addressed as part of this review. Any proposals for change will be subject to a comprehensive public consultation process and a rigorous Regulatory Impact Assessment in due course prior to their being signed into law.

Water Quality Issues

113. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which he expects ground water quality to improve over the next five years with particular reference to upgrading of septic tanks, improvement to public sewerage treatment systems, including major, small or group schemes; if he will quantify the extent to which improvements under each heading can contribute to overall improvement in water quality in line with EU regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12730/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In accordance with the Water Framework Directive, groundwater is classified according to its chemical and quantitative status. The most recent EPA report Ireland's Environment 2012 – An Assessment states that the majority of groundwater bodies (85.6%) are in good status as required under the Water Framework Directive. The general reduction in nitrate concentrations in groundwater observed in recent years has been attributed to the dilution effect of increased rainfall, reductions in inorganic fertiliser, improvements in organic fertiliser storage and the implementation of land-spreading restrictions.

Groundwater quality is dependent to a large extent on the quality of surface water and so the upgrading of septic tanks and of waste water treatment plants can be expected to contribute to improved groundwater quality.

The priorities in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme include the provision of works required to comply with Water Framework Directive requirements, to improve sewage treatment and collection infrastructure in accordance with the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, to respond to judgments of the European Court of Justice and to achieve environmental and public health objectives arising from various regulations and EPA reports dealing with water quality. A total of €328.7 million in Exchequer funding is being provided for water services capital investment this year including investment under the Rural Water Programme. My Department also provides funding from the Local Government Fund towards the operational costs of group water schemes.

Over the past decade, substantial improvements have been made in the group water sector, reflected in improved infrastructure and management and leading to greater compliance with water quality standards. This has been accomplished through a partnership approach between my Department, the water services authorities and the group water sector itself, with the support of the National Federation of Group Water Schemes. My Department is committed to ensuring that the substantial progress made in the group water sector is sustained over the coming years.

The implementation of the National Inspection Plan 2013: Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems, published recently by the Environmental Protection Agency, will also contribute to the existing range of measures in place to improve and protect our water quality.

Question No. 114 answered with Question No. 101.

EU Directives

115. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is working with the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht on the implementation in March 2012 of a resolution of Dáil Éireann which called on the Government to engage actively with the European Commission to seek a resolution within the terms of the habitats Directive and to prepare and submit a national raised bog restoration plan to the Commission as a matter of urgency. [12814/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department's Environmental Compliance Unit provides a co-ordinating role with the European Commission in respect of all environmental infringement cases and liaises as necessary with other Departments and Agencies which have direct responsibility for managing individual cases, as well as with relevant business areas within my own Department. In that context, in respect of the specific infringement referred to (case reference number 2010/2161), my Department continues to engage closely with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht , which has the lead role in resolving the outstanding elements of the case, to the satisfaction of the European Commission.

Question No. 116 answered with Question No. 96.

Question No. 117 answered with Question No. 103.

Water Supply

118. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of funding that has been provided during his period in office for reducing unaccounted for water including all advertising; rainwater harvesting in public buildings including all advertising; and the establishment of Irish Water, all costs including the PWC report and advertising. [12783/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Unaccounted for Water is the amount of water (generally expressed as a percentage) which enters a distribution system and which cannot be accounted for by legitimate use. Significant investment in recent years in water management systems and active leakage control has provided the platform for more intensive water mains repair and replacement contracts under the current Water Services Investment Programme, which will continue to be the main focus of

capital investment in 2013.

Over €247 million has been spent on water conservation projects in the last decade with €39.9 million spent in 2011 and €39.25 million in 2012. The installation of rainwater harvesting systems on public buildings is a matter for the Office of Public Works. The cost of the PWC report on the establishment of the new public water utility was €179,584 including VAT. Certain costs associated with the water sector reform programme incurred by my Department, local authorities and the Commission for Energy Regulation will be funded by my Department from the Water Services Investment Programme in 2013.

Mountain Access Scheme

119. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when it is intended to make the pilot scheme for access to hills and mountains fully operational; if he is satisfied that this is progressing satisfactorily; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12707/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department is progressing a pilot Mountain Access Scheme at two locations, Mount Gable in Connemara and Carrauntuohill in Co. Kerry. There are 94 landholders associated with the pilot scheme at Mount Gable. The scope of the scheme at Carrauntuohill required review as it was not feasible to progress a pilot access scheme there in isolation from the rest of the MacGillcuddy Reeks. Subject to the consent of landowners and with community support, it is intended to expand that scheme to include an area of approximately 100 square km stretching from the Gap of Dunloe in the east to Glencar in the West. This comprises almost the entire MacGillicuddy Reeks. Discussions with landowners and other stakeholders are on-going.

Mountain access areas are by their nature sensitive habitats, and as such, great care must be taken to ensure that proposed developments do not generate negative consequences and lead to environmental degradation and habitat destruction. It is clear that some upland areas and mountains , and their unique ecosystems and habitats, are already suffering damage from recreational activity ; a properly constructed and funded Mountain Access Scheme offers an opportunity to address these matters, while also generating significant potential for tourism and recreation related job creation and associated development opportunities, in rural areas.

A requirement of the proposed scheme is that participating landowners are protected against any potential claim arising from an accident or injury to a hill walker and while it has not proved possible to reach consensus on all aspects of the scheme to date, discussions with the farming organisations on the scope and scale of such protection are continuing.

Given the significant benefits that can accrue from an agreed community based Mountain Access Scheme, I am committed to ensuring that outstanding issues relating to its implementation on a national basis will be resolved as soon as possible.

Local Authority Funding

120. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a breakdown in tabular form for each local authority indicating the allocation of funding in 2012 and 2013 for housing grants for elderly and disabled persons. [12819/13]

125. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the measures he is reviewing in respect of private housing grants; the time-frame for the changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12684/13]

405. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a breakdown by county of funding provided for the housing aid for elderly persons scheme and the housing adaptation grant for people with a disability in 2012 and 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12617/13]

416. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide in tabular form the allocation of funding to each local authority for 2012 and 2013 in respect of housing adaptation grants, housing aid for older people and mobility aids grants scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12930/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 120, 125, 405 and 416 together.

I am keenly aware of the challenges we face in delivering housing supports to a range of vulnerable households and groups. The difficulties facing the State's finances and the necessity to reduce public expenditure to sustainable levels are impacting on capital programmes all across the public service. My Department's housing programme is no exception. The level of capital funding available has decreased significantly in recent years along the lines highlighted in the Medium Term Exchequer Framework for Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-2016. Regrettably these steps are necessary to bring stability to the public finances. As a result, capital spending on housing programmes in 2013 is down on last year.

Reduced capital budgets inevitably give rise to difficult choices and decisions in allocating the available funding. This means balancing a dwindling capital budget across a range of important areas, and spreading those scarce resources in a way that meets the needs of those concerned as best we can. In addition to the Private House Grants, the capital budget needs to cover regeneration, improvements, energy retrofitting of the social housing stock and meeting the needs of older people and people in social housing with disabilities. For this I have allocated €167m in 2013.

This year I am allocating 12.4% of the housing budget, some €34.2 million, to the grant schemes compared to 13.2% in 2012. In allocating the available funding across all 34 city and county councils, I did so in as transparent and as fair a way as possible. In framing the 2013 allocations my Department wrote to each Local Authority requesting details of the numbers and value of grants where work had been approved to commence. Between them, local authorities reported contractual commitments in respect of approved grants totalling €18 million. Local authorities were always encouraged to maintain continuity in terms of approving and paying grants and commitments carried forward into the new financial year always had first call on the available funding. This year each authority was allocated the full amount of their contractual commitments. Only one local authority, Laois County Council, reported a zero commitment for grants approved. The balance of the available funding was allocated on the basis of each authority's share of the new applications on hand in January 2013. I believe this is a fair way of apportioning the funding. I appreciate that this approach has resulted in lower than expected allocations for some authorities.

I accept that particular difficulties may arise in some local authorities in the course of 2013 and I have a contingency in place to deal with this. I have set aside a capital reserve of around €2 million and I will consider applications from local authorities for a supplementary allocation once the initial allocation has been exhausted. I am currently reviewing the structure of the scheme with a view to achieving more with the decreasing budget and ensuring that the maxi-

mum numbers of households are supported. My priority is to spread the benefits as widely as possible and to ensure fairness and value for money in the operation of the grant schemes. This will involve an in-depth analysis of relevant factors which impact on the demand for grants, the scope and extent of eligible works and the level of grant payments to individual applicants. My intention is that the new grant structure will apply from 2014 onwards.

The detailed information in relation to the combined Exchequer plus local authority own resources allocations for the years 2012 – 2013 is set out in the following table:

Local Authority	2012 Allocation	2013 Allocation
Carlow	€1,349,014	€747,078.97
Cavan	€1,625,000	€1,038,155.24
Clare	€1,445,000	€1,445,000.00
Cork	€6,250,364	€4,561,159.71
Donegal	€2,448,146	€827,280.49
D'Laoghaire/Rathdown	€1,110,602	€731,197.36
Fingal	€2,072,365	€1,588,467.61
Galway	€2,375,000	€1,644,386.59
Kerry	€3,257,865	€1,445,971.16
Kildare	€2,025,000	€2,025,000.00
Kilkenny	€1,867,500	€1,406,161.86
Laois	€1,084,827	€260,923.46
Leitrim	€576,305	€65,953.25
Limerick	€1,473,454	€1,473,455.00
Longford	€1,243,575	€687,674.34
Louth	€1,186,266	€1,103,144.70
Mayo	€2,575,216	€2,575,216.25
Meath	€997,208	€487,123.12
Monaghan	€1,152,172	€837,210.57
North Tipperary	€1,200,000	€425,757.37
Offaly	€1,125,000	€625,000.00
Roscommon	€1,009,251	€709,956.68
Sligo	€997,684	€276,983.80
South Dublin	€2,728,308	€1,213,986.05
South Tipperary	€3,111,713	€1,087,988.81
Waterford	€994,766	€414,024.05
Westmeath	€988,155	€435,722.48
Wexford	€2,566,772	€1,210,764.56
Wicklow	€954,794	€567,117.69
Cork City	€1,749,741	€1,749,741.25
Dublin City	€10,629,459	€4,932,319.56
Galway City	€928,352	€301,280.08
Limerick City	€1,525,000	€1,010,884.61
Waterford City	€740,282	€348,841.83
Sligo Borough Council	€385,844	(with Sligo Co Co figure for 2013)

Local Authority Charges Application

121. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government noting that self-declarations of the liability for the local property tax can be made in March 2013, with payments from July 2013 if there will be an impact on funds channelled to those local authorities that have a significant percentage of deferrals. [12816/13]

123. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extra local government services that residents can expect to receive with the introduction of the local property tax; and the way he expects this tax to improve the delivery of local services. [12812/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 121 and 123 together.

Under section 157 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, commencing in 2014, the Minister for Finance will pay into the Local Government Fund an amount equivalent to the Local Property Tax (LPT) paid into the Central Fund during that year. In 2013, the funds raised by the tax will accrue to the Exchequer. Should a disproportionate number of liable owners living in the functional area of a given local authority defer payment of the tax in 2014 or subsequent years under Part 12 of the 2012 Act, those deferrals will have a financial impact on that local authority. As the rate of deferral will not be known until individual homeowner LPT returns are made to the Office of the Revenue Commissioners by 28 May 2013, it is not possible to estimate the potential implications for any particular local authority.

As regard local authority services, I expect the Local Property Tax to have multiple benefits, including:

- A more sustainable and resilient system of funding for local authorities and therefore a sounder financial footing for the provision of essential local services;

- Greater local scope for financial decision making concerning service provision - in particular, the inclusion of the local variation mechanism from 2015 will further increase the autonomy of local authorities; and

- A strengthening of democracy at local level and a more active relationship between local authorities and local electorates – a stronger democratic relationship and clearer lines of accountability can only have a beneficial impact on service provision from the perspective of the service user.

Planning Issues

122. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the timeframe for the establishment of a planning regulator; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12681/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Government published its response to the recommendations of the Final Report of the Mahon Tribunal on 19 July 2012 including in respect of an independent planning regulator, to which it has agreed in principle. I also discussed this specific recommendation with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht on 29 January 2013. In that context, I expect Government shortly to consider proposals, taking into account the views expressed by the members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee,

on all of the planning recommendations in the Mahon Report.

Question No. 123 answered with Question No. 121.

Animal Breeding Regulations

124. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the situation in rural Ireland where persons have had their sheep herds attacked by domestic dogs; if he will consider introducing legislation making microchipping compulsory for all dogs; if he will legislate to have dogs impounded while attacks are investigated as has recently been introduced in the UK; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6995/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I do not propose at this point to introduce compulsory microchipping of all dogs; however, a number of recent developments have increased microchipping usage. The regulations I introduced in early 2012 under the Dog Breeding Establishments Act, 2010 stipulate that all dogs held in such establishments be microchipped once they reach 8 weeks of age or when a dog is moved from the establishment. This initiative will result in more and more dogs being microchipped over time. To be properly effective, the compulsory microchipping of dogs should be supported by the development of registration systems for all dogs. It would also be necessary to have the co-operation of the dog-owning public in updating such registrations where ownership changes. These are large projects which would involve a significant investment of time and funding, but they remain under consideration by local authorities and my Department.

Mandatory microchipping of all dogs will not in itself eliminate the problem of sheep worrying. The key to tackling this issue is responsible dog ownership. Dog owners should recognise the issues involved and their responsibilities to ensure that their dogs are controlled at all times, especially at night time and, most especially, before and during the lambing season. My Department is in dialogue with farming representatives regarding the promotion of such behaviour by dog owners. A dog warden may seize any dog and detain it in order to ascertain whether an offence is being , or has been , committed under the Control of Dogs Act, 1986. This facilitates a dog warden in ascertaining whether a dog has worried livestock, in which case the owner or any other person in charge of the dog is liable to be found guilty of an offence.

Question No. 125 answered with Question No. 120.

Local Government Reform

126. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in view of the recent visit by the the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe monitoring committee, his views on whether Ireland is in compliance with the European charter of local self-government; his plans to ensure that Ireland is compliant with the charter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12711/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I am satisfied that Ireland is in compliance with the European Charter of Local Self-Government. In addition, the extensive measures in the Action Programme for Effective Local Government, which sets out Government decisions in relation to local government reform, will further enhance the quality of local government in Ireland.

Local Authority Funding

127. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the Local Government Fund allocation to each local authority in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12685/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I presume the question relates to General Purpose Grants from the Local Government Fund. The information requested is set out in the table below. I am satisfied that the general purpose allocations provided for 2013, together with the income available from other sources, will enable local authorities to provide a reasonable level of services to their customers.

Local Authority	2010 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2011 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2012 Original Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2013 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation
Carlow County Council	11,331,276	10,128,725	8,532,829	8,560,762
Cavan County Council	18,245,262	16,549,414	14,200,854	14,123,740
Clare County Council	13,986,912	12,736,073	10,176,044	10,072,651
Cork County Council	48,353,652	42,689,885	33,495,626	32,048,612
Donegal County Council	38,913,388	36,345,399	30,945,838	30,840,363
Dun Laoghaire Rath-down County Council	34,624,434	31,522,005	25,780,316	24,772,291
Fingal County Council	29,799,877	26,267,018	20,455,071	19,619,590
Galway County Council	36,092,172	32,835,625	28,105,841	27,400,744
Kerry County Council	25,572,631	23,238,216	19,005,401	18,374,432
Kildare County Council	25,532,785	23,924,053	20,127,482	20,634,229
Kilkenny County Council	19,334,743	17,527,581	15,113,016	15,105,892
Laois County Council	16,823,589	15,143,352	13,189,788	13,070,064
Leitrim County Council	14,489,435	13,479,217	11,809,261	11,952,743
Limerick County Council	23,724,090	21,355,645	17,683,768	17,668,930
Longford County Council	13,856,743	12,849,645	11,252,795	11,488,728

Local Authority	2010 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2011 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2012 Original Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2013 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation
Louth County Council	12,118,470	10,914,165	9,130,490	9,044,372
Mayo County Council	35,180,309	32,135,562	27,800,750	27,650,043
Meath County Council	27,377,684	25,553,557	21,684,996	21,251,612
Monaghan County Council	14,737,177	13,648,138	11,902,168	11,968,784
North Tipperary County Council	18,005,785	16,373,536	14,267,841	14,504,742
Offaly County Council	15,388,672	14,139,586	12,164,815	12,095,491
Roscommon County Council	20,110,463	18,490,254	15,967,965	15,828,208
Sligo County Council	16,356,043	15,314,229	13,553,783	13,584,307
South Dublin County Council	24,289,702	21,709,971	16,963,904	16,285,348
South Tipperary County Council	22,128,379	20,211,960	17,472,862	17,302,006
Waterford County Council	21,990,654	20,583,798	17,888,261	18,176,169
Westmeath County Council	20,003,602	18,494,866	16,016,846	16,055,537
Wexford County Council	20,755,993	19,259,881	16,229,752	15,912,433
Wicklow County Council	19,219,558	17,502,198	14,625,057	14,357,641
Cork City Council	25,014,462	22,940,522	17,265,785	16,612,544
Dublin City Council	88,769,969	78,722,867	54,805,761	52,613,531
Galway City Council	8,512,430	7,534,888	5,990,156	5,750,549
Limerick City Council	10,595,040	9,638,920	7,968,166	8,264,861
Waterford City Council	7,564,315	6,713,415	5,223,860	5,415,345
Clonmel Borough Council	3,115,507	2,785,896	2,353,114	2,235,458
Drogheda Borough Council	4,434,266	3,966,978	3,208,084	3,047,680
Kilkenny Borough Council	1,766,873	1,560,328	1,266,584	1,203,255

Local Authority	2010 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2011 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2012 Original Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2013 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation
Sligo Borough Council	2,927,408	2,580,497	2,105,833	2,000,541
Wexford Borough Council	2,199,185	1,948,097	1,773,200	1,684,540
Arklow Town Council	1,587,276	1,455,760	1,264,178	1,200,969
Athlone Town Council	1,793,563	1,587,448	1,296,281	1,231,467
Athy Town Council	749,251	690,500	571,629	543,047
Ballina Town Council	1,580,583	1,445,712	1,273,025	1,209,373
Ballinasloe Town Council	878,744	793,526	679,194	645,234
Birr Town Council	780,485	704,969	621,693	590,609
Bray Town Council	4,284,234	3,831,912	3,303,940	3,138,743
Buncrana Town Council	913,089	804,777	701,776	666,687
Bundoran Town Council	559,962	493,613	425,621	404,340
Carlow Town Council	1,721,237	1,530,546	1,332,619	1,265,988
Carrickmacross Town Council	586,800	535,346	466,229	442,918
Carrick-on-Suir Town Council	1,139,383	1,047,814	905,503	860,228
Cashel Town Council	655,338	593,045	516,446	490,624
Castlebar Town Council	966,468	851,964	730,023	693,522
Castleblayney Town Council	469,170	419,775	361,631	343,549
Cavan Town Council	811,835	718,591	654,077	621,373
Clonakilty Town Council	588,921	521,171	474,381	450,662
Clones Town Council	570,359	524,434	464,307	441,092
Cobh Town Council	1,177,961	1,046,319	952,382	904,763
Dundalk Town Council	4,961,900	4,403,659	3,589,814	3,410,323

Local Authority	2010 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2011 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2012 Original Local Govern-ment Fund GPG Allocation	2013 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation
Dungarvan Town Council	966,575	852,052	708,731	673,294
Ennis Town Council	2,305,693	2,043,399	1,710,714	1,625,178
Enniscorthy Town Council	1,151,903	1,016,035	924,817	878,576
Fermoy Town Council	818,970	726,081	660,894	627,850
Kells Town Council	473,188	421,572	361,427	343,356
Killarney Town Council	1,778,486	1,603,506	1,317,649	1,251,767
Kilrush Town Council	620,402	559,419	485,747	461,460
Kinsale Town Council	391,048	344,812	313,856	298,163
Letterkenny Town Council	1,096,274	966,369	796,266	756,453
Listowel Town Council	748,119	665,706	562,011	533,911
Longford Town Council	1,148,502	1,012,428	873,855	830,162
Macroom Town Council	591,359	525,612	478,423	454,502
Mallow Town Council	1,068,192	951,776	866,327	823,011
Midleton Town Council	546,739	486,711	443,015	420,864
Monaghan Town Council	1,105,999	976,889	828,489	787,065
Naas Town Council	1,459,370	1,336,377	1,123,654	1,067,472
Navan Town Council	545,635	483,948	392,283	472,669
Nenagh Town Council	1,074,375	957,471	847,980	805,581
New Ross Town Council	953,252	857,575	780,583	741,554
Skibbereen Town Council	420,067	370,292	337,047	320,195
Templemore Town Council	633,782	576,386	505,123	479,867
Thurles Town Council	963,441	865,088	729,707	693,222

Local Authority	2010 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2011 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2012 Original Local Government Fund GPG Allocation	2013 Local Government Fund GPG Allocation
Tipperary Town Council	829,034	745,880	630,993	599,444
Tralee Town Council	3,056,595	2,694,458	2,188,225	2,078,813
Trim Town Council	549,878	491,118	426,006	404,706
Tullamore Town Council	1,235,028	1,089,931	924,856	878,613
Westport Town Council	800,324	705,501	611,929	581,332
Wicklow Town Council	1,557,309	1,391,457	1,202,037	1,141,936
Youghal Town Council	1,090,968	965,305	878,642	834,709
Totals	€870,000,000	€790,000,000	€651,000,000	€640,000,000

Tourism Industry Issues

128. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Taoiseach further to the statements by the Irish Hotels Federation criticising both the detail of statistics collected by the Central Statistics Office in respect of tourist behaviour, and the tardiness of the production of visitor statistics with 2011 just now being published, if there are plans to improve the timeliness and detail of these statistics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12637/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): It may be helpful to clarify for the Deputy that CSO tourism statistics for 2011 were in all cases published in 2011 and 2012, and that it would be inaccurate to suggest that CSO visitor statistics for 2011 have only now been published. Currently, the CSO produces three sets of statistics on Tourism. The first, Overseas Travel, which is published on a monthly basis (based on a three month rolling average), is based on the Country of Residence Survey (CRS) and provides estimates of the residency of tourists, i.e. where tourists to Ireland are coming from. This is important information in helping to determine the key markets for tourists coming to Ireland and also helps to identify new and emerging markets. Data for the period November 2012 to January 2013 was published on 27th February.

The second data source is based on the Passenger Card Inquiry (PCI) and gathers important information on the profile and expenditure of tourists coming to Ireland and Irish residents holidaying abroad. For example, in respect of tourists coming to Ireland, it highlights the mode of travel into the country, the route, residency, the reason for the journey, the type of accommodation used, the average duration of stay and most importantly expenditure.

Both the CRS and PCI are frontier surveys, conducted at point of entry Air and Sea ports. The Tourism & Travel release in respect of 2011 was published in September of last year. The 2012 Annual Tourism & Travel release will be published before the end of this month. Thereafter, data will be published quarterly. The third source of data on Tourism is the Household Travel Survey, which is a postal survey of Irish households and this covers domestic trips within Ireland by Irish residents and also provides additional information on international

travel by Irish residents. The 2011 Household Travel Survey was published on 11 October of last year and results in respect of 2012 will be published before the end of May. After this data is released, data will be published on a quarterly basis.

By any measure, these represent a comprehensive set of surveys to measure the industry, both in respect of domestic, inward and outbound tourism. The CSO has been engaged with the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport in examining new data needs and will be publishing new additional data (at a national level) in respect of key markets (France/Germany/Italy/Australia and New Zealand) in terms of numbers of trips, the reason for the journey, average duration, reason by area of residence and expenditure. We will also introduce new tables showing expenditure cross classified by reason and by residence and trips by reason and by area of residence. This additional new detail will be published later this month.

The Country of Residence Survey (CRS) has a sample size of 426,000 per annum. The Passenger Card Inquiry (PCI) has a sample size of approximately 184,000 per annum. The Household Travel Survey samples in excess of 55,000 households per annum. By international standards these sample sizes are extremely large. The UK International Passenger Survey (the UK equivalent of the CRS and PCI) has a sample size smaller than that of Ireland, at 304,000, despite the difference in population.

It can be noted that the domain of Tourism statistics is subject to EU regulation. The benefit of this regulatory framework is that it ensures a range of comparable statistics on Tourism across EU member states. The range and detail of information published by the CSO exceeds that required by EU regulation. However, it will never be the case that the CSO, whose remit is official statistics, will provide information to meet all demands. In the case of Tourism statistics, Failte Ireland also carries out their own surveys and research including the Survey of Overseas Travellers, the Visitor Attitudes Survey and surveys of accommodation providers, which give further detail on aspects such as visitors' motivation for holidaying in Ireland, activities undertaken, destinations visited and accommodation used. Such information complements the data produced by the CSO. The CSO is always open to engagement with users of its statistics regarding data needs.

Grocery Industry Competition

129. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Taoiseach the total number of persons in employment here in the retail grocery sector; if he will provide a breakdown of figures available to show the number of persons employed in foreign owned retail chains; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12923/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The exact information requested by the Deputy is not available. The Annual Services Inquiry (ASI) provides a breakdown of the retail sector by Nationality of Ownership (excluding motor vehicles and motorcycles) for enterprises which have 20 or more "persons engaged in employment". The latest year for which data has been published is 2010. The ASI collects information from enterprises in different services sectors as classified by the standard European classification of economic activity (NACE Rev2). The NACE classification contains no direct equivalent classification "retail grocery sector". The closest equivalent for which data is available is NACE sector 47 which covers the retail trade. Table 1 below shows the breakdown of persons engaged in the retail trade by Nationality of Ownership for each year from 2008 to 2010.

Table 1: Persons Engaged (Number) in enterprises with 20 or more persons engaged, by NACE Rev 2 Sector, Nationality of Ownership and Year

Nace Rev 2	-	2008	2009	2010
Retail Trade (47)	Irish	101427	85639	78585
	Non-Irish	43574	47953	51029

The ASI does not collect information on the Nationality of Ownership for enterprises with less than 20 persons engaged. However, estimates are available for the total number of persons engaged in these enterprises and this information is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Persons Engaged (Number) in enterprises with 20 or less persons engaged, by NACE Rev 2 Sector and Year

Nace Rev 2	-	2008	2009	2010
Retail Trade (47)	Under 10	55092	53588	52783
-	10-19	31618	29048	28931

The following should be noted when analysing the figures provided above. The figures provided are on a "person engaged in employment" basis and not on an employee basis. The definitions used are:

1.Persons engaged, includes employees, proprietors and family members.

2. For Information on Nace Rev 2 see the following link.

http://www.cso.ie/en/surveysandmethodology/classifications/classificationofindustrialactivity/

Departmental Expenditure

130. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the home of junior Minister in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12374/13]

The Taoiseach: The cost of providing hardware and software to my home was €571.95 in respect of a PC. There was no cost incurred in the provision of hardware or software to the homes of Ministers of State in my Department.

Departmental Expenditure

131. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and junior Ministers in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12392/13]

The Taoiseach: My Department does not provide telephones in my home or in the homes of Ministers of State in my Department.

Departmental Expenditure

132. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly phone bills of Ministers and junior Ministers in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12411/13]

The Taoiseach: ICT equipment for constituency offices was supplied from existing pre-used stock. The cost of telephones provided to the constituency offices including monthly phone bills of Ministers of State since March 2011 is €22,959.

Departmental Expenditure

133. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills are being paid to constituency office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12429/13]

The Taoiseach: All standard printing in constituency offices is covered by a central Managed Print Services contract which my Department has in place for all standard printing in the Department. The cost of printing on all printers located in constituency offices under this contract is approximately €200 per month. My Department also pays the cost of incidental expenses, travel and subsistence, as well as some office equipment and office supplies for my Constituency Office and the Government Chief Whip's Constituency Office. The costs incurred under these headings from March 2011 to the end of February 2013 was €11,203.

Departmental Expenditure

134. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach the number of mobile phones in use by him and junior Minister and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12447/13]

The Taoiseach: The number of mobile phones in use by myself, Junior Ministers and politically appointed staff is 26. The total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011 is €49,993.

Departmental Expenditure

135. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12465/13]

The Taoiseach: The total mileage costs claimed by Ministers of State assigned to my Department is provided in the following table:

Name	Jan 2011 - end February 2013
Minister of State, P. Kehoe	€25,220.84
Minister of State, L. Creighton	Nil

I have been provided with a Garda car under the Ministerial transport scheme and do not use

a private car for official purposes. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade pay mileage expenses in relation to Minister of State Creighton.

Departmental Expenditure

136. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12484/13]

The Taoiseach: In March 2011 my Department had 14 credit cards in use by officials, this was reduced to 8 cards in 2012 and 7 cards in 2013. The following table provides details of the total spend on each card from March 2011 to end February 2013.

Departmental credit cards are used for official purposes only. They are allocated to officials where the facility will be of practical use in meeting the requirements of official business, for example, to facilitate meeting of travel expenses and official entertainment while away from the office, the procurement of goods and services such as on-line conferences bookings, air travel, purchase of IT equipment and library supplies.

The use of official credit cards is closely monitored by the Department's Finance Unit. Expenditure must be supported by receipts submitted by card holders each month as part of the approval process for the associated expenditure. The allocation and use of official credit cards are reviewed on an ongoing basis, with a view to minimising the number of cards allocated

2011

Total Spend on Card	Official
€680.93	Former Taoiseach (Brian Cowen)* Costs incurred prior to 9th March
€30.00	Principal Officer, Public Service Modernisation Division
€3,955.85	Head of Information Technology Unit
€400.15	Government Press Secretary
€5,510.46	Head of Library Services
€320.00	Private Secretary to the Government Chief Whip
€30.44	Principal Officer, Economic Division
€715.82	Special Advisor to the Taoiseach
€1,445.48	Assistant Secretary, European Affairs
€192.74	Head of Management Services Unit
€30.00	Private Secretary to the Taoiseach
€5,252.60	Finance Officer
€369.84	Assistant Secretary, Public Service Modernisation
€2,556.23	Private Secretary to Minister of State for European Affairs

2012

Total Spend on Card	Official
€1,499.38	Principal Officer, Constitutional Convention

Total Spend on Card	Official
€10,010.02	Head of Library Services
€7,476.29	Head of Information Technology Unit
€30.00	Private Secretary to Chief Whip
€143.43	Assistant Secretary, Economic, International and Northern Ireland
€1,269.80	Private Secretary to the Taoiseach
€12,168.55	Finance Officer
€543.08	Private Secretary to Minister of State for European Affairs

Jan to end February 2013

Total Spend on Card	Official
€367.55	Principal Officer, Constitutional Convention
€582.93	Head of Information Technology Unit
€900.30	Head of Library Services
€3,430.49	Finance Officer
€82.22	Private Secretary to Minister of State for European Affairs
€0.00	Private Secretary to the Taoiseach
€0.00	Private Secretary to Government Chief Whip

Human Rights Issues

137. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will raise the case of a person (details supplied) with the US authorities. [12315/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I am aware of the case to which the Deputy refers. As this is a bilateral consular issue between the US and the Cuban authorities, the Government has no standing in the matter.

Departmental Expenditure

138. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the homes of Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12368/13]

139. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12386/13]

140. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly phone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12405/13]

141. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills are being paid to con-

stituency office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12423/13]

142. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of mobile phones in use by him and Junior Minister and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12441/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 138 to 142, inclusive, together.

No costs have been incurred by my Department in respect of the provision of ICT facilities at the homes of the Ministers of State. The Department provides me with a fax machine in my home for official business purposes. The cost of this service to date is €1,351, including installation.

My constituency office and that of the current Minister of State with responsibility for Trade and Development are each based in the Department. The standard range of Department ICT facilities are provided to each staff member in the constituency offices and include PC, telephone, print and fax services and appropriate software licences. The estimated annual average cost to the Department to provide ICT-related services is €750 per officer; the same such costs apply for Constituency Office staff. It is not possible to separate from the monthly telephone bills those costs specifically associated with the Constituency Offices. No other costs are associated with these offices other than normal office running costs such as utilities and furnishings.

The former Minister of State with responsibility for Trade and Development, Deputy Jan O'Sullivan, was refunded €1,534 in respect of telephone costs and €1,319 was recouped to the Houses of the Oireachtas under the agreement with Government Departments for constituency office ICT facilities.

There are six mobile phones currently in use by me, the Ministers of State and politically appointed staff. The total cost of mobile telephony since March 2011 is €16,728 and includes purchase of mobile phone devices.

Departmental Expenditure

143. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12459/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Listed in tabular format are the details of the cost of drivers for each Minister of State at my Department in the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. The figures reflect the motor travel allowances claimed for official travel undertaken, subject to guidelines as set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Subsistence amounts paid to drivers and the salaries paid to the official drivers are also included on the table.

Once-off severance payments were made to drivers for Minister of State Roche and Minister of State Power in June 2011. These payments are not included in the salaries costs.

-	Mileage Costs	Subsistence costs for drivers	Salary costs
Minister of State-Dick Roche T.D.	€	€	€
2010 January to December	17,242	32,526	74,402
2011 January to March	3,370	3,439	13,425
Minister of State Lucinda Creighton T.D.	€	€	€
2011 March to December	4,834	318	51,087
2012 January to December	9,597	1,058	73,099
2013 (to date)	Nil	Nil	13,930
Minister of State Peter Power T.D.	€	€	€
2010 January to December	9,145	18,728	70,931
2011 January to March	2,402	2,576	12,777
Minister of State Jan O'Sullivan T.D.	€	€	€
2011 March to December	9,169	4,560	51,174
2012 January	820	1,252	Nil
Minister of State Joe Costello T.D.			€
2012 January to December	1,549	Nil	Nil
2013 (to date)	Nil	Nil	Nil

Departmental Expenditure

144. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12478/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): My Department, which is responsible for Vote 27 (International Cooperation) and Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs), operates a restrictive policy for the use of corporate credit cards for official expenditure. There are currently 6 official credit cards in use by my Department in Ireland and 13 in use by Missions abroad. The use of official credit cards may be permitted for officials who, because of the nature of their work, need to make official payments by this method. Credit cards are typically used to make occasional flight and hotel bookings, for making on-line purchases where it represents better value for money and for making payments at short notice, where cash may not be acceptable or where invoicing arrangements cannot be put in place.

Their use is subject to the same authorisation and control procedures as other forms of payment and decisions to issue a card are made in response to identified business needs.

While credit card companies require that the accounts be operated by named authorised signatories, it must be stressed that in my Department credit cards are used exclusively for official purposes.

The following table sets out details of each of the cards issued to my Department and their associated costs.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade HQ	No of cards	Issuer	Fees Charged March 2011 to Date
Finance Unit	One	Visa	€60
Library	One	Visa	€60
Minister of State's Office	One	Visa	€60
ICT Unit	One	Visa	€60
Finance Unit (DCD)	One	Visa	€61
Minister of State's Office (DCD)	One	American Express	€100
Missions Abroad			
Abu Dhabi	One	Visa NBAD	€55
Embassy, Berne	One	MasterCard	€158
Permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union, Brussels	Four	Visa	€88
Canberra	One		0
Embassy, London	One	Visa	€61
Embassy, Mexico	One	American Express	€839
Permanent Mission to the United Nations, New York	One	Visa Card	0
Embassy, Ottawa	One	American Express	€199
Embassy, Paris	One	Visa	€263
Embassy, Tokyo	One	Visa	€38

The credit card service providers are selected on a case by case basis by comparing the rates and terms offered by service providers to ensure best value for money.

Overseas Development Aid Provision

145. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will take the lead through both funding and diplomacy in Irish Aid's priority countries to guarantee safe spaces for community organisations, leaders and local people to advocate for their rights (details supplied). [12544/13]

149. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will take the lead through both funding and diplomacy in Ireland's aid programme in countries to guarantee safe spaces for community organisations, leaders, and their local people

to advocate for their rights; (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13036/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): I propose to take Questions Nos. 145 and 149 together.

I welcome the focus of this year's Trócaire Lenten Campaign on the rights of citizens and community organisations to participate in and influence decisions that affect their lives. Civil society organisations play an important role in bringing citizens together to act collectively and participate in the development of their own countries and communities. They have a strong role to play in demanding better services from the state and holding governments to account.

In some developing countries, civil society organisations have come under increasing pressure in recent years as they seek to play their legitimate role in society. In these countries, dialogue with civil society organisations is limited and the space for civil society engagement remains narrow or is, in some cases, shrinking. This can severely limit the operations and effectiveness of organisations, notably those working on human rights and advocacy.

Ireland has a long tradition of supporting civil society engagement. Through the Government's aid programme, we work to protect the space in which civil society organisations operate, and to foster an enabling environment for the work. We channel a higher proportion of our development assistance through civil society organisations than other international donors. Of Ireland's total aid budget of €623 million this year, about a quarter will be channelled through civil society organisations to support their valuable work in, for example, improving access to health care and education, supporting livelihoods, and strengthening accountability, governance and democracy. Trócaire and a number of other organisations, such as Christian Aid and Frontline Defenders, are specifically funded by my Department to promote and facilitate strong civil society engagement across a range of countries.

In Ireland's nine partner countries, where we have a commitment to long term strategic assistance, we also provide funding to local civil society organisations. This enables their participation at local and national levels of decision-making and their work for the fulfilment of human rights, especially for the most vulnerable. Ireland's partnerships in these countries are founded on respect for human rights, and we will continue to emphasise in our dialogue with partner governments that it is essential to ensure the role of civil society organisations is enhanced.

Internationally, by signing up to the 2011 Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, we have agreed to implement fully our commitments to enable civil society organisations to exercise their role as independent development actors. At the most recent formal meeting of EU Development Ministers, in Luxembourg last October, I gave strong support to new Council Conclusions on Europe's engagement with civil society. These commit Member States "to support and promote an enabling environment for an independent, pluralistic and active civil society in partner countries". The EU will work to improve dialogue with civil society organisations on the ground, and will continue close monitoring of legislation, regulations and other restrictions on the operation of civil society organisations in our partner countries.

Ireland's membership of the UN Human Rights Council presents a valuable opportunity to build on our contribution to the promotion and protection of an enabling environment for civil society. We intend to advance this issue during our term on the Council, following a successful meeting on consolidating the space for civil society which Ireland organised during the September 2012 Human Rights Council session. Ireland is also championing the UN Universal Periodic Review mechanism which reviews all member states' human rights records, including the treatment of civil society actors and human rights defenders.

The Government will continue to promote civil society-led initiatives and support other arrangements at national and international level to promote and monitor an enabling environment for civil society organisations.

Foreign Conflicts

146. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide an update on the recent UN-drafted peace deal for the Democratic Republic of Congo which has been signed by 11 African states; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12560/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I welcome the recent progress in efforts to secure a durable solution to the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In particular, I welcome the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the DRC and the Region, which was concluded in Addis Ababa on 24 February, in the presence of the UN Secretary General. This important Agreement was reached by the Government of the DRC and ten neighbouring and regional countries. The co-guarantors of the Agreement are the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the United Nations. It follows a brutal campaign of violence in eastern DRC by the so-called M23 group, which escalated in April 2012 and which has led to the deaths of many innocent civilians, appalling abuses of human rights and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people from their homes. I would like to pay tribute to the work of the UN Secretary General and leaders of the countries of the Great Lakes region for their patient, intense mediation and negotiation efforts to try to broker a comprehensive framework for peace in the region.

The adoption of the Agreement was welcomed on behalf of the EU in a joint statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton and Development Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs. I am in full agreement with the statement which calls on all sides to continue negotiating in good faith and to refrain from violence.

In the UN Secretary General's own words, a lasting solution requires at least four essential elements. It must be anchored in the political will of the leaders of all countries in the region. It must address the structural causes fuelling instability in the DRC itself. It must respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and legitimate concerns and interests of all concerned countries. It also demands the commitment and long-term support of the international community.

The Agreement contains important commitments from the Government of the DRC, from its neighbours and regional partners and from the international community. However, as the Secretary General has also stressed, it represents the start of the process rather than the end. Lasting peace will only be secured in the DRC if the Agreement is implemented in full and the opportunity it presents is fully grasped by all parties involved.

The UN Secretary General plans to appoint a Special Envoy who, together with the relevant parties, will support the implementation of the Agreement. He is also proposing the establishment within the UN mission, MONUSCO, of an Intervention Brigade to address security aspects of the crisis more comprehensively.

The European Union will continue to play a constructive role, working through political and diplomatic engagement, development cooperation programmes, and support for MONUSCO. The EU is also pursuing security sector reform programmes, through its Common Security and Defence Policy missions in the DRC.

Ireland will also continue to play its part. We are contributing a number of military observers to the UN Mission and over the past year Ireland has provided over €10 million in assistance to those worst affected in the DRC. This assistance has been channelled through the UN, international organisations, and our NGO partners. Last week, we allocated a further €3.8 million for humanitarian relief efforts in the DRC over the coming period.

Presidential Distinguished Service Awards

147. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when he will open the nomination process for the 2013 Presidential Distinguished Services Award for the Irish Abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12620/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): My Department recently commenced the process of seeking nominations for the 2013 Presidential Distinguished Service Awards for the Irish Abroad. Individuals abroad can make nominations through one of our diplomatic Missions. Nominees for this Award will be drawn from the following areas of achievement: Irish community support; Arts, culture and sport; charitable works, business and education, and peace, reconciliation and development.

In order to be eligible for consideration, nominees must be habitually resident outside the island of Ireland and are required to satisfy the following additional requirements: have rendered distinguished service to the nation and/or its reputation abroad; have actively and demonstrably contributed to Ireland and/or its international reputation and/or Irish communities abroad in at least one of the categories above; have a track record of sustained support and engagement with Ireland and/or its international reputation and/or Irish communities abroad over a period of not less than 5 years.

While the scheme is open to all persons living abroad, it is primarily aimed at Irish citizens, those entitled to Irish citizenship and persons of Irish descent, who have made a sustained and distinguished service to Ireland or Irish communities abroad.

A High Level Panel based in Ireland will consider the nominations received from abroad and will make recommendations to the Government in respect of no more than 10 individuals.

It is expected that the recipients of the 2013 Awards will be presented with them by the President in late 2013.

Human Rights Issues

148. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the level of engagement he has with programme country governments funded by Ireland through Irish Aid, to establish the effectiveness of those countries practices and legal procedures which uphold basic human rights and dignity, promote equality and afford the protection of the state to the individual; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12895/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): Ireland's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights is a cornerstone of our foreign policy. Ireland works in nine Programme Countries mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and all our aid programmes are targeted at the poorest and most vulnerable. Regular dialogue is an essential part of the work of our Embassies in their engagement with partner Governments. The promotion and protection of human rights, equitable development and the eradication of

poverty are important components of this dialogue.

Our engagement is undertaken both bilaterally as well as jointly with other diplomatic missions, especially resident EU missions. It includes meetings at the highest level, such as with the Head of State, Government Ministers and the Legislature, on a wide range of issues - political, economic and development. Engagement also takes place through the various aid coordination mechanisms established at national and local level to oversee the implementation of development programmes funded by Ireland and other development partners. Continuous assessments on governance conditions in our Programme Countries, including respect for human rights, are a part of this engagement.

As well as monitoring progress, we also actively support the promotion of human rights and equality in our Programme Countries in a number of important ways. This includes assistance to partner Governments in their work to eradicate poverty and promote and protect human rights, gender equality and the rule of law. We support oversight institutions such as National Human Rights Institutions and Ombudsmen, as well as non-governmental organisations and others to advance human rights and equality, especially for the most vulnerable. We also support national Parliaments, which are the cornerstone of democracy and good governance.

Ireland's current membership of the United Nations Human Rights Council provides a further opportunity to play a vibrant role in the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide, including in our programme countries. We remain committed to a strong multilateral human rights system which can impartially monitor the implementation of human rights norms. In particular, Ireland is championing the UN Universal Periodic Review mechanism which reviews all member states' human rights records.

At the European Union level too, Ireland is playing a full and active part in ensuring human rights are advanced in our Programme Countries. Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union reaffirmed the EU's determination to promote human rights and democracy through all its external actions. Ireland, together with other EU Member States and the European Commission, agreed an EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy last year. By working together effectively in promoting human rights, we believe our impact will be greater.

Question No. 149 answered with Question No. 145.

Northern Ireland Issues

150. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has had discussions with Members of the Northern Ireland Executive in relation to the need for all Members of the Executive to support, without equivocation, the Police Service of Northern Ireland in its work in dealing with violence arising from flag protests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13119/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Since the outbreak of street violence in early December, I have had frequent contact with the party leaders within the Northern Ireland Executive. While the situation regarding the flag protests has been calmer in recent weeks, we remain fully engaged in our support of the work of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The persistence of sectarianism in Northern Ireland, with the absence of political agreement on how to make progress towards a truly reconciled society, contributes to the likelihood of incidents such as those we have witnessed in recent weeks. While we continue to work in support of efforts to address the root causes of sectarianism, it is vital that the rule of law is respected and that the PSNI is fully supported in implementing the

rule of law.

In addition to these issues, the focus of political leadership in Northern Ireland should be on maintaining and creating jobs through economic recovery, in which inward investment and tourism play such a crucial role. The Government are ready to support the Executive and political leadership in Northern Ireland in whatever way we can.

National Treasury Management Agency

151. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Finance whether there will be a €20 billion reduction in the National Treasury Management Agency's market borrowing requirements in the next decade (details supplied); the way this figure was calculated and the assumptions, including of economic growth, future refinancing rates, net present value and inflation that were used to underpin that calculation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12328/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware it has been estimated that there will be a c.€20 billion reduction in the National Treasury Management Agency's market borrowing requirements over the next 10 years (before transaction costs) as a result of replacing the amortising Promissory Notes with a portfolio of non-amortising Irish Government bonds. The €20 billion reduction in market borrowing requirement over the next decade to which the Deputy refers was calculated by comparing the estimated borrowing requirements from the market to finance the payments on the Promissory Notes under the previous arrangement to the requirements under the existing arrangement in which a portfolio of Irish Government bonds has replaced the Promissory Notes.

The reduced borrowing requirement over the next 10 years arises due to a number of factors, the most significant of which is the fact that capital repayments are not required to be made over the period. The borrowing requirement from the market is also reduced by the lower interest rate arrangement on the new bonds.

Key assumptions applied to the calculation include a forecasted 6 month Euribor curve, forecasted ECB and sovereign refinancing rates and forecast of payments from the Central Bank of Ireland to the State. Economic growth, net present value and inflation were not used in the calculation. As the Deputy will appreciate these are assumptions with regard to future events which are impossible to predict with certainty.

NAMA Staff Remuneration

152. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance if developers' salaries set by the National Asset Management Agency will be reduced in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 and if so, if he will outline the reductions. [12353/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): NAMA seeks to ensure that income generated by assets securing NAMA loans is applied towards repaying a debtor's indebtedness to NAMA. In certain circumstances, debtors are allowed to retain a portion of asset income in lieu of overheads which include staff costs where this is necessary to preserve the value of the assets securing NAMA's loans. NAMA advises that operating cost allowances are reviewed as part of its regular review of each debtor's performance. NAMA advises that these reviews include consideration of developments in the wider economy and that debtors are not immune to these wider considerations.

Universal Social Charge Payments

153. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider a reduction in the universal social charge for one income families which are struggling with the cost of living; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12304/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The position is that the Universal Social Charge (USC) was introduced in Budget 2011 to replace the Income Levy and Health Levy. It was a necessary measure to widen the tax base, remove poverty traps and raise revenue to reduce the budget deficit. The USC is a tax payable on all gross income. However, there are a number of exemptions and reliefs from the USC. There is a lower exemption limit, which from 1 January 2012 is €10,036 per annum, €193 per week. In addition, individuals in receipt of a full medical card or aged 70 years and over are not liable to the top rates of USC if their income is not exceeding €60,000 per annum.

In addition, it is important to point out that payments from the Department of Social Protection are exempt from the USC. Furthermore, such payments will not be taken in to account in determining if an individual has exceeded the €10,036 threshold.

Finally, the introduction of further tax reliefs on the lines you suggest could not be justified given the current budgetary position and the need to provide equity between all citizens based on their level of income. As the Deputy will appreciate, I receive numerous requests for the introduction of new tax reliefs and the extension of existing ones. The Deputy will also appreciate that I must be mindful of the public finances and the many demands on the Exchequer. Tax reliefs, no matter how worthwhile in themselves, reduce the tax base and make general reform of the tax system that much more difficult.

Tax Rebates

154. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare is due a tax refund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12320/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that PAYE Balancing Statements (P21s) for the years 2009 to 2011 inclusive issued to the person concerned in January 2013. As the total overpayment arising was less than €0.50 cent the credit will be included in future tax credits. The tax year 2012 will be reviewed on receipt of Form 60 for 2012.

Property Taxation Collection

155. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance when he expects local property tax to be deductible from rental income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12341/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Inter-departmental group chaired by Dr. Don Thornhill to consider the design of a property tax (the "Thornhill Group") recommended that the Local Property Tax (LPT) paid in respect of a rented property should be deductible for income tax or corporation tax purposes, in a similar manner to commercial rates. However, the Group recognised the considerable pressures on the public finances and the need to bridge the gap between expenditure and revenue. For this reason, the Group suggested that consideration be given to phasing in deductibility over a period of years. The Group also con-

sidered that it is for Government, having regard to the prevailing budgetary situation, to decide on the time span for phasing-in deductibility and on what percentage of LPT to allow as a deduction from gross rents for tax purposes. There is no provision in the current legislation for such deductions. While it is the intention of the Government to introduce such a provision on a phased basis, neither the manner in which this will happen or the timing have yet been decided.

Property Taxation Application

156. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance if, in regard to local property tax, he will outline the situation that will apply when a taxpayer has declared a particular value in good faith but the property is sold for a higher figure during the period of the valuation and if in that scenario, any additional local property tax will be charged; the way the reverse situation will be handled whereby a higher valuation does not equate with the realised market value in a sale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12342/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 sets out how the tax is to be administered and how a residential property is to be valued for Local Property Tax (LPT) purposes.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that LPT is a self-assessed tax so in the first instance it is a matter for the property owner to calculate the tax due based on his or her assessment of the market value of the property. As property values for properties under €1 million are organised into valuation bands for the purposes of LPT, property owners will not be required to provide a precise value for their property.

I am further advised by the Commissioners that the initial valuation of a property on 1 May 2013, assuming it is made in good faith, will be valid up to and including 2016 and will not be affected by any increase or decrease in property prices, during this period. This will ensure a measure of certainty for all property owners.

The Revenue Commissioners have prepared valuation guidance which, taken together with the owner's own knowledge of the property, will assist him or her in assessing its value. The guidance includes an on-line guide that provides indicative property valuation bands depending on the property type, age and location and is available on the Revenue website.

When using Revenue's valuation guidance, property owners should consider the specifics of their own property and if they feel that the guidance is not indicating a reasonable valuation, they should make their own assessment. As I have previously advised the House, where the Revenue guidance is used in an honest manner, the property valuation made by a property owner will not be challenged by Revenue in accordance with its normal Customer Service Charter and, consequently, additional charges will not be applied.

Property Taxation Application

157. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance if any outstanding amount of local property tax in a repossession or forced sale scenario will rank higher for payment purposes than an outstanding mortgage when the realised sale price is insufficient to fully discharge a mortgage liability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12343/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Under the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, unpaid Local Property Tax (LPT), together with any accrued interest, will be a charge

on the property to which it relates. The Act does not confer any preferential creditor status on the Revenue Commissioners, other than that which they would have in the normal course of events. The usual rule is that the priority of a Revenue charge vis-à-vis other parties who also have a charge on the property will depend on the timing of the various charges. Therefore, in the event of a repossession or forced sale of the property, the proceeds must be used to discharge charges in the order in which those charges arose. The Revenue Commissioners will only have preferential creditor status over a mortgage provider where the LPT liability was due and payable before the mortgage provider advanced a loan in respect of the property. On that basis, unpaid charges for LPT should not have an effect on currently outstanding mortgages.

Ministerial Expenditure

158. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12385/13]

159. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly phone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12404/13]

160. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills are being paid to constituency office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12422/13]

161. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of mobile phones in use by him, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12440/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 158 to 161, inclusive, together.

The information requested by the Deputy is as follows:

I can confirm that no telephones, ICT, monthly phone bills or any additional costs are provided in the constituency offices of the Minister or Junior Minister in my Department. However an office is set aside in my home for use as my constituency office. The cost of providing telephony service to my home was €3,998.28 inclusive of VAT from March 2011 to date. No cost was incurred on home telephony service on behalf of a Junior Minister.

The number of political staff with business mobiles in this Department is four including myself and the total cost incurred for the 2 year period since March 2011 is €5,263.99 exclusive of VAT.

Ministerial Transport

162. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12458/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There are no state vehicles assigned to

me as Minister for Finance. In relation to the use of my car for Ministerial travel, the total cost has been €202,966 for the period May 2011 to date in March 2013. This cost included mileage (which is to cover car related expenses), the salaries paid to civilian drivers, travel and subsistence paid to the drivers and Employer PRSI contributions in respect of the two drivers. This amount is significantly below the €280,000 average annual cost under the previous domestic Ministerial transport regime for each Minister.

Departmental Expenditure

163. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12477/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In the period in question three new credit cards were issued in my Department. Two of the cards were issued in 2011 to myself as Minister for Finance and my Private Secretary and a further card was issued in respect of the Press Officer in 2012. Annual fees in respect of the cards came to €62 in 2011 and €93 in 2012. It is the Departments policy to ensure that all credit card payments are cleared at the end of each month to avoid penalty interest payments.

IBRC Liquidation

164. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the fact that payments have been made to unsecured creditors by the liquidator of Irish Bank Resolution Corporation in return for their co-operation; the reason he has not authorised the liquidator to make ex gratia payments to the workforce, as has been done in other cases by the State, to match the previously agreed redundancy terms. [12493/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Special Liquidators that, in an insolvency situation, duress payments to unsecured creditors are often required to be made to ensure the on-going provision of services. Such payments are a matter for the Special Liquidator and I have no role in the initiation or authorisation of these payments. On the appointment of the Special Liquidators on 7 February 2013, the employment contracts of the employees in the Republic of Ireland were terminated. I have been advised by the Special Liquidators that 802 of the 809 employees in the Republic of Ireland were re-hired to assist with the liquidation of IBRC.

As the Deputy is aware, the legislation surrounding liquidation ranks employees as preferential creditors in respect of certain amounts owing to them on a winding up, including accrued wages and salaries, holiday pay, sick pay, statutory redundancy, pensions contributions and claims for damages arising from accidents. Any claims over and above that described above will rank as an unsecured claim in the liquidation process.

There are standard rules which apply to the distribution of the assets of companies in liquidation and it would not be appropriate for me to interfere with these rules. Any action taken by the Minister which might divert the assets from IBRC creditors to employees could be challenged in the Courts.

The Special Liquidators have said that it is their key priority that all employees are fully kept up to date on all developments during the course of the special liquidation. They have indicated that their approach will be to talk with employees directly either in small groups or on

a one to one basis and they also plan to communicate by email general updates to employees during the course of the special liquidation.

IBRC Staff

165. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the pressure being experienced by the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation workers following the change in the terms of their redundancy package; and if he is prepared to meet with their representatives as a matter of urgency to discuss these issues. [12494/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware, the legislation surrounding liquidation ranks employees as preferential creditors in respect of certain amounts owing to them on a winding up, including accrued wages and salaries, holiday pay, sick pay, statutory redundancy, pensions contributions and claims for damages arising from accidents. Any claims over and above that described above will rank as an unsecured claim in the liquidation process. I can advise the Deputy that officials within my Department met with the IBOA last month and issues surrounding the status of the employees of the IBRC (in special liquidation) were discussed. The special liquidators have advised that there is on-going interaction between them and the IBOA in relation to these matters. I am advised that the special liquidators are highly cognisant of the issues being raised and that significant steps have already been taken to address those concerns including the confirmation that no further staff would be terminated in the first 3 months of the liquidation. I have further been advised that 802 of the 809 employees in the Republic of Ireland were re-hired to assist with the liquidation of IBRC.

The special liquidators have said that it is their key priority that all employees are fully kept up to date on all developments during the course of the special liquidation. They have indicated that their approach will be to talk with employees directly either in small groups or on a one to one basis and they also plan to communicate by email general updates to employees during the course of the special liquidation.

Mortgage Interest Relief Application

166. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) relating to a person's interaction with their bank on their mortgage interest relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12495/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is not appropriate for me to comment on individual disputes between a bank and its customers. The 30% rate of mortgage interest relief for those who took out their first qualifying home loan between 2004 and 2008 came into effect with the enactment of the Finance Act in March 2012. The regulations governing mortgage interest relief provide for the granting of the relief due to the borrower by the lender within the tax year.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that to apply the new 30% rate, specific technology developments were required to Revenue's and to each of the lenders computer systems. While Revenue's computer system was upgraded in late 2011 the speed of upgrading across the lenders was inconsistent. For that reason in January 2012, as an interim relieving measure, Revenue advised lenders to grant tax relief at the rate of 25% to those entitled to the new 30% rate of relief, given that the 25% rate was already a feature of the first time buyer mortgage interest relief regime and was not dependent on new IT upgrades taking place.

Due to ongoing technology problems, Ulster Bank was unable to implement the 30% rate until the end of 2012 but did pay the interim 25%, as advised by Revenue, throughout the year. In December the bank credited the additional 5%, including arrears, to the mortgage accounts of each customer entitled to the 30% rate. Ulster Bank confirmed to Revenue that it wrote to each customer affected by the rate change offering to transfer the money to a current account of choice.

In regard to 2013, Ulster Bank has assured Revenue that the required IT changes will be implemented in March and the increased rate will be reflected in customers' loan repayments from April 2013 onward. Any arrears due in respect of the January to March 2013 period will also be paid without the need for any action on the part of mortgage account holders.

However, in relation to the details supplied by the Deputy in respect of this customer, it is open to the person affected to make a formal complaint to the bank in question about the delay in the payment involved. If satisfaction is not received and all avenues are exhausted with the bank, then the customer may take his complaint to the Financial Services Ombudsman.

The Financial Services Ombudsman can investigate, in an impartial and independent manner, complaints from individual customers and small businesses who have unresolved disputes with regulated financial service providers.

The Financial Services Ombudsman can be contacted at:

3rd Floor, Lincoln House,

Lincoln Place,

Dublin 2

Lo Call: 1890 88 20 90

Email: enquiries@financialombudsman.ie

Website: www.financialombudsman.ie

EU Directives

167. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline the details of the EU agreement on capping bankers' bonuses; when the agreement will come into effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12534/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Remuneration is just one small part of the CRDIV Regulation and Directive on which the Irish Presidency has concluded an agreement between the European Council and Parliament. It is important not to lose sight of what this CRD package is really about: It is about protecting taxpayers into the future by building stronger European banks. We have seen how banks went into the financial crisis without sufficient capital and had to be bailed out by taxpayers across the EU. These new rules will make sure that our banks can better withstand future crises. CRDIV is also about providing a foundation for banking union and giving the future single supervisor a single rule book. The proposed rules on bonuses are part of the CRD package of measures to better manage risk taking by banks. The aim is to make sure that bankers are taking decisions in the long term interest of the stability of the bank and that this is taken into account in their remuneration package. The agreement reached on remuneration contains the following principles:

- a basic ratio of pay to bonus of 1:1 which can only increase to 1:2 with shareholder approval (with a quorum of 50% of shareholders, 66% of votes in favour would be required, and, if that quorum is not reached, 75% of votes in favour).

- in order to incentivise deferral of bonus pay, and facilitate claw-back of remuneration, a portion of the total bonus can consist of long term financial instruments, discounted with reference to factors reflecting risk inherent in the instruments (guidelines on the applicable discount factor will be issued by EBA).

- the EU Commission shall review and report on the application of these provisions, in close cooperation with the EBA, taking into account its impact on competitiveness and financial stability.

ECOFIN on 5 March asked Member State's Ambassadors to finalise the negotiations with the Parliament on the basis of these principles.

What is clear from discussions at EcoFin is that Member States want to move ahead to finalise these new capital rules. We hope to iron out the outstanding technical issues with the Parliament over the coming weeks so that we can finalise this key file during our Presidency.

IBRC Liquidation

168. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the total value of unsecured creditors at the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation when it was placed in special liquidation on 6 February 2013. [12622/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Special Liquidators that they are currently identifying the exact amount of all creditors' claims and it is therefore too early in the liquidation to ascertain the level of unsecured creditors. It should be noted that creditors have been asked to forward a statement of their account at the date of the appointment of the Special Liquidators, together with any other documentation to support their claim, by 30 April 2013.

Deposit Guarantee Scheme

169. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question 181 of 26 February 2013, which showed that deposits in Irish banks, based on which these banks hand over 0.2% at the end of each year to be held by the Central Bank of Ireland in its Deposit Guarantee Scheme, had declined from €217bn at the end of 2011 to €190bn at the end of 2012, if this is correct; and the apparent discrepancy between this decline and statements from his Department which suggest a stabilization and modest growth in deposits. [12623/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deposit Guarantee Scheme (DGS) in Ireland was established under Irish and European legislation to protect depositors in the event of a bank, building society or credit union authorised in Ireland being unable to repay deposits (e.g. where a liquidator has been appointed). The DGS is administered under the Deposit Protection Account by the Central Bank of Ireland and is funded by the credit institutions covered by the scheme. The Deposit Protection Account (DPA) at the Central Bank covers retail deposits up to €100,000 for all institutions regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. This includes branches of Irish institutions operating in other EU Member States. However, it should be noted that Eligible Liabilities Guarantee (ELG) deposits at the covered institutions, amounts above

€100,000 held at other institutions or corporate deposits at other institutions are not included.

The operation of the Deposit Protection Account is governed under European Communities (Deposit Guarantee Scheme) Regulations 1995 (SI No. 168 of 1995). The following table shows the balance held at year-end in the Deposit Protection Account at the Central Bank of Ireland. Each deposit-holding institution is required to maintain a balance on their DPA account of 0.2% of their total deposits (with a minimum amount of €50,000 in the case of all institutions except credit unions). This percentage is calculated annually in December. Interest is paid by the Central Bank on the DPA balances (1).

In the following table, it is shown that at the end of 2012, the Central Bank held €379 million, which represented 0.2% of the €190 billion on deposit in Ireland at the end of 2012. It is true to say that this was down 12.9% from the €435 million held by the Central Bank at the end of 2011, which represented deposits of €218 billion. The decline in the DPA balance reflects the drop in deposits in Irish credit institutions.

DPA Balances

Year End	Banks	Credit Union	Total
2012	379,390,200.00	23,633,580.57	403,023,780.57
2011	434,740,900.00	0	434,740,900.00
2010	537,900,500.00	0	537,900,500.00
2009	608,262,200.00	0	608,262,200.00
2008	669,408,300.00	0	669,408,300.00
2007	526,093,100.00	0	526,093,100.00

A comparison between the figures for deposits covered by the Deposit Guarantee Scheme (DGS) and the statements from my Department on the level of deposits in general is not entirely comparable. The Department of Finance Deposit Note on Deposit Trends at Irish Covered Banks of 14 February 2013 to which I presume the Deputy refers in his question, concentrates solely on the covered institutions - that is AIB Group, Bank of Ireland Group and permanent tsb. Thus it covers both the DGS and the Eligible Liabilities Group (ELG) as covered in Ireland and the UK and to corporate and retail deposits at the three covered institutions.

I would also refer to the latest available figures from the Central Bank of Ireland, released on 28 February 2013 "January 2013 Money and Banking Statistics", which show that Deposits from households were 1.2% higher on an annual basis at end-January 2013, while deposits from insurance corporations and pension funds and Other financial intermediaries increased by 8.2%. Deposits from Non-financial corporations rose by 5.2% over the same period.

(1) Section 4 of the Financial Services (Deposit Guarantee Scheme) Act 2009 for credit unions provides that from 30 November 2012, each credit union will be required to maintain in the Deposit Protection Account at the Central Bank of Ireland, an amount equal to 0.2% of the deposits and shares held on behalf of members.

Banking Sector Regulation

170. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm the policy of Allied Irish Banks in which he is the shareholder of 99.8% of the shares in writing down debt owed on commercial loans and if ordinary shareholders in companies where debt write-

offs will be agreed by AIB, will be 100% wiped out before any debt write-off is agreed by AIB. [12624/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been informed by AIB that the bank is committed to operating its business activities on a commercial basis as it seeks to return to profitability. The bank assesses each customer in detail on a case by case basis to ensure the appropriate commercial outcome for the bank is achieved. As each case is dealt with on an individual basis, there is no blanket policy applied in respect of capital hierarchy.

Eligible Liabilities Guarantee

171. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown by covered institution of the €1,235,980,000 in 2011 and €1,024,786,000 in 2012 of eligible liabilities guarantee fees received by the State; and if he will provide a projection of the fees payable in 2013 by covered institution and the projected fees in budget 2013. [12625/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Fees paid by the covered institutions in respect of the ELG Scheme guarantee are paid quarterly in arrears and therefore there is a time lag before the fees are paid into the Exchequer (i.e. fees received as cash in Q1 of 2012 are in respect of fees accrued in Q4 of 2011). Accordingly, the published figures for fees received in respect of 2011 and 2012 are on an accrued basis and are €1,234.6 million and €951.2 million, respectively. The corresponding cash figures are €1,230.8 million and €1,024.2 million.

The following tables show a breakdown of fees accrued in 2011 and 2012 by credit institution.

Breakdown of ELG fees accrued in 2011

	€ millions	€ millions	€ millions	€ millions	Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
IL and P	38.0	42.0	42.8	42.4	165.2
BoI	107.9	97.2	96.8	73.5	375.4
A.I.B	95.8	93.5	67.3	75.4	332.0
IBRC	9.9	5.7	4.8	3.5	23.9
EBS	11.8	13.0	14.4	15.5	54.7
Total	263.4	251.4	226.1	210.3	951.2

Breakdown of ELG Fees accrued in 2012

	€ millions	€ millions	€ millions	€ millions	Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
IL and P	38.0	42.0	42.8	42.4	165.2
BoI	107.9	97.2	96.8	73.5	375.4
A.I.B	95.8	93.5	67.3	75.4	332.0
IBRC	9.9	5.7	4.8	3.5	23.9
EBS	11.8	13.0	14.4	15.5	54.7
Total	263.4	251.4	226.1	210.3	951.2

The ELG Scheme fee estimates used in Budget 2013 of €435m were prepared as part of the normal budgetary process in November 2012.

For the purpose of Budget 2013, assumptions were made regarding the volumes of deposits, their maturity profiles and the mix of deposit books across each of the Covered Institutions. These assumptions are subject to change.

The Budget 2013 fee estimates have not been revised following the announcement of the ending of the ELG Scheme which is due to end at midnight on 28 March, 2013. The fees have not been re-forecasted because the final mix of deposits and the maturity profile of covered liabilities will only be known once the issuance window is closed i.e. after 28 March. My Department will then re-forecast ELG fee estimates for 2013 onwards. I do not expect any negative budgetary implications as a result of the ending of the ELG Scheme.

The fee estimates included in Budget 2013 were €435mn on a cash basis. As such information is regarded as commercially and price sensitive going forward, it cannot be provided on a bank-by-bank basis.

IBRC Liquidation

172. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 63 on 27 February 2013, if he will confirm if it is KPMG corporate finance that will provide the independent valuation of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation mortgage loanbook. [12626/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As part of the role of the liquidators, the assets of IBRC will be valued independently before being sold. Any assets not sold to third parties (including loan counterparties and other financial institutions) at or above the valuation price will be sold to NAMA at the independent valuation. As such, I have been advised that KPMG corporate finance will not be appointed as part of this process and that the valuation will be undertaken by independent professional advisor(s) or valuer(s).

IBRC Liquidation

173. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No.63 of 27 February 2013, if he will provide an assessment of KPMG's capabilities in disposing of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation mortgage loan book. [12627/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Kieran Wallace and Eamonn Richardson of KPMG have been appointed as Special Liquidators to IBRC. I am satisfied that each person appointed as Special liquidator has the appropriate level of skill, knowledge and qualifications required to perform the functions of a Special Liquidator pursuant to the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Act 2013. The Special Liquidators are still in the process of devising and implementing a sales process in respect of IBRC's assets including the mortgage portfolio. Once this is devised I am advised that the Special Liquidators will be appointing independent sales advisors to manage the sales process. This process will be overseen by the Special Liquidators to ensure that deadlines are being met and that the best value is achieved.

Bank Debt Restructuring

174. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the involvement of KPMG in the sale of mortgage loan books at Permanent TSB and to provide an assessment of that company's performance in selling PTSB's loan books. [12628/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I can inform the Deputy that KPMG advised Permanent TSB on the potential sale of Capital Home Loans (CHL) and Springboard mortgage loan books. I am advised that the sale of CHL was postponed while a revised Restructuring Plan was being prepared by management. The revised plan now includes CHL as a stand-alone unit as part of Permanent TSB. The decision to engage KPMG to advise on the sale of these loan books was made by the board of Permanent TSB whose management team were responsible for monitoring KPMG's performance.

IBRC Liquidation

175. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an assessment of the disposal price of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation mortgage loan book if sold as one job lot and if broken down into subportfolios or individual mortgage sales. [12629/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised that it is the intention of the special liquidators to package and sell the mortgage book as a portfolio. I am advised that the special liquidators are currently devising a process where 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. The special liquidators will not be providing an assessment of the disposal price of the IBRC mortgage loan book if sold as one job lot or if broken down into sub portfolios as this could potentially have a detrimental impact on asset recovery from the impending sales process.

IBRC Liquidation

176. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of individual mortgage accounts that comprise the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation mortgage loan book. [12630/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Details of the number of individual mortgage accounts that comprise the IBRC mortgage loan book can be found on page 170 of the Bank's 2011 Annual Report & Accounts.

IBRC Staff

177. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an overview of what is involved in the valuation of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation mortgage loan book; and if he will confirm the time required for the completion of an independent valuation. [12631/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As part of the role of the liquidators, the assets of IBRC will be valued independently before being sold. Any assets not sold to third parties (including loan counterparties and other financial institutions) at or above the valuation price will be sold to NAMA at the independent valuation. The Special Liquidators are still in the process of devising and implementing a sales process in respect of IBRC's assets including the mortgage portfolio. I have been advised that the Special Liquidators are in the process

of obtaining suitable independent professional advisors who shall employ standard valuation methodologies appropriate to each class of asset of IBRC.

The Special Liquidators anticipate having the valuations of the loan books completed by the end of June 2013.

IBRC Mortgage Loan Book

178. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if an auction model has been considered for the sale of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation mortgage loan book; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12632/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As part of the role of the liquidators, the assets of IBRC will be valued independently before being sold. Any assets not sold to third parties (including loan counterparties and other financial institutions) at or above the valuation price will be sold to NAMA at the independent valuation. The Special Liquidators are still in the process of devising and implementing a sales process in respect of IBRC's assets including the mortgage portfolio. Once this is devised I am advised that the Special Liquidators will be appointing independent sales advisors to manage the sales process. This process will be overseen by the Special Liquidators to ensure that deadlines are being met and that the best value is achieved.

Tax Reliefs Application

179. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 81 of 23 January 2013, if he is now in a position to provide the data requested. [12744/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As I informed the Deputy in my reply to her question of 23 January last, the annual return that relevant employers must submit to the Revenue Commissioners detailing, inter alia, the number of employees and the amounts of exempt income claimed under the Special Assignee Relief Programme was not due for submission until after the end of the tax year 2012. This is in order to ensure that an accurate picture of take up levels over a full tax year could be provided. Therefore, given that 2012 was the first year of the programme, reliable statistics on its uptake will not be available until later this year when the returns have been analysed.

Tax Rebates

180. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding moneys due to a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12761/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the person in question in this case is a company. The case has been examined, and all relevant refunds of tax withheld for the company, relevant to the accounting year ending 30/09/12, have been made to the company. In accordance with Section 530P, Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, any tax withheld arising for the company's year 01/10/12 – 30/09/13, which has not been off-set against other taxes, will be made available for refund on receipt of the CT1 for that accounting period.

IBRC Staff

181. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance if he or the liquidator of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation has been in contact with any other financial institution asking them not to employ current employees of IBRC while they are involved in the wind down of the bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12854/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I can confirm that neither I nor the Special Liquidators have been in contact with any other financial institutions asking them not to employ current employees of IBRC.

Legislative Programme

182. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance when he intends to publish the betting amendment Bill. [12875/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Betting (Amendment) Bill was published in July last year. Since that date work has been continuing by officials of my Department and Revenue on the drawing up of a number of amendments to the Bill to strengthen enforcement measures. It is my intention, given the number of amendments, to go back to Government in the very near future for approval to republish the Bill. The Deputy will be aware that under the EU Technical Standards and Regulations Directive it will be necessary to show the published Bill to the EU Commission and other Member States, which could take 3 months for clearance. However, I hope to use this time to progress the Bill through the Dáil subject to scheduling agreement between the Whips.

Tax Reliefs Application

183. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the approved bodies that have benefited from tax relief on donations made to them in the last year for which figures are available; and the value of the tax relief that applied in each case. [12896/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Section 848A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides a scheme for tax relief on donations to eligible charities and other approved bodies. The administration of this scheme is the responsibility of the Revenue Commissioners. A list of the bodies that qualify for the scheme is available on Revenue's website at the following link: http://www.revenue.ie/en/business/authorised-charities-resident.html. For donations made pre-2013, the precise arrangements for allowing tax relief vary depending on whether the donor is a PAYE taxpayer only, a chargeable person subject to self-assessment or a company. For a PAYE only donor, the relief is given on a "grossed up" basis to the eligible charity or approved body, as the case may be, rather than by way of a separate claim to tax relief by the donor. The claim for refund is made by the eligible charity or approved body in respect of a PAYE donor. In the case of a self-assessed donor, that individual claims the relief and there is no grossing up arrangement. In the case of a company, it will claim a deduction for the donation as if it were a trading expense.

The Revenue Commissioners have advised me that their obligation to observe confidentiality for charities and small groups of taxpayers would preclude them from disclosing the amounts of tax relief allowed to individual approved bodies under the donations scheme. However, they have provided details of the total amounts refunded under the scheme, in respect of PAYE dona-

tions only, to approved bodies during 2010 and 2011 and these are shown in the following table:

Year	Amount
2010	€30.2m
2011	€26.3m

Tax Reliefs Application

184. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will amend section 469 (1)(f) of the Taxes Consolidation Act (1997) to delete the words, "or similar treatment prescribed by a practitioner", and to leave the word, "Physiotherapy", to ensure that extra costs are not imposed on physiotherapy patients who have not been referred by their general practitioner, hospital accident and emergency or medical consultant and to ensure that his commitment to the provision of health care in the primary care setting is protected and to ensure that they meet their goal of meeting 90% of health care needs through the primary care setting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12904/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Income tax relief in respect of health expenses is allowable in accordance with section 469 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. This legislation provides for tax relief for health expenses incurred in the provision of health care. Health care is defined for the purposes of that legislation as the prevention, diagnosis, alleviation or treatment of an ailment, injury, infirmity, defect or disability and includes care received by a woman in respect of pregnancy. Health care does not include routine ophthalmic or dental treatment. The section provides that tax relief must be either for the costs of the services of a practitioner, defined as a person registered on the register established under the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, or diagnostic procedures carried out on the advice of a practitioner, which includes "physiotherapy or similar treatment prescribed by a practitioner". Eligibility for tax relief is limited to expenses relating to treatment considered necessary and appropriate by a qualified practitioner.

Section 469 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 consolidated all previous legislation pertaining to relief for health expenses, in particular section 12 of Finance Act 1967 which introduced the relief in the first instance. This section also required that physiotherapy or similar treatment be prescribed by a practitioner before qualifying for relief. This requirement has, therefore, been part of the qualifying criteria since the introduction of relief for health expenses and I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that guidance and instructions to staff have remained unchanged in this regard.

For 2010 the cost of tax relief for health expenses was €127 million and was availed of by 368,000 individuals who had sufficient income to benefit from a claim. There is no specific breakdown in these figures of the costs related to physiotherapy.

The costs of the relief, if self-referral for physiotherapy was allowed, would be unquantifiable but it would be expected to increase the overall cost to the Exchequer. While the Government supports measures to lower the cost of medical treatment which should in turn lower the costs of health care provision by the State, an amendment as requested by the Deputy, if passed, would inevitably lead to calls for other treatments to similarly qualify for relief, which would greatly increase the overall cost of the scheme. In addition, it would inevitably lead to self-diagnosis of ailments which could have dire consequences for patients where their own diagnosis proves incorrect and they have embarked on the wrong treatment in the absence of the correct medical advice.

Grocery Industry

185. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of the profits earned by grocery chains here in recent years; if he will provide a breakdown of the largest earnings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12924/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the relevant information available is on the amount of gross income earned by the sector engaged in the retail sale of predominantly food, beverages or tobacco and referenced under NACE Code 4711. This is based on personal income tax returns filed by non-PAYE taxpayers and information on gross profits derived from corporation tax returns for the year 2010. The tax year 2010 is the latest year for which the necessary detailed information is available. The gross income from all sources returned by self-employed individuals engaged in this activity for 2010 was €94 million and the corresponding gross trading income returned by companies engaged in this activity for 2010 was €894 million.

Figures are rounded to the nearest million.

As regards the largest earnings of the traders involved, the Revenue Commissioners' obligation to observe confidentiality for taxpayers and small groups of taxpayers would preclude them from giving this information.

The sector identifier used on the tax records is based on the 4 digit "NACE code (Rev. 1)" which is an internationally recognised economic activity code system. The NACE codes are not essential for the assessment and collection of taxes and duties and the correct allocation and maintenance of these codes is subject to the limit of available resources. NACE code classifications on tax records are compiled by reference to the primary area of economic activity reported by individual and corporate taxpayers on their own behalf and the taxes collected are allocated to those codes without reference to the precise economic activity which generated them.

While the accuracy of the NACE codes on tax records is sufficient to underpin broad sector-based analyses there will undoubtedly be some inaccuracies at individual level. This should be borne in mind when considering the information provided. The sector identified for this reply represents the closest equivalents in the NACE code system to the sector mentioned in the question.

Mortgage Arrears Proposals

186. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Finance if the main banks are charging customers/businesses if they visit the person to discuss mortgage repayment difficulties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12929/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank has advised me that, on 6 December 2010, it issued letters to all banks directing them to refrain from imposing interest surcharge on arrears or any other charge arising on a mortgage account in arrears to which the revised Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears applies and in respect of which a borrower is co-operating reasonably and honestly with the lender in the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process. The Central Bank also advises that it is not aware of any banks charging such a fee to which the Deputy refers to and it would not expect banks to do so.

Excise Duties Yield

187. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a breakdown in excise returns by category and by month from January 2011 to February 2013. [12950/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The breakdown in excise returns by category and by month from January 2011 to February 2013 is as follows.

2011	Alcohol	Tobacco	Oils	Carbon	VRT	Other Excise
JAN	87.8	0.6	234.7	14.5	41.5	12.1
FEB	35.9	26.8	176.7	44.7	57.7	9.0
MAR	51.2	64.7	183.0	23.3	49.1	8.2
APR	67.9	96.1	180.2	32.2	45.9	9.5
MAY	67.5	65.4	177.5	19.4	33.5	5.5
JUN	65.6	102.9	177.9	26.9	36.1	4.8
JUL	70.8	113.7	174.3	22.1	31.4	12.5
AUG	72.0	109.7	185.6	20.5	19.5	6.1
SEP	70.2	78.3	174.0	22.2	36.4	9.0
OCT	64.7	90.0	174.7	22.9	14.6	10.8
NOV	75.3	110.7	181.3	24.3	12.2	7.8
DEC	100.8	267.2	109.9	25.3	10.4	4.6
TOTAL	829.5	1126.1	2129.8	298.2	388.4	100.0

2013	Alcohol	Tobacco	Lights Oils	Carbon	VRT	Other Excise
JAN	93.1	0.9	225.5	26.0	52.1	8.4
FEB	39.8	64.0	157.4	42.8	60.0	2.4
TOTAL	132.8	64.9	382.9	68.7	112.1	10.8

Illicit Trade in Tobacco

188. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the amount his Department estimates the illicit trade in tobacco to be worth in terms of lost revenue to the State and lost trade to the economy. [12951/13]

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 losses that it causes the Exchequer and the legitimate trade, is problematic, and estimates of such losses need to be viewed with caution. I understand that the available information on possible losses to the Exchequer relates only to cigarettes. A survey in respect of 2011 carried out for the Revenue Commissioners and the Health Services 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.

I am advised also that the Revenue Commissioners do not have information on the loss caused to legitimate businesses by the illicit tobacco trade. They are, however, conscious of the threat that this criminal activity poses to law-abiding retailers, and taking action against it is a high priority for them. Revenue's programme of action resulted in the seizure of over 95 million cigarettes and 5,276 kilograms of tobacco in 2012, and 132 convictions for smuggling or sale of illicit cigarettes or tobacco were secured during the year.

Property Valuations

189. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance if he will advise whom a person (details supplied) in County Kerry should contact regarding a panel of valuers for the valuation of property for the real estate taxes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13012/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that a panel of valuation experts has been in place for a number of years for the purposes of Capital Gains Tax and Capital Acquisitions Tax where valuations were challenged by Revenue. As the previous contract recently expired, the Commissioners published an invitation to tender on the etenders website (etenders.gov.ie) on 8 February 2013, in line with standard procurement procedures. In this invitation to tender, the Revenue Commissioners are seeking to establish a multiparty framework agreement comprising suitably qualified and experienced valuers to provide the Commissioners with independent expert advice where valuations of residential property, commercial property and development lands are being challenged by Revenue in connection with certain taxes and duties that they administer. The title of the tender is "Valuations of all Forms of Residential Property, Commercial Property and Development Land". I am advised that the deadline for responses to the invitation to tender is 5 pm on Wednesday 20 March 2013.

Finally, I am advised by the Commissioners that Local Property Tax (LPT) is a self-assessed tax so in the first instance it is a matter for the property owner to calculate the tax due based on his or her assessment of the market value of the property. The Revenue Commissioners will not be valuing individual properties for LPT purposes.

IBRC Staff

190. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address the concerns of a person (details supplied) in County Antrim whose personal circumstances are changing due to the liquidation of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13029/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware, the legislation surrounding liquidation ranks employees as preferential creditors in respect of certain amounts owing to them on a winding up, including accrued wages and salaries, holiday pay, sick pay, statutory redundancy, pensions contributions and claims for damages arising from accidents. There are standard rules which apply to the distribution of the assets of companies in liquidation and it would not be appropriate for me to interfere with these rules. However the State does intervene to ensure that statutory redundancy is available through the Social Insurance Fund and that arrears of pay, sick pay, holiday pay or pay in lieu of statutory notice (limited to EUR600 per week up to a maximum of eight weeks) are payable from the Insolvency Payments Scheme. The Minister for Social Protection will rank as a preferential creditor of IBRC in respect of any payments made to employees of IBRC from the Social Insurance Fund or the Insolvency Payments Scheme. Any action taken by the Minister which might divert the assets from IBRC creditors to employees could be challenged in the Courts.

The special liquidators were promptly in contact with staff on Thursday 7th February and, unlike in other liquidations, the majority of employees have now been re-hired by the special liquidators, for a minimum period of 3 months, to provide some level of assurance and to ensure an orderly wind-down of the business. In addition, some staff may, in time, be re-hired by NAMA or other purchasers of the assets. This should provide some reassurance to employees.

The Special Liquidators have said that it is their key priority that all employees are fully kept up to date on all developments during the course of the special liquidation. They have indicated that their approach will be to talk with employees directly either in small groups or on a one to one basis and they also plan to communicate by email general updates to employees during the course of the special liquidation.

State Banking Sector

191. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the publication of results for 2012 by Bank of Ireland, in which he owns 15% of the ordinary shares, if he will provide his reaction to the performance of the bank in 2012. [13076/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I was pleased to see that Bank of Ireland's 2012 results were slightly ahead of investors' expectations and indeed prompted some in the market to upgrade their forecasts of the bank's prospects for the years ahead. In order for Bank of Ireland to return to strength, meet the needs of the Irish economy and enable the State to exit its investment, it has to develop a profitable commercial enterprise and these results show that the bank is definitely well on its way to achieving this goal. The positive takeaways would be that the profitability of the bank is improving with a net interest margin of 1.34% in H2 2012 up 0.14% from H1 2012, auguring well for this year and beyond. The removal of the ELG scheme this year and the on-going reductions in deposit rates will also help. The bank is well capitalised with its Core Tier 1 ratio of 14.4% stronger than the market expected at year end and while impairment levels are still very high, the trend here is downwards.

There are still areas of concern however. Operating costs need to come down further while the level of non-performing loans is still rising, albeit at a slower pace. Mortgage arrears at the bank look to be close to their peak, but as I've said many times before I am not happy at the pace at which the banks are moving to deal with this issue. Addressing mortgage arrears is a top priority for the Government and we expect to see real progress on this issue in the months ahead.

State Banking Sector

192. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide the latest valuation of the State's interest in Bank of Ireland, particularly the value of its ordinary and preference shares. [13077/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware, as part of its recapitalisation commitments, the State invested €4.7bn in Bank of Ireland (BOI). The State has received c.€0.5bn for its warrants which were originally attached to our preference shares, and significant income in the form of coupons and dividends on its investments. In January 2013 the State also successfully disposed of the €1.0 billion Contingent Capital instruments in Bank of Ireland at a profit of €10m. The State's remaining investment in BOI consists of a 15% equity stake and preference shares with a nominal value of €1.8bn. The most recent valuation of these holdings is contained in the NPRF 2011 Annual Report published on the 19th July 2012 and available on its website. As at the 31st December 2011, the NPRF valuation of its investments in BOI was €1,843m consisting of preference shares of €1,473m and ordinary shares of €370m.

I understand that the value of both of these investments has improved since then as evidenced by the recent strength in BOI's share price. As of 7th March 2013, the share price was over 14c versus 8c at the end of 2011, putting a value of approx. €660m on our equity holding.

A more up to date value on our preference shares will be contained in the NPRF's 2012 Annual Report.

IBRC Liquidation

193. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to the eventual publication on or after 4 March 2013, of the directions given by him to the National Asset Management Agency in respect of the liquidation of Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, if he will now publish the documents referred to in the directions, namely the facility agreement, deeds, transfers and schedules. [13078/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I do not intend to publish the documents referred to in the directions, at this time, as they contain commercially sensitive information which if released could have a detrimental effect on the outcome for the taxpayer.

NAMA Debtors

194. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the safeguards the National Asset Management Agency has in place to ensure that its debtors provide accurate accounting for their businesses and that benefits are not inappropriately withdrawn from debtor businesses by their proprietors. [13079/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by NAMA that it adopts a two-pronged approach to ensuring appropriate, accurate and timely financial reporting by debtors. Firstly, NAMA is imposing a financial reporting rigour on debtors to ensure that management information relating to each debtor's business is delivered to NAMA. In particular, debtors are subject to on-going reporting requirements in respect of the achievement of agreed milestones and debt repayment targets and current financial metrics such as rental receipts. Debtors are also required to provide future cash flow forecasts and other specific information requirements identified by NAMA case managers. Secondly, to provide additional assurance on the information received and to enhance control over cash flows, particularly rental income, NAMA also requires the appointment of independent monitors, including financial monitors, property management service providers and project managers, whose remit is to ensure that financial information provided by debtors is consistent with the underlying books and records. These external service providers evaluate and report to NAMA on the completeness and accuracy of information presented by debtors in relation to both historical and future financial and property management activity and milestones which have been agreed with NAMA. As the Deputy is aware, these milestones were agreed as part of the debtor's commitment to repay the amounts due to NAMA and in turn the taxpayer.

NAMA Staff Numbers

195. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the safeguards the National Asset Management Agency has in place to ensure its employees, particularly its asset managers do not become compromised, for example, through over familiarity, in the course of their management of specific debtors. [13080/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): NAMA advises that it operates a number of safeguards to ensure that staff are equipped to successfully carry out their function on

behalf of taxpayers. These safeguards include a rigorous appointments process, which deals fully with any actual or potential conflicts of interest, induction and on-going compliance training, and regular compliance updates. Other safeguards include the NAMA Credit Committee which is in place to approve credit decisions on amounts that exceed credit approval authority delegated to the NAMA CEO. All delegated authority decisions below NAMA Credit Committee are undertaken on a dual sign-off basis, and the appointment of at least two case managers to each individual debtor connection.

Tax Reliefs Application

196. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence (details suplied) regarding tax relief on nursing home fees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13107/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Section 469 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides for tax relief at the taxpayers marginal rate (20 or 41%) for expenses incurred in relation to nursing home fees. However, tax relief can only be claimed when an individual has a tax liability in the same tax year as the expenses were incurred. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that for the tax year 2011, any tax that was paid by the individual in question was refunded. As the individual concerned has not submitted a P60 for 2012, it is not possible to say if any refund will be due.

While I appreciate the position of the individual in question, to amend one section of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 in order to provide tax relief for current expenditure against tax that was paid in previous years would inevitably lead to calls for all tax reliefs to be similarly refundable based on taxes paid in any year. This would place an undue burden on the Exchequer and would be extremely difficult for the Revenue Commissioners to administer.

Tax Code

197. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Finance his plans for imposing a tax on maternity benefit.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13108/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The position is, as I stated in my Budget day speech of 5 December 2012, that from the 1st of July 2013, Maternity Benefit will be treated as taxable income. It should be noted that it is a general principle of taxation that, as far as possible, income from all sources should be subject to taxation. In line with this principle, the majority of social welfare payments are reckonable as income for tax purposes. These include long-term payments such as the Disablement Benefit, the State Pension, Widows, Invalidity and Blind Pensions, Carers Allowance and the One Parent Family Payment as well as short term benefits such as Job Seekers Benefit. Treating these payments as income for tax purposes is essentially a matter of equity.

Of course, the extent, if any, to which taxation actually arises in a given case depends on the level of income that a recipient has in a tax year. If there is no other income besides the social welfare payment, the basic personal credits in force can be expected in most cases to ensure that no tax arises on the social welfare income itself.

There are situations currently where an employee continues to be paid by her employer, in full, while on maternity leave and, based on her PRSI contributions, is entitled to Maternity Benefit from the Department of Social Protection. The non-taxation of such benefit currently

results in an employee having a greater net take-home pay for the period of maternity benefit, than if she was at work.

The rates of Maternity Benefit are earnings-related and are set to reflect post-tax income. It was never intended that individuals would gain financially by being on maternity leave. The introduction of the charge to income tax on maternity benefit payments will ensure that those with identical incomes will be treated the same for income tax purposes.

However, it should be noted that maternity benefit payments will remain exempt from Universal Social Charge and PRSI.

The Revenue Commissioners estimated that the expected yield from the taxation of Maternity Benefit payments will be €15 million in 2013 and €40 million in a full year.

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, a number of possible tax outcomes could arise:

1. An individual may 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 may pay income tax on their maternity benefit payments at the standard rate.

3. An individual may pay income tax at the standard rate on a portion of the maternity benefit and the higher rate on the balance of the maternity benefit payment.

4. An individual may pay income tax on their maternity benefit payments at the higher rate.

Disabled Drivers Grant Eligibility

198. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding an application for remission of vehicle registration tax in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13115/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that Section 134(3) of the Finance Act 1992 (as amended) and Statutory Instrument No: 353 of 1994 (Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations, 1994 (as amended) provide for permanent relief from the payment of specified maximum amounts of VAT and VRT for persons registered under the scheme. The person (details supplied) registered an imported vehicle on 26th October 2011 and received a remission of VRT under the Disabled Drivers/Passengers Tax Concession Scheme. Where a person receives a remission under this scheme, that person must undertake to use the vehicle in question for the transport of the disabled passenger for a period of 2 years from the date the vehicle was registered. The person may dispose of the vehicle within the two year period for the purpose of changing to an alternative vehicle provided a refund of a portion of the VRT remitted is made to the Revenue Commissioners. To facilitate the calculation of the refund, the invoices in respect of the purchase and adaptation of the existing vehicle should be submitted to the Central Repayments Office, Monaghan. Alternatively, the person will be eligible to avail of a further remission in respect of an eligible replacement vehicle on/after 26th October 2013 without the need to refund a portion of the previous remission.

Construction Sector Strategy

199. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his strategy and its achievements since March 2011 in supporting displaced construction workers to develop skill sets for deployment in growing and secure industries; if he will acknowledge the employment challenges that face displaced construction workers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12893/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The training and upskilling of the country's workforce through a variety of further education and training programmes is a vital element of this country's recovery from the current downturn. It will also play a vital part in securing the future competitive advantage of all enterprises and in enhancing future growth in productivity in this country. My Department is providing a range of supports to unemployed people, including former construction workers, to up-skill and re-skill so that they are in a better position to avail of jobs as the economy recovers.

Unemployed construction workers can avail of a suitable training intervention from a range of FÁS training courses at levels 3-6 on the National Qualifications Framework, to meet their career and employment aspirations taking into account their previous education and experience, skill and expertise, the evolving labour market and skill needs of employers/sectors. Courses of particular interest to unemployed construction workers are FÁS 'green' energy courses as follows:

- Passive House ("A" rated) Building Envelope;

- Passive House Construction Mech Systems;

- Rainwater Harvesting;

- Domestic Thermal Insulation;

- Intelligent Building Control Systems;

- Small Scale Wind Systems Implementation;

- Micro Solar Photo Voltaic Systems Implementation.

Pilot FÁS courses for which unemployed construction workers, amongst other groups, are being targeted:

- Overhead Line Worker being piloted by Tralee Training Centre, primarily aimed at unemployed construction operatives;

- Wind Turbine Maintenance to be piloted later this year by Tralee Training Centre, primarily aimed at unemployed electrical, plumbing mechanical construction craft workers).

The impact of the economic downturn has led to a collapse in demand for apprentices from employers, particularly in construction related trades. Significant numbers of apprentices have also been made redundant before completion of their training. To assist redundant apprentices to complete their apprenticeships, FÁS has put the following interim measures in place:

The temporary Redundant Apprentice Placement Scheme (RAPS) provides supports for redundant apprentices to be placed with an employer to complete the minimum duration necessary to complete the on-the-job phases at Phase 3/5/7. Employers can apply to FÁS to participate in RAPS subject to meeting the eligibility criteria.

FÁS has also introduced a Competency Determination Mechanism (CDM). This mechanism will provide redundant apprentices who have a time deficit in their apprenticeship with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge against the occupational standard for the specified trade over a number of days in a FÁS Training Centre.

The Labour Market Activation Fund (LMAF) was launched in March 2010 and was designed to assist in the creation of training and education provision for specific priority groups among the unemployed, namely the low skilled, and those formerly employed in declining sectors including the construction sector. Over 12,500 unemployed people, including many former construction workers, benefited from training and education programmes when the fund ended in June 2011.

As part of the Government's "Action Plan for Jobs" initiative, FÁS is administering the Labour Market Education & Training Fund (LMETF) which was launched as MOMENTUM in December 2012. €20 million has been committed by the Department of Education & Skills through the National Training Fund. The aim of MOMENTUM is to provide a range of quality, relevant education & training interventions for up to 6,500 individuals who are long-term unemployed including former construction workers.

Skillnets funds enterprise-led training through a network model, where companies from networks representing specific industry sectors or geographical regions co-operate to deliver training programmes appropriate to current market requirements. It is committed to supporting former construction workers. While some of the training is designed to allow such job-seekers to secure employment within the construction sector, the main focus is on retraining former construction workers to enter alternative sectors with sustainable employment opportunities.

Job-seekers from the construction sector can access training in two ways: - 1 Training Networks Programme (TNP) In 2012 612 job-seekers from the construction sector undertook TNP/Finuas Training across 251 different training events. 162 of the trainees undertook certified training from Level 5 -9 on the NFQ or was certified by a professional body. Training was provided across a wide range of areas in growth sectors including ICT, Pharmaceuticals, Life Sciences, Food, Financial Services, Green Economy, Agriculture, and Manufacturing. - 2 Job-seekers Support Programme (JSSP) Approximately 3,000 job-seekers benefited from training and work placements/internships offered through the JSSP in 2012. Of those trainees who indicated their prior sector of employment, over 400 came from the construction sector.

EGF

A significant number of redundant construction workers have been assisted, under the aegis of my Department, through the completion of a programme of supports co-financed by the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in 2012. The EGF programme targeted a cohort of redundant construction workers and apprentices across three specific sub-sectors of the construction industry who had been verifiably made redundant between 1 July 2009 and 31 March 2010. The sub-sectors covered by the programme were: construction of buildings; specialised construction services; and architectural and engineering services. The EGF programme ran from 1st July 2009 to 9th June 2012 and provided a range of co-financed guidance, training, education and enterprise measures. These included occupational guidance supports including tailored career planning courses provided by VECs; training courses and allowances administered by FÁS including on and off the job apprenticeship supports to allow those apprentices made redundant to progress their apprenticeships while unemployed; further and higher education courses delivered by the VECs and HEA-funded institutions; and entrepreneurial guidance and supports provided by the City and County Enterprise Boards for those clients interested in becoming self-employed.

The programme also provided for the awarding of EGF Training Grants where a required training or education measure could not be delivered by a public institution but was available to the client through the private sector. In total almost 11,000 separate interventions were provided to a total EGF eligible cohort of just over 8,000 redundant construction workers and apprentices in the relevant implementation period.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

200. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way the parents of a child (details supplied) in County Wicklow who have a recommendation from the early intervention team to split their child's school day between mainstream and a special needs school can go about ensuring that this happens; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12313/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from primary and post primary schools for special educational needs supports. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such supports. SENOs are a valuable source of support to parents who are actively sourcing a placement for their children or on deciding the most appropriate placement for their child.

The parents of the child concerned should contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on *www.ncse.ie.*

Student Support Schemes Issues

201. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding he will allocate to the student assistance fund for the academic year beginning September 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12327/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Third Level Access Measure comprises two sub-priorities: the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities. The overall value of the Fund for the 2013/14 academic year is €16.2m.

The management of the Third Level Access Measure Fund rests with the Higher Education Authority and the allocation of funding for the sub-priorities in a particular year is a matter for that authority. The value of the Student Assistance Fund for the 2013/14 academic year will not be known until the HEA takes a decision in this matter, as normal, in the run up to the commencement of that academic year.

Departmental Expenditure

202. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the home of a Minister of State his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12365/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has not provided any hardware or software to either my home or the homes of Minister Ciarán Cannon T.D. or Minister Seán Sherlock T.D.

Departmental Expenditure

203. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12383/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The total cost to my Department of providing a telephone in my home from when I took up office as Minister for Education and Skills in 2011 to date is €440.98.

My Department does not pay home telephone costs in respect of Minister of State Ciarán Cannon.

It is worth noting that Ministers, unlike all other Oireachtas Members, are not able to claim for telephone calls relating to the performance of his/her duties as a Member under the Public Representation Allowance provided by the Houses of the Oireachtas as this facility is instead provided by their Departments.

School Staffing

204. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider allowing schools to combine their learning support hours allocation and their resource hours allocation to enable them to provide the maximum amount of support to students with special educational needs and to give them the flexibility to provide such supports within a school community without the need for teaching time to be lost travelling from one school to the next; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12395/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Shared full-time posts and travel between schools is a long standing feature of the primary system. There were a plethora of long-standing clustering arrangements in place which were not the most practical, efficient or cost effective way to allocate resources. The new arrangements introduced in the current school year are designed to address the limitations of the previous arrangements. Under the reforms to the teacher allocation process introduced for the current school year, schools were empowered to cluster and arrange their General Allocation Model resources in a manner that best suits their local needs, including in a manner that reduces travel between schools. This school led process has resulted in over 97% of the overall GAM allocation being in full-time stand-alone or shared posts.

Aside from the reforms to the GAM, the allocation of resource hours for individual pupils vary from year to year. This is because of the ongoing individual assessment of pupils through the NCSE must operate on a later timescale. The new arrangements involve the allocation of a network of permanent posts in base schools and again are designed to make the system work more smoothly at school level. 85% of all NCSE approved resource teaching hours in the 2012/13 school year were allocated to schools that had resource base posts.

The staffing arrangements for the coming school year 2013/14 are outlined in Circular 0013/2013 which is available on the Department website. When the allocation and redeployment process is completed later in the Summer schools that have complied with the arrangements outlined in the Circular will be given some discretion to operate, where possible, their own temporary local arrangements in relation to the day to day work arrangements of teachers in full-time shared posts. These arrangements are aimed at minimising any time lost in travelling between schools.

School Staffing

205. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details in tabular form of the number of learning support hours and resource hours allocated to each school in an area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12396/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): There is detailed historical information contained in the Statistics Section of my Department's website relating to the number of teaching posts in schools. The most recent published information relates to the 2011/2012 school year. The NCSE has notified all schools of their allocation of resource hours for low incidence special needs for the 2012/13 school year and has published this information on its website. The arrangements for how schools access these resource hours in teaching posts are set out in the primary staffing schedule (Circular 0013/2013) which is available on the Department website.

Under these arrangements a network of over 2,500 full-time resource posts has been put in place in close to 1,700 base schools throughout the country. The list of these schools is set out at Appendix C in the published circular. The allocation of GAM/EAL (learning/language support) hours by school and county is also published at Appendix C of the primary staffing schedule.

Departmental Expenditure

206. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly phone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12402/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Minister Quinn's Constituency Office is operated from within the Department of Education and Skills. Apart from telephone handsets, which were replaced in April 2012 as part of a standard upgrading of all telephones within my Department, no additional or replacement ICT equipment has been assigned to this office since March 2011. Mobile phone costs for this office since March 2011 amount to €411.02.

The following costs were incurred by the Department in respect of Minister Ciarán Cannon's Constituency Offices:

- ICT equipment: €1,199.13;

- Fixed Voice (including broadband in Loughrea): €4,722.40

Departmental Expenditure

207. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills are being paid to constituency offices by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12420/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The total cost to my Department for the provision on non-ICT related office equipment in constituency offices is €3,846.59

in respect of a photocopier purchased for Minister of State Cannon's constituency office in Galway in July 2011. Other incidental office costs, such as heating and lighting, are met as part of my Department's overall energy costs.

Departmental Expenditure

208. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of mobile phones in use by him, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12438/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): There are 8 mobile phones used by myself, Minister Ciarán Cannon and politically appointed staff. The total cost of these phones since March 2011 is €9,113.

Departmental Expenditure

209. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12456/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The following tabular statement contains the information sought by the Deputy. My Department does not hold details of the yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010, as the provision of ministerial cars and garda drivers at that time was administered by the former Department of Justice.

However, I understand the cost of the previous Ministerial Transport arrangements under the last Fianna Fail - Green Party government was estimated at the time of costing €280,000 per Minister per annum.

On taking office the Government introduced new travel arrangements for Ministers. The majority of Ministers now use their own cars and are paid for official mileage up to 96,540 kilometres or 60,000 miles per annum. Civilian drivers are paid a weekly wage.

The following is a tabular statement of costs associated with the provision of Ministerial Transport for the 31st Dáil from 2011 to March 2013.

Mr. Ruairí Quinn, T.D.

Minister for Education & Skills

Payment Type	Amount
Drivers Remuneration (including Employer's PRSI) May 2011 to March 2013	€142,021.00
Drivers Subsistence Expenses May 2011 to March 2013	€3,446.00
Ministerial Mileage/Travel Expenses May 2011 to March 2013	€24,462.00
TOTAL	€169,929.00

Mr. Ciaran Cannon, T.D.

Minister of State

Department of Education & Skills

Payment Type	Amount
Drivers Remuneration (including Employer's PRSI) March 2011 to March 2013	€149,390.00
Drivers Subsistence Expenses March 2011 to March 2013	€21,089.00
Ministerial Mileage/Travel Expenses March 2011 to March 2013	€36,707.00
TOTAL	€207,186.00

Departmental Expenditure

210. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12475/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Two business credit cards are held and operated by staff in my Department. One card is held in the name of and operated by the Private Secretary in the Minister's Office and the second is held in the name of and operated by the Private Secretary in the Minister of State's Office. These cards allow for expenditure to support the business needs of the Department, in extremely time limited circumstances, where the spending needs cannot be easily satisfied by the Department's normal billing process.

The total expenditure incurred on these credit cards since March 2011 is as follows: Private Secretary to the Minister: €3,846. Private Secretary to the Minister of State: €1,050.74

State Examinations Issues

211. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reasons that reasonable accommodation has not been made available to a leaving certificate student (details supplied) in County Tipperary; if his attention has been drawn to the circumstances at play in this case; if he will review this decision; if he will ensure that reasonable accommodation is made for this student; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12536/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations. The State Examinations Commission operates a scheme of Reasonable Accommodations in the Certificate examinations. Applications for such accommodations are submitted by schools on behalf of their students. Full details of the scheme is available for downloading from their website: *www.examinations.ie/candidates/reasonableaccommodations.* In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

School Transport Eligibility

212. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 334 of 16 January 2013, if he will intervene and assist with the co-oper-

ative initiative by a school (details supplied) in County Kerry which is in compliance with his Department's directive, these schools are 2.5 km apart and the imposition of full transport costs on the students and their families will be detrimental to the progress of this scheme; and based on information provided, if he will examine this viable proposition with a view to subsidising the ongoing costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12542/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The purpose of my Department's School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school or education centre. There is no provision within the terms of the Scheme to provide funding towards the cost of the transport services outlined by the Deputy in the details supplied.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

213. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a third level grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12565/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland, that on 8th March 2013, a request for further documentation was issued to the student referred to by the Deputy. When the requested documentation is returned the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Student Support Schemes Issues

214. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way students from disadvantaged backgrounds will be fairly treated; and if he will restore the grant for Gaeltacht courses in order to ensure equality of access. [12567/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As part of the Government's budgetary considerations and the Comprehensive Expenditure Review carried out in 2011, a decision was made to abolish the payments by this Department towards the cost of attendance at Gaeltacht courses by students commencing their programme of primary initial teacher education. The decision came into effect for the 2012/13 academic year. As the Deputy will be aware, priority is being given to protecting resources for front line services in the coming years.

To assist with the costs of the Gaeltacht placement, primary initial teacher education students who are in receipt of a student grant which includes a 100% fee grant, or who would have qualified for a full fee grant but for the Free Fees Schemes, can apply for funding towards travel and accommodation costs under the field trip element of a fee grant, subject to the normal terms and conditions of the student grant scheme.

Apart from the student grant system, in circumstances of particular need students may apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund which assists students in third-level institutions in exceptional financial need. Information on the fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended.

Student Grant Scheme Appeals

215. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if it is true that three out of five grant applications for students are overturned on appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12580/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand from Student Universal Support Ireland that as of 10 March 2013, 6,041 appeals were received by SUSI and that, of these 3,486 were overturned, 2,049 decisions were upheld and 506 are awaiting a decision from the appeals officer.

The Department has asked SUSI for a report on the overturn rate.

Student Grant Scheme Application Numbers

216. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills as of 1 March 2013, the number of students still waiting to have their Student Universal Support Ireland grant applications dealt with; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12642/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand from Student Universal Support Ireland that it is up to date with processing all complete applications.

In this regard, as at close of business on 10th March 2013, 57,957 applications have been processed to completion. As part of the close out strategy for the 2012/13 academic year, SUSI is currently contacting applicants who have not completed their application by submitting the required documentation. SUSI is providing these with a final opportunity to submit the documentation so that applications for 2012/13 can be closed out. Support for students to complete their applications has been put in place.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

217. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills what happens if a person's (details supplied) financial circumstances change during an academic year which would make them eligible for a third level maintenance grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12644/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Eligibility for a student grant or for an increased level of grant may be assessed or re-assessed,as the case may be, during an academic year where a permanent change of circumstances arises.

Applicants should contact their grant awarding authority for advice where such circumstances occur.

School Accommodation

218. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding accommodation works at a school (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12645/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The school referred to by the Deputy has been approved devolved funding under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme to build one mainstream classroom.

Student Grant Scheme Appeals

219. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will list in tabular form the number of appeals that have been referred from Student Universal Support Ireland to the Student Grants Appeal Board in 2012/13; the number of claims that have been successfully upheld during that period; the average time for an appeal to be heard by the SGAB and how often the SGAB meets to deal with appeals deferred from SUSI. [12646/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Student Grant Appeals Board deals with appeals arising from student grant decisions made by 66 grant awarding authorities and not just SUSI.

Appeals are received by the Student Grants Appeal Board on an on-going basis throughout an academic year. Since its establishment, Appeal Board sittings have taken place at intervals varying from 2 to 4 weeks. It is currently sitting at weekly intervals. The average time for the consideration of an appeal varies on this basis. The frequency of sittings is determined by the volume of appeals submitted and the requirement that the Appeals Board makes a determination on the appeal within the 60 day timeframe specified in the Student Support Act 2011.

The statistical data required by the Deputy is contained in the table.

Appeals on foot of SUSI decisions to Student Grant Appeals Board - 2012/13 Academic Year

Number of appeals to the Student Grants Appeals on foot of SUSI decisions	223	At close of business 8 March 2013
Number of appeals considered by the Student Grants Appeals Board to date on foot of S	129	At close of business 5 March 2013
Number of appeals where SUSI decision was overturned	11	At close of business 5 March 2013.

Student Grant Scheme Delays

220. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the delay in awarding the student grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly and when they may expect to receive same. [12651/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland, that on 5th March 2013, a request for further documentation was issued to the student referred to by the Deputy. When the requested documentation is returned the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Pupil Transfers

221. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review circular 32/03 section 3, transfer of pupils to another primary school to repeat sixth class; if he is satisfied that this is a useful and justifiable restriction; if he will consider having it removed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12669/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department's policy in relation to pupils repeating the same grade in primary school is set out in Primary Circular

32/03. In accordance with this circular, in exceptional cases a Principal teacher, following consultation with the learning support teacher/resource teacher and class teacher and parent(s) of the pupil may conclude that a pupil would benefit educationally by repeating a grade level. In such cases, the pupil may be allowed to repeat the year provided there is an educational basis for it, and there is a clear programme for the pupil to follow.

However, the circular provides that pupils who have completed sixth class must not transfer to another primary school to repeat sixth class and that in the event that a school were to enrol pupils from another school to repeat sixth class the pupils shall not be included as eligible pupils for the purposes of determining staffing and other resources granted the school.

The Primary School curriculum is designed as an eight year course, including a two year infant cycle followed by six years in standards from first to sixth, with children progressing to the next grade at the end of each school year. The curriculum is flexible and child-centred, and can be adapted to meet children's needs. Additional supports by way of learning support and resource teaching is also available to enable pupils to make progress in keeping with their needs and abilities and to move consecutively through the different class levels in the school in keeping with their peers. I have no plans to amend the provisions of the circular in question.

Gratuity Grant Applications

222. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application for gratuity grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and further to Parliamentary Question No. 333 of 29 January 2013 the up to date position regarding an application for funding under the terms of the Superannuation Act 1887. [12718/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a gratuity under the Superannuation Act, 1887, was approved by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in respect of the retired employee of the Limerick Model School.

Payment in respect of the gratuity issued to the former employee in February 2013.

Teacher Redeployment

223. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that an on-going redeployment issue for a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; if his attention has been drawn to the hardship caused as a result of this redeployment; if he will take steps to alleviate the hardship caused in this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12731/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In line with procedures agreed under the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement 2010 - 2014 this person was placed on the Public Appointments Service re-deployment resource panel. A suitable vacancy was identified in Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) and the person was redeployed to LIT in line with the agreed procedures. Following the redeployment decision, the individual referred their case for adjudication.

The adjudication was heard by an independent adjudicator on 26 August 2012 and a decision issued to the parties on 19 September 2012 affirming the redeployment decision. Under the terms of the adjudication scheme under the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement 2010

- 2014, the outcome of this adjudication is binding on all the parties.

School Enrolments

224. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the options open to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare whose daughter is not eligible for a primary school place due to her age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12732/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The question of enrolment in individual schools is the responsibility of the managerial authority of those schools. My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places.

It is the responsibility of the managerial authorities of schools to implement an enrolment policy in accordance with the Education Act, 1998. In this regard a Board of Management may find it necessary to restrict enrolment to children from a particular area or a particular age group or, occasionally, on the basis of some other criterion. The criteria to be applied by schools in such circumstances are a matter for the schools themselves. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants.

Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, provides parents with an appeal process where a board of management of a school or a person acting on behalf of the Board refuses enrolment to a student. Where a school refuses to enrol a pupil, the school is obliged to inform parents of their right under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 to appeal that decision to either the relevant Vocational Educational Committee or to the Secretary General of my Department.

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The Board can be contacted at National Educational Welfare Board, National Headquarters, 16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7 or by telephone at 01-8738700.

Student Grant Scheme Appeals

225. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an appeal in respect of the amount of the grant awarded to a student who wished to receive the special rate of maintenance grant (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12738/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department understand from Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that the student in question does not meet the terms and conditions of the student grant scheme for the special rate of grant.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI, and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the Student Grants Appeals Board.

Public Procurement Regulations

226. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the public procurement by his Department particularly in the area of school suppliers of arts and graphic products who have vast specialised knowledge that is a very valuable resource which will be lost along with the industry; if he will acknowledge that the criteria in the public procurement for exam procurement condition that requires a minimum turnover of €10m by the business totally prohibits the micro school supplier from engaging in trading in a core part of their business and that this will put an estimated 2,500 jobs at risk (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12787/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy is probably aware, the National Procurement Service (NPS) is already supporting Small and Medium Business Enterprises (SMEs) to participate in public sector procurement competitions through its education and guidance strategies. All of the NPS tender documents explicitly seek to encourage the participation of SMEs in competitions, by encouraging them to explore the possibilities of forming relationships with other SMEs or with larger enterprises.

In terms of public procurement reform, it has been estimated that €9 billion is spent by public bodies annually on the procurement of supplies and services. My colleague Minister Howlin has highlighted the importance of ensuring that the public sector is achieving maximum value for money and operational efficiency in its approach to public procurement. Centralising the procurement of commonly used goods and services can deliver significant benefits which include: cash savings; administrative savings from reduced duplication of tendering; greater purchasing expertise; improved consistency and enhanced service levels.

In addition, given the financial constraints within which we must all now work, cost reductions and savings can go some way to helping Exchequer funded bodies, such as schools, manage within reducing financial budgets.

Given the potential benefits that can realised across the public sector, public procurement is one of the major projects of key strategic importance under the Government's Public Service Reform Plan. The Public Service Reform Plan, published in November 2011, provides for the development of a new policy framework for procurement. This work is now being led by the newly appointed Chief Procurement Officer, Paul Quinn. Under his leadership a new national procurement office for the public sector is being established. Paul is currently working with officials across the public sector to put in place new sectoral and centralised procurement arrangements.

I do appreciate the concerns being raised by school supply companies and I have asked relevant officials here in the Department, who are coordinating procurement reform in the Education and Training sector, to take these concerns into consideration in the context of the work being undertaken on procurement reform.

School Disputes

227. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will engage with the board of management of a school (details supplied) in County Kilkenny, to resolve a lengthy dispute; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12790/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I appreciate the concerns you raise in your question. While my Department sets out the constitution of Boards of Manage-

ment and rules of procedure it is not directly involved in the management of schools.

Under the provisions of the Education Act, 1998, the Board of Management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school, and it is the Board of Management which employs the teachers at the school. Accordingly, whereas my Department provides funding and policy direction for schools, it does not have the power to instruct schools to follow a particular course of direction with regard to individual complaint cases.

The Office of the Ombudsman for Children may independently investigate complaints relating to the administrative actions or non actions of a school recognised by my Department, provided the parent has firstly and fully followed the school's complaints procedures. The key criterion for any intervention by the Ombudsman for Children is that the administrative actions or non actions of a school has, or may have, adversely affected the child. Accordingly, officials in my Department are not in a position legally to intervene in the dispute in question.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

228. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the higher diploma in montessori teaching course at a college (details supplied) in Dublin is not funded by the Student Universal Support Ireland grant; if he will consider including it on the list for funding in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12844/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The course referred to by the Deputy has not been approved as it has not been demonstrated that it represents academic progression from the qualification required for entry to the course. I have no plans to extend the student grant scheme to include this course on that basis.

Educational Disadvantage

229. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he has put in place to tackle educational disadvantage for deaf children. [12874/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department provides for an extensive range of supports to assist pupils who are deaf or hard of hearing.

I can confirm that there are currently 11 special classes for pupils with hearing impairment attached to mainstream primary schools, 5 special class at post-primary level and 3 special schools. An enhanced capitation grant is provided to the special schools and special classes for hearing impaired pupils.

Pupils in special classes and special schools for hearing impaired children are supported by enhanced pupil teacher ratios of 7:1. Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support is also provided in these schools and classes, as required.

In line with my Department's policy that children with special educational needs (SEN) access appropriate education intervention in mainstream settings where possible, many deaf/hard of hearing pupils are integrated into mainstream classes at primary and post-primary level with the assistance, as necessary, of resource teaching and special needs assistant support.

Grant-aid is also provided to schools towards the provision of special equipment for pupils who are hard of hearing, such as sound field systems and radio aids.

My Department also provides funding for a weekly home tuition service whereby tutors visit the homes of deaf and hard of hearing pre-school children and school-going pupils to provide training in Irish Sign Language (ISL) for these children, their siblings and parents.

In addition, the Visiting Teacher Service for Children and Young People with a Hearing Impairment is provided by my Department from the time of referral through to third level education. The Visiting Teacher service provides advice and support to ensure that the needs of children and young people with hearing impairment are met. This service is available at pre-school, primary and post-primary levels. Specifically, the service works in partnership with parents of pre-school children with hearing impairment, visiting their homes and/or meeting them in groups to inform, advise and offer guidance in matters pertaining to their education and overall development and in helping their children to derive maximum benefit from the educational opportunities available.

My Department, through the Higher Education Authority (HEA), has established and funds a Centre for Deaf Studies in Trinity College, Dublin which provides diploma courses for ISL/English interpreters, deaf tutors and in deaf studies. The course modules deal with issues such as sign linguistics, bilingualism and socio-linguistics of sign language. The course is delivered in seminar sessions/group work and the award of the diploma is based on continued assessment and a project and course design.

Finally, I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has published Policy Advice on the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in Ireland, which makes a number of recommendations for the improvement of educational provision for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children.

This policy advice is available on the NCSE's website www.ncse.ie. My Department has established a working group which will consider and implement the recommendations of this report in accordance with available resources.

Múinteoirí Bunscoile agus Meánscoile

230. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cad iad na hathruithe atá déanta ar na liúntais Ghaeilge, Ghaeltachta agus Oileáin a bhíonn á n-íoc le múinteoirí bunscoile agus meánscoile ó tháinig sé i gcumhacht; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [12883/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Thug an Rialtas faomhadh do roinnt beart a bhain le liúntais seirbhíse poiblí tar éis don Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar fud na seirbhíse poiblí ar liúntais agus préimh-íocaíochtaí.

Mar thoradh ar chinneadh an Rialtais, táthar tar éis na liúntais Ghaeltachta, na liúntais i gcomhair mhúineadh trí Ghaeilge agus na liúntais Oileáin a tharraingt siar ar fud na seirbhíse poiblí i gcás tairbhithe nua, múinteoirí san áireamh, le héifeacht ó 1 Feabhra 2012.

Schools Building Projects Status

231. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 40 of 20 September, the number of the 27 schools listed that are in band rating 2.1 and are not included in the five year plan and have rented portacabins that have sites

that have been assessed by his Department as being ready to build on; the names and roll numbers of these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12884/13]

232. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 40 of 20 September 2012, the number of the 27 listed schools that are in band rating 2.1 and are not included in the five year plan and have rented portacabins that have more then 50% of the pupils being taught in portacabins; the names and roll numbers of these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12885/13]

233. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 40 of 20 September 2012, the number of the 27 listed schools that are in band rating 2.1 and are not included in the five year plan and have rented portacabins that have learning support and resource teachers working in rooms that are not considered adequate in size for such work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12886/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 231 to 233, inclusive, together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that a site assessment if required would only take place at the point when a building project is being approved.

In respect of rented portacabins that have more then 50% of the pupils being taught in portacabins, my Department does not have the specific information sought by the Deputy relating to the deployment of teachers in classrooms by schools.

In relation to schools that have rented portacabins that have learning support and resource teachers working in rooms that are not considered adequate in size for such work, when schools apply for temporary accommodation it is a matter for each school to apply for the appropriate level of accommodation. As standard, the Department approves a 16m2 room for each full-time equivalent learning support and resource post in respect of both permanent and temporary accommodation.

Schools Refurbishment

234. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the schools in counties Wicklow and Carlow that were provided for under his Department's additional accommodation scheme and emergency works approval to date in 2013; the precise amount of funding that has been allocated to each; the specific project in each school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12887/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Details of all Additional Accommodation and Emergency Works approvals are published on my Department's website on a weekly basis.

As the tendering process could be influenced by the provision of the amount of grant-aid provided at this stage, this information will be published on my Department's website as soon as the projects are completed.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

235. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of persons on the payroll of his Department, both Department employees and teachers in schools

nationwide; the number of physical payslips that his Department processes each month; the percentage of these that are sent to payees in the post; the breakdown in the overall cost of physical payslips and postage per year for the years 2009 to 2012; if payees have the option of switching to online payslips; if he will implement online payslips in the near future; if he has considered the savings this would make; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12888/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): An average of 96,000 employees (comprising school employees/pensioners and Departmental staff) are paid on payrolls operated by my Department every fortnight. Approximately 229,000 payslips are generated every month, of which 98.95% are posted to payees. The overall cost of physical payslips and postage in the years 2009 to 2012 is as follows:

Year	Stationery Costs	Posting Costs
2009	€59,635	€1,246,735
2010	€67,015	€1,275,369
2011	€78,475	€1,276,477
2012	€51,417	€1,074,703

The option of online payslips is not yet available to school employees/pensioners. Online payslips for school employees/pensioners will be considered by officials in my Department, with a view to implementing a cost effective online payslip system by the end of 2014. In late 2012 my Department rolled out the online payslip facility on a pilot basis to Departmental staff in Tullamore. Since February 2013 this has been extended to all staff within the Department's main offices in Dublin, Tullamore and Athlone.

The issuing of physical payslips to staff within the Department will cease with effect from Friday 15th March. In the coming weeks this online facility will be extended to officers outside the Departments main offices who carry out field duties such as Inspectors and Psychologists; this will significantly reduce the percentage of Departmental staff currently receiving payslips by post.

Teacher Redeployment

236. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills with reference to new applicants for panel rights at primary teacher level including applicants who previously applied in 2012, if a person (details supplied) in County Donegal who has worked in a temporary capacity for seven years in two separate dioceses, will be in a position to secure a place on the 2013-14 panel. [12900/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The core function of the redeployment arrangements is to facilitate the redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers to other schools that have vacancies. The redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers is key to the Department's ability to manage within its payroll budget and ceiling on teacher numbers. Thereafter, schools are required under the panel arrangements to fill permanent vacancies from supplementary panels comprised of eligible fixed-term (temporary/substitute) and part-time teachers. The application process for the supplementary panels was introduced for the 2012/13 school year.

The arrangements for panel access for fixed term (temporary/substitute) and part-time teachers for the 2013/14 school year are set out in Department Circular 0038/2012 which was published on 9 November 2012 and is available on the Department website. The closing date

for receipt of applications was 14 December 2012.

The teacher referred to by the Deputy has submitted an application before the closing date and this is currently being processed. As outlined in circular 0038/2012, my Department intends to notify all applicants of the outcome of their application by 31 March 2013 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Library Services

237. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in tabular form, in respect of library services in university libraries, the percentage of total spend allocated to the library services broken down by institution and year for each institute of technology and university for each year from 2005 to date; the number of persons and the full time equivalent in each grade in library, academic and administrative positions for each institute of technology and university for each year from 2005 to date; the names and student enrolment of modules or courses taught by part time or sessional lecturers or any staff not in the full time employment of the institution for each institute of technology and university for each year from 2005 to date and the percentage of FTE student numbers this represents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12909/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information sought is not readily available in my Department. Officials of my Department have asked the Higher Education Authority to contact the institutions seeking details and I will forward the available information to the Deputy as soon as possible.

School Curriculum

238. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to the social, personal and health education programme currently run in second level schools as a compulsory part of the curriculum, his plans to maintain this as a mandatory subject; and if he has any plans to reform the said programme. [12931/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The NCCA is designing a range of short courses which will be available to schools from September 2014 including a short course in SPHE. Schools may choose to incorporate these short courses into their junior cycle programme either for certification purposes or not for certification. They may choose not to opt for the new short course and may choose to continue to use existing courses or other approaches to meet the Framework's Principles, Statements of Learning and Key Skills relevant to these areas. Schools will have the flexibility to determine how best to meet the range of Statements of Learning, Key Skills and Principles that relate to the areas currently covered in SPHE.

The new Framework for Junior Cycle which I published last October will, inter alia, aim to increase the importance of physical wellbeing in several ways:

The Framework is based on eight Principles. The Principle of "Wellbeing" undertakes to ensure that "the student experience contributes directly to their physical wellbeing." The Principle of "Inclusive Education" undertakes to ensure that "the educational experience is inclusive of all students and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcomes for all"

Contained in the Junior Cycle's Statements of Learning is the stated aim that the student "takes action to safeguard and promote his/her wellbeing and that of others"; is "confident and competent in physical activity and is motivated to be physically active" and that he/she "understands the importance of food and diet in making healthy lifestyle choices".

In addition, eight Key Skills are required for successful learning across the curriculum and beyond the school. This is in recognition of the fact that learning takes place both inside and outside of the formal school environment. One of these Key Skills is "Staying Well", which adopts a holistic approach to wellbeing and includes "Being healthy, physical and active".

School Patronage

239. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an update on plans to set up an Educate Together primary school in the Sandymount-Ringsend area of Dublin. [12952/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy may be aware, in June 2011, I announced the need for the establishment of 20 new primary schools to cater for increased demographics across a number of locations up to 2017, including the Sandymount/Ringsend area in Dublin 2/4.

I also announced new arrangements for the recognition and determination of patronage of these new primary schools. The new arrangements published by my Department provide a balanced approach to allow applications to be made by prospective patrons for the establishment of schools. The criteria used in deciding patronage of the new schools place a particular emphasis on parental demand for plurality and diversity of patronage. This consideration will have regard to the patronage of the existing schools in an area.

Residential Institutions Redress Scheme

240. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding inclusion for the consideration of the Residential Institutions Redress Board. [12953/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002 established the Redress Board to make financial awards to people who, as children were resident in specified institutions and who have or have had injuries that are consistent with abuse received while resident in these institutions. The Schedule to the 2002 Act specified 123 institutions and section 4 of the Act enables the Minister for Education and Science to provide for the insertion into the Schedule of "any industrial school, reformatory school, orphanage, children's home, special school which was established for the purpose of providing education services to children with a physical or intellectual disability or a hospital providing medical or psychiatric services to people with a physical or mental disability or mental illness in which children were placed and resident and in respect of which a public body had a regulatory or inspection function." Two Orders have been made specifying 16 additional institutions, in November 2004 and July 2005, bringing the total number of scheduled institutions to 139. The position of the Regina Coeli hostel was considered by my Department but it was not included in the Schedule as hostels did not come within the terms of section 4 of the Act. A request to include an institution at the same address and known as the Morning Star Mother and Baby Home was also refused on the basis that there was no record of State responsibility for it.

Following the publication of the Ryan Report in May 2009, there were a range of demands for the redress scheme to be extended, including demands to include specific institutions and categories of institutions. Having considered these demands, the then Government announced its decision not to revise the arrangements in its press statement of 15th April, 2010.

While the original closing date for receipt of applications by the Redress Board was 15th December, 2005, the Board could accept late applications in exceptional circumstances. The Residential Institutions Redress Amendment Act, 2011 removed the Board's power to accept late applications received on or after the 17th September, 2011. The Board is continuing to finalise the remaining applications before it.

Finally, I wish to clarify that the Bethany Home is not a scheduled institution under the Redress Scheme.

School Transport

241. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No.113 of 29 November 2012, if the shortfall due to the family (details supplied) has been paid out to the said family; if not, the steps he will take to expedite the payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12967/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The Deputy will be aware from my previous reply that the family in question has received payment covering the school years 2001/02 to 2010/11.

The method used to calculate the grant payment due was explained to the family in question.

My Department is satisfied that no further payments are outstanding.

Cóiríocht Scoile

242. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cé mhéad bunscoil agus iarbhunscoil, faoi seach, atá i gcóiríocht shealadach agus cé mhéad díobh sin gur scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge iad; cad iad ainmneacha agus uimhir rolla na scoileanna sin [13005/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Faoi láthair, tá 621 bunscoil agus iar-bhunscoil ann atá ag tógáil cóiríochta sealadaí ar cíos ar fud na tíre, 60 díobh gur Gaelscoileanna iad agus 5 díobh gur Gaelcholáistí iad.

Tá ainmneacha agus uimhreacha rolla na scoileanna lán-Ghaelacha atá ag tógáil cóiríochta sealadaí ar cíos léirithe sa tábla leis seo.

Gaelscoileanna agus Gaelcholáistí i gCóiríocht Shealadach

Uimhir rolla	Ainm na Scoile	Contae	Dáta Tosaigh na Cóiríochta Sealadaí
20026G	GS Bhreifne	An Cabhán	01/09/12
19849U	GS Donncha Rua	An Clár	01/09/02
19999Q	GS Uí Choimín	An Clár	01/09/94
19839R**	GS Uí Ríordáin	Corcaigh	01/09/83
19851H**	GS de hÍde	Corcaigh	01/09/08

Uimhir rolla	Ainm na Scoile	Contae	Dáta Tosaigh na Cóiríochta Sealadaí
19881Q**	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Corcaigh	01/09/05
19909M	GS Pheig Sayers	Corcaigh	01/09/05
19993E**	GS an Ghoirt Álainn	Corcaigh	01/01/04
20006A**	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Corcaigh	01/09/09
20025E	GS Droichead na Bandan	Corcaigh	01/08/11
20107G**	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Corcaigh	01/09/06
20151J	Gaelscoil Mhúscraí	Corcaigh	01/09/09
20239A	Gaelscoil Ui Drisceoil	Corcaigh	01/07/11
20265B	Gaelscoil Chionn tSáile	Corcaigh	01/09/07
19971R**	Gaelscoil Adhamh-nain	Dún na nGall	01/09/05
20097G	Gaelscoil Bhun Chranncha	Dún na nGall	01/09/99
20144M	Gaelscoil Chois Feabhail	Dún na nGall	01/09/03
20167B	Gaelscoil Eirne	Dún na nGall	02/09/02
76107U	Gaelcholáiste Bhun Cranncha	Dún na nGall	15/08/07
19907I*	Gaelscoil Mologa	Baile Átha Cliath	01/09/07
19926M**	Gaelscoil Choláiste Mhuire	Baile Átha Cliath	21/12/01
19991A	Ghaelscoil na Camoige	Baile Átha Cliath	01/07/06
20043G	Gaelscoil Chnoc liamhna	Baile Átha Cliath	01/09/06
20047O**	Gaelscoil Bharra	Baile Átha Cliath	01/06/97
20220C	Gs Ui hEarcain	Baile Átha Cliath	01/09/08
20334R**	Gaelscoil Ros Eo	Baile Átha Cliath	01/09/08
76085N	Gaelcholaiste Reachrann	Baile Átha Cliath	01/09/05
19994G	GS Mhic Amhlaigh	Gaillimh	01/09/06
19998O**	GS de hÍde	Gaillimh	01/09/98
20061I**	GS Iarfhlatha	Gaillimh	01/07/12
20123E**	Gaelscoil Riabhach	Gaillimh	01/07/04
20237T**	Gaelscoil Riada	Gaillimh	01/09/06
20264W	GS na bhFilí	Gaillimh	03/09/07
20013U	Gaelscoil Lios Tu-athail	Ciarraí	01/09/04
20058T	Gaelscoil Ui Fhiaich	Cill Dara	01/09/04

Uimhir rolla	Ainm na Scoile	Contae	Dáta Tosaigh na Cóiríochta Sealadaí
19856R*	Gaelscoil Osraí	Cill Chainnigh	01/09/05
15446B	Gaelscoil Thromaire	Laois	23/04/07
20224K	Gaelscoil an tSlí Dála	Laois	01/07/05
20212D**	Gaelscoil Liatroma	Liatroim	01/09/05
20260O	Gaelscoil Chluainín	Liatroim	01/09/07
19956V	Gaelscoil Sairséal	Luimneach	01/01/00
20148U**	Gaelscoil Chaladh an Treoigh	Luimneach	01/09/01
20181S**	Gaelscoil an Ráithín	Luimneach	01/09/03
76101I	Gaelscholáiste Luimnigh	Luimneach	01/09/10
20083S**	Gaelscoil an Longfoirt	An Longfort	01/09/05
19972T	Gaelscoil Uileog De Búrca	Maigh Eo	01/06/97
20051F	Gaelscoil na Boinne	An Mhí	01/04/06
20082Q	Gaelscoil Thulach na nÓg	An Mhí	01/09/06
20382F**	Gaelscoil na Mí	An Mhí	01/07/11
19936P	Gaelscoil Ultain	Muineachán	28/08/06
20055N	GS Eois	Muineachán	01/12/97
20327U	Gaelscoil Lorgan	Muineachán	18/07/08
20332N**	Gaelscoil Éadan Doire	Uíbh Fhailí	01/09/08
20126K	GS de hÍde	Ros Comáin	01/09/04
20044I	Gaelscoil Chnoc Na Ré	Sligeach	01/07/04
20085W	GS Charraig Na Siúire	Tiobraid Árann	01/09/98
19885B	Gaelscoil Philib Barún	Port Láirge	10/01/05
20050D**	Gaelscoil na nDéise	Port Láirge	01/07/08
68078U	Gaelcholáiste Phort Láirge	Port Láirge	01/08/07
20238V	GS an Choillin	An Iarmhí	01/09/06
20057R**	GS Inis Córthaidh	Loch Garman	01/09/05
20045K**	Gaelscoil Chill Mhantáin	Cill Mhantáin	01/09/05
20080M**	GS An Inbhir Mhóir	Cill Mhantáin	01/09/98
20243O	GS Na Lochanna	Cill Mhantáin	01/07/10
76106S	Gaelcholáiste na Mara	Cill Mhantáin	01/09/07

* Included in Prefab Replacement Programme

** Included in 5 Year Programme

School Enrolments

243. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline secondary school options available for children in Ashbourne, County Meath; if he will detail plans for the new secondary school; the pupil capacity and enrolment procedure for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13070/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy is aware, in June of 2011, I announced that 20 new post-primary schools are to be established up to 2017 across a number of locations to cater for increasing demographics. This announcement included a proposal to establish a new post-primary school in Ashbourne. The new school will commence operation in September 2014 under the patronage of County Meath VEC and will cater for 1000 pupils in the long term. My Department is currently working with the Local Authority to identify a suitable site for the new school. The enrolment policy for the new school will be developed by the school's management authorities in due course.

School Enrolments

244. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline primary school options available for children in Ashbourne, County Meath; if he will outline the measures he is taking to ensure appropriate and adequate access to primary school places for all children in the locality into the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13071/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware, in March 2011 approval was given for a number of new primary schools to commence operation in September 2011 and 2012 to cater for demographic needs. To cater for the demographic demand in the Ashbourne area, approval was granted to open two new primary schools, one under the patronage of An Foras Pátrúnachta which commenced operation in September 2011, and the second under the patronage of Educate Together which commenced operation in September 2012.

The 5 Year Construction Programme that I announced in March 2012, together with my recent announcement of the 50 school projects which are scheduled for construction in the current year as part of a €2 billion capital investment programme, outlines the major school projects that will commence construction over the duration of the Plan (2012-2016). Three of these projects, two primary schools and one post-primary school are located in Ashbourne.My officials have been in direct contact with the existing primary schools in Ashbourne regarding the availability of primary school accommodation in the area for September 2013. My Department will be in further contact with these schools on this matter shortly.

Schools Building Projects Status

245. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an update on a school (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13072/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy may be aware,

a project for the school to which she refers is included in the 5 Year Construction Programme that I announced in March 2012. It is my Department's intention that this project will proceed to construction in 2014/15.

The Schedule of Accommodation is currently being finalised and my Department will be in contact with the school authority as soon as this process has been completed. The architectural planning process for the project can be initiated thereafter which includes the appointment of a design team.

The current status of all projects on the school building programme, including the school in question, may be viewed on my Department's website at www.education.ie.

Third Level Fees

246. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the free fees scheme application in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 13; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13074/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the terms of my Department's Free Fee Initiative the Exchequer meets the cost of tuition fees in respect of eligible students who are pursuing full-time undergraduate courses of study which are a minimum of two years duration in an approved higher education institution. The main conditions of the scheme are that students must be first-time undergraduates, hold inter alia EU/EEA/Swiss nationality in their own right, and have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course.

The position is that the assessment of eligibility in individual cases is a matter for each higher education institution to determine within the terms of the scheme. I understand from clarification received by my officials that in this case the relevant higher education institution has advised the student of their eligibility status.

The Springboard programme provides free part time higher education courses for unemployed people in areas where there are identified labour market skills shortages, such as ICT, Manufacturing and International Financial Services. Springboard places are open to unemployed people who have a previous history of employment and there is no requirement that a person be progressing on the National Framework of Qualifications. More than 10,000 places have been provided under the two rounds of the programme to date. A new call for proposals for Springboard courses was issued to higher education providers at the end of February and is expected to provide for an additional 5,000 places in 2013. Further information is available at the dedicated information and applications website: www.springboardcourses.ie.

Public Sector Pensions Issues

247. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the pension related deduction is ever going to be refunded to those with salaries of less than €30,000 as originally stated when the pension related deduction was introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12595/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The pension-related deduction (PRD) was introduced by the previous Government and I am not aware of any commitment about refunds to those on less than €30,000.

However, I am pleased to state that the Government has agreed to the Labour Relations Commission proposals, currently under consideration by the trade unions, which include an undertaking to reduce the rate of PRD on the band from €15,000 - €20,000 of relevant earnings from 5% to 2.5%.

The PRD was introduced by way of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009 and section 13 of that Act provides that I must review the Act each year and cause a written report of my findings to be laid before each House of the Oireachtas, which I have done and will continue to do.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

248. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in view of the severity of the Croke Park II proposed cuts to low and middle income pay, following significant reductions in take home pay for public sector workers since 2009, and his decision to implement the new cuts in pay and pensions eight months before the Public Service Agreement 2010 concludes, his views that the LRC sought and agreed by management proposals in effect enact Clause 1.28 of the Croke Park agreement which states the implementation of this agreement is subject to no unforeseen budgetary deterioration. [12351/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): At the instigation of Government, discussions took 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 a €1bn overall saving from the public service pay and pensions bill by 2015. Following intensive engagement 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. These proposals represent a balanced and integrated set of proposals and avoid the imposition of basic pay cuts to the 87% of public servants on low and middle incomes. As these proposals are intended as the basis for a new Agreement between the Government and the Unions and Associations representing public servants, the issue of Paragraph 1.28 of the earlier Public Service Agreement does not arise.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

249. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide in tabular form, the number of public sector employees who will be subject to the provisions of the Croke Park II agreement whose salary and allowances fall into the following bands less than €65,000; €65,000 to €150,000; €150,000 to €185,000 and more than €185,000 together with the estimated pre-Croke Park II 2013 gross salaries and allowances, 2013 net salaries and allowances after tax and deductions and the post-Croke Park II 2013 gross salaries and allowances, 2013 net salaries and allowances after tax and deductions. [12352/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The closest data currently available within the Department to those sought by the Deputy are the estimated breakdown of employee numbers on a whole time equivalent basis (based on a whole time equivalent figure of 292,000) by salary range within the public service is set out in Table 1. The impacts of Income Tax, Universal Social Charge, Pension Related Deduction, Employee P.R.S.I. and Pension Contributions have been based on the mid point of the relevant salary range and are included in the Table also. Estimates are based on a single individual subject to social insurance deductions under Class A.

Salary Range	Numbers	Gross Pay Mid Point in Range	Net Pay Mid Point in Range	Gross Pay after proposed pay reduction on Mid Point in Range	Net Pay Mid Point in Range
0 to 65,000	252,767	32,500	€24,187	*32,500	€24,187
65,000 to 150,000	36,512	107,500	€53,391	100,900	€50,884
150,000+	2,721	175,000	€79,020	162,750	€74,369
	292,000				

*The proposed Pay Reduction does not affect salary rates below €65,000 per annum.

12/03/2013WRJ02150Croke Park Agreement Savings

250. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will estimate by year in each of 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 the gross savings arising from changes in the Croke Park II to overtime arrangements whereby overtime will be paid at time and half at the first point of the scale for those on less than €35,000; time and a quarter at the individual's scale point for those over €35,000 and those public servants currently on 39 hours will provide an unpaid hour of overtime. [12354/13]

251. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will estimate by year in each of 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 the gross savings arising from changes in the so-called Croke Park II to twilight payments and reduced rate of time and three quarters for Sunday pay. [12355/13]

252. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will estimate by year in each of 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 the gross savings arising from changes in the Croke Park two from freezing increments for those earning more than €65k; between €35k and €65k; and less than €35k. [12356/13]

253. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will estimate by year in each of 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 the gross savings arising from changes in the Croke Park II to those at the maximum of their scales from measures intended to balance with changes to increments for those who are not at the maximum of their scales. [12357/13]

254. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will estimate by year in each of 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 the gross savings arising from changes in the Croke Park II from the elimination of supervision and substitution payments in the education sector. [12358/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 250 to 254, inclusive, together.

In relation to estimates of savings arising from the LRC proposals, it is intended to publish the Revised Estimates Volume for 2013 before end March 2013. This document will set out the revised allocations for Votes arising from the proposals made and will include an overall savings provision on the pay and pensions bill of some €300m for 2013. My Department will be contacting Departments shortly with the final pay allocations for 2013 including Employment

Control Framework staffing ceilings which will include savings arising from the LRC proposals. This will have implications for the overall allocations for Votes. The Revised Estimates Volume for 2013 will be submitted to the Oireachtas for consideration in due course.

Following the publication of the 2013 Revised Estimates Volume, Departments will be contacted regarding their overall allocations for the period 2014-2016, including the ongoing effect of the pay proposals and staffing ceilings.

Departmental Expenditure

255. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the home of the Minister of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12372/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): ICT is provided on a shared services basis by the IT Unit in my Department to both the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

My Department has incurred no costs in relation to the provision of hardware or software in my home or the home of the Minister for Finance.

I am awaiting information from the Office of Public Works in relation to the provision of hardware and software to the home of Minister of State Hayes. I will forward this material to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Departmental Expenditure

256. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12390/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question I can confirm that no telephones were provided in my home or that of the Minister of State Brian Hayes.

Departmental Expenditure

257. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly phone bills of Ministers and Junior Ministers in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12409/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question I can confirm that there were no costs borne by my Department for providing telephones and ICT to my Constituency Office since March 2011.

Provision of PCs, laptops and other computer-related equipment to the Minister of State and his three staff amounted to €3,905.46.

Departmental Expenditure

258. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills are being paid to constituency office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12427/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question I can confirm that a Shredder, Fax Machine, Dictation Transcriber and Photocopier costing €5,275.60 have been loaned out to equip my Constituency Office in Wexford but remain the property of the Department and will revert back accordingly in due course. There were no additional costs in the Constituency Office of Mr. Hayes.

Departmental Expenditure

259. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of mobile phones in use by him, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12445/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question I can confirm that there are three mobile phones in use by myself and two other politically appointed staff which has cost €3,572.70 since March 2011.

The mobile phone costs incurred by Minister of State and his Personal Assistant since March 2011 are €4,521.90.

Departmental Expenditure

260. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12463/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question the following is a list of costs regarding Ministerial cars from March 2011:

Type of Expenditure	Number of Staff	Amount
Minister		
Mileage	1	€24,148.31
Expenses	2	€45,483.18
Salaries	2	€141,295.18
Total		€210,926.67
Minister of State		
Mileage	1	€36,754.62
Expenses	3	€8,921.21
Salaries	3	€139,694.52
Total		€185,370.35

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform did not exist in 2010.

Departmental Expenditure

261. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12482/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question there are seven credit card holders in my Department with annual fees costing €155.00 in 2011 and €248.00 in 2012 respectively. There are four credit card holders in the Office of Public Works and the total cost per card since 2011 is €230. It is the Departments policy to ensure that all credit card payments are cleared at the end of each month to avoid penalty interest payments.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

262. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the moratorium on public sector recruitment has been lifted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12503/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Looking forward over the course of the next few years, the public service will be required to deliver more savings and to 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.

The moratorium on promotion and recruitment in the public service is an important control mechanism for this purpose and has served to help reduce numbers while allowing for some limited recruitment where necessary, for example in frontline service posts in the health and education sectors. The moratorium on recruitment will continue until such time that the targets are met and sustained.

National Procurement Service Framework Agreements

263. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the way the multi-supplier framework agreement for the supply of monochrome and colour printers and multi-function devices is consistent with the Action Plan for Jobs 2013 commitment 206, to prioritise the reduction of barriers to entry for small and medium enterprises in competing for procurement opportunities; the reason no social clauses have been considered as part of the process despite his commitment to promote such clauses. [12553/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The National Procurement Service (NPS) is fully committed to encouraging the participation of SMEs in their nationwide competitions and has taken a number of steps to make this possible. 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. The NPS actively encourages consortia to tender for their competitions. 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.

One proven method to encourage the participation of SMES is through the use of lots in a competition. In the current office equipment tender the NPS has divided the range of printers sought into five individual lots with plans to place up to seven companies on a framework for each lot. Therefore, there is the potential for thirty-five different companies to win places on this new framework.

In order to lighten the burden placed on SMEs when tendering the NPS operates in line with the best practise recommendations of the Department of Finance Circular 10/10. These steps include the use of proportional criteria for turnover and qualification, proportional insurance levels being set, ensures that there is no requirement for companies to submit all relevant paperwork (e.g. tax clearance certificates, auditors statements) upfront. The NPS also uses the CSSO approved standard suite of documents when drafting a tender and uses the eTenders website to ensure all companies can access the documentation and any clarifications quickly and freely. There is a social clause included in current public works contracts which deals with pay and conditions of employment, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform are considering how it may be possible to include a performance requirement for the employment of the long-term unemployed in future contracts.

National Procurement Service Framework Agreements

264. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will review the current managed print services framework to include the annual turnover requirements, to ensure that it is fully consistent with his recent commitments to promote small and medium enterprise involvement in procurement and reflective of social clauses. [12554/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): Managed Print Services (MPS) is a unique office print solution, where a supplier provides an all-inclusive service charged on a per click basis, that includes the provision of print/imaging devices at no capital cost to the public sector body. The supplier, in effect, provides the full infrastructure required for all day-to-day office printing. Research carried out by the National Procurement Service (NPS) has indicated that such an approach gives best value to the Irish public sector.

The MPS Framework Agreement offers all public sector bodies in the State access to a print solution that is strategic, cost efficient and that can be tailored to the specific needs of the individual organisation. Following an open competition, advertised on e-tenders and in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU), the Framework Agreement for MPS was established on 8 February 2012. The Framework Agreement will be in place for two years, with an option to extend for a further two years.

The value of the Framework Agreement over two years was estimated to be up to €100 million. Taking into account the value of the Framework and the fact that suppliers are required to provide all of the print devices upfront, from their own resources, the view was taken by the NPS that the €10 million minimum turnover requirement was proportionate. Tenderers who did not have the required turnover in their own right were invited to partner with other entities

to satisfy this requirement.

The minimum turnover requirement for entry into the Framework was an average of €10 million per annum for the three most recent years of audited accounts or where the date of establishment is more recent for each year the entity has been established. These turnover requirements were applied at the qualification stage as part of the competition for entry on to the MPS Framework Agreement. Under S.I. No. 329 of 2006 – European Communities (Award of Public Authority Contracts) Regulations 2006, no changes can be made to the composition of a Framework for the duration of the Agreement.

The MPS procurement competition explicitly sought to encourage the participation of SMEs. Those SMEs that believed the scope of the competition was beyond their technical or business capacity were encouraged to explore the possibilities of forming relationships with other SMEs or with larger enterprises. Larger enterprises were also encouraged to consider the practical ways that SMEs could be included in their proposals with a view to maximising the social and economic benefits of the contracts that result from these tenders.

All of the Framework Members have operations in Ireland and provide local employment. Four of the seven successful tenderers are SMEs (MJ Flood, Bryan S Ryan, Hibernian Business Equipment and Ergo). One of the tenderers did not have the required turnover in their own right to qualify for the Framework and formed an alliance with a large manufacturer to satisfy the turnover requirement. Furthermore, the Framework Members have indicated in their tender submissions that they will use a further 11 indigenous SMEs in the delivery of MPS.

National Procurement Service Framework Agreements

265. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in view of his commitment to promote social clauses and small and medium enterprise take up of Government procurement, the steps being taken to design tender documents and evaluation criteria that reflect these commitments. [12555/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The Government has taken several steps to encourage the participation of SMEs in their tender competitions. National Procurement Service (NPS) tender documents explicitly seek to encourage the participation of SMEs. They encourage SMEs who believe that the scope of a particular competition is beyond their technical or business capacity to explore the possibilities of forming relationships with other SMEs or with larger enterprises. Larger enterprises are 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.

The NPS uses the CSSO-approved standard suite of documents when drafting a tender and I have encouraged all other contracting authorities involved in public procurement to do the same – this use of standardised documents is designed to simplify the issues facing business when tendering for public contracts. The standard tender documents provide that much of the documentary evidence of a tenderer's capacity to undertake a project is not required to be produced at tender stage – instead, tenderers are asked to declare that they have the necessary capacity and that they will be in a position to produce the necessary documentation when requested. That documentary evidence (e.g., bank statements, audited accounts, proof of professional indemnity, etc.) need only be produced when a tenderer has been short-listed or is coming under consideration for the award of a contract. This approach is aimed at reducing the up-front administrative burden for businesses interested in tendering for contracts.

In line with the best practise recommendations of the Department of Finance Circular 10/10, contracting authorities are encouraged to ensure that requirement levels for turnover and insurance levels are proportionate to the particular contract. There is a social clause included in current public works contracts which deals with pay and conditions of employment and, as I indicated to Deputy Tóibín in reply to an earlier question, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform are considering how it may be possible to include a performance requirement for the employment of the long-term unemployed in future contracts. The Department is also considering whether it would be appropriate to include comparable clauses in other public contracts.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

266. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the revised Croke Park agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12607/13]

272. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in view of the fact that full premium payments have been restored to permanent fire fighters and prison officers, the reason nurses, gardaí and paramedics are going to have their premiums cut; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13035/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 266 and 272 together.

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 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. These proposals represent a balanced and integrated set of proposals and I have no plans to amend the proposals made. All public servants, including frontline workers, will be able to consider the full set of proposals by the LRC which have been published and the public service staff representatives who remained in negotiations have indicated that these proposals will be subject to ballot by members.

Both the Government and I are acutely aware of the very significant contributions made to date by all public servants by way of pay reductions, imposition of the pension related deduction, non payment of pay increases and the significant productivity arising over recent years facilitated by the Public Service Agreement. Regrettably, the scale of the fiscal crisis inherited by the current Government and the absolute requirement to address and reduce the current deficit of 8% to less than 3% in 2015, requires a further contribution of €1bn from the public service pay and pensions bill which accounts for some 35% of current expenditure. The LRC proposals represent a fair and balanced set of proposals across all public service sectors to secure the savings required by the Exchequer while ameliorating the impacts for public service staff on low and middle incomes to the greatest extent possible. In this regard, I am satisfied that the proposals have protected the core pay of 87% of the workers in the public service.

National Lottery Licence Sale

267. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the 6% retail agents' margin will be ringfenced in the National Lottery Bill 2012; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [12659/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy is aware, I announced in April 2012 that there will be a competition for the next National Lottery licence. It is envisaged that the competition will take place later this year. I have advised retailer representative bodies that it is my intention to safeguard the existing rates of commission paid to retailers under the terms of the next licence.

I acknowledge the concerns of retailers and the importance to them of income from National Lottery sales, particularly in the current economic climate. I am also aware of the central role which retailers have played in the great success of the National Lottery since its inception. It is envisaged that retailers will continue to be central to the operation of the National Lottery over the 20 year term of the next licence. I am confident that there will be strong growth in National Lottery sales under the next licence with an alignment of interests between the next licence holder, retailers and the State, reaping benefits for all concerned.

Flood Relief Schemes Funding

268. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will confirm the way money has been allocated to Clonakilty Town Council and or Cork County Council to carry out minor works in Clonakilty in the aftermath of the 28 June flood of 2012; the amount of these funds that has been spent by the council to date; if the Office of Public Works will consider further applications for funding of minor flood relief works at Clonakilty; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12717/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The Office of Public Works allocated funding to Cork County Council of €350,000 under the Minor Flood Works and Coastal Protection Scheme in 2010 for channel capacity improvements for Clonakilty, of which €202,456 was drawn down by the end of 2012. OPW did not allocate any further funding for Clonakilty in 2012.

Clonakilty was identified through the national Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment as an area where the flood risk was potentially significant and was hence designated as an Area for Further Assessment (AFA), for which detailed analysis is to be carried out under the South West Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study.

In response to the severe flood risk in Clonakilty evidenced by the flooding of 28 June 2012, it was agreed at a meeting between Cork County Council and OPW in July 2012 that the study of Clonakilty would be accelerated under the South West CFRAMS project. The flood risk assessment and the analysis of flood relief options for Clonakilty are being prioritised with a view to developing as soon as possible a comprehensive solution to the flooding problems the town experiences. The hydrological and hydraulic analysis under this study is currently nearing completion, and consideration of the possible options to develop a solution has begun. It is anticipated that a draft Preliminary Options Report will be provided to the OPW and Cork County Council for technical review in early summer, with a range of potentially viable options, including a provisionally preferred option, being subsequently presented to stakeholders and the public for consultation in mid-summer of 2013. The preferred option for flood relief in Clonakilty, with outline design, should then be identified by Autumn 2013, subject to the outcome of the public consultation process.

It would not be appropriate and the OPW does not intend to fund further minor or interim works in Clonakilty as the CFRAM Study is now ongoing and in the process of identifying vi-

able options to address the flooding problems in the town.

State Properties

269. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will outline the circumstances in which Ballyhoura Estates Limited, consisting of a substantial house, outbuildings and more than 130 acres of land, which was vested in and held in trust by the Minister for Finance under the 1954 State Property Act on 1 September 1972 for the statutory 20 years, was conveyed to a person (details supplied) on 5 April 1979, and then on 6 April 1979, was conveyed to the person's daughter in part house, outbuildings and 17 acres of land, of which the person, sold 6.315 acres on 11 January 1984; if he will explain the way, almost two years later, on 6 October 1986, the Minister for Finance sold in fee simple sale absolute to the person who had acquired the property seven years earlier, while the property was vested in the Minister for Finance; if this transaction was ever examined as to its propriety, the steps that were taken by his Department to safeguard the property interests of the State in such transactions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12759/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Section 28 (2) of the State Property Act 1954 provides that the Minister for Finance assumes responsibility for all personal property and land vested in or held in trust for a body corporate (other than personal property or land held by such body in trust for another person) immediately prior to its dissolution. Upon the dissolution of the body corporate, such property becomes State property. This function transferred in July 2011 to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform under the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act, 2011 and S.I. No. 418/2011 — Finance (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order, 2011. The effect of Section 28 is that the Minister does not hold the assets of dissolved companies as beneficial owner. He holds them in trust. The title which the Minister acquires under this Section has been described as a defeasible title since, if the dissolved company is restored to the Register of Companies within twenty years of the date of its dissolution, its property is automatically restored to it. The State Property Act also includes, in Section 31, a power for the Minister to waive the interest acquired under Section 28 of the Act.

It is understood that the property which is the subject of the current question was held within a company which was struck off the Register of Companies in September, 1972 for failure to file annual returns with the Companies Office. The beneficial owner of the property applied to the Department of Finance for a waiver of the interest acquired by the Minister for Finance under the provisions of the State Property Act and that waiver, in respect of which the consideration was £160, was completed in October, 1986. The effect of the waiver, which was not a sale by the State, would have been to allow the beneficial owner to complete the process of assembling a satisfactory title. The waiver itself would have formed only a limited element in the establishment of that title and the transaction was a normal exercise of Departmental functions. The price which the beneficial owner may have secured in a subsequent sale was not a matter for consideration in the context of the waiver and, accordingly, would not merit enquiry by me at this juncture.

I am advised that all applications for waiver of property falling within the scope of Section 28 of the State Property Act are referred to the Office of the Chief State Solicitor for legal advice and that any policy issues that may arise in particular cases are given full consideration on their merits.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

270. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the changes to redeployment arrangements as proposed in Croke Park II has extended the 45 km radius to 90 km;and the reason the new proposals have removed the original provision that in making redeployment decision regard will also be had to reasonable daily commute time. [12798/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In conformity with the provisions of Chapter 6 of the Public Service Agreement, the guideline redeployment distance will continue to be 45km, having regard to reasonable daily commute time.

Public Sector Staff Remuneration

271. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will confirm the premium payment under the retired Garda pension scheme which relates to the number of unsociable hours worked during time of service will be cut as part of the Labour Relations Commission proposal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13021/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I refer to my reply to Questions Nos. 117 to 119, inclusive, of 28 February 2013. The Labour Relations Commission proposals are not specific in relation to Garda pay or pensions, which is a matter for the Minister for Justice and Equality and Defence.

Question No. 272 answered with Question No. 266.

Farm Safety

273. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on the use of gypsum CsS04 for under bedding farm animals in view of the fact that it a highly toxic gas when it is eventually washed into and stored in the slurry tank of slatted units and on the release of hydrogen sulfides H25 it has fatal consequences for farm workers; and will he take note of the fact that it is banned for this use in Northern Ireland, Scotland and England. [12786/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I have consulted the Health & Safety Authority on the technical issues raised by Deputy Fleming and am advised that the widespread use of slatted sheds for cattle housing makes slurry handling a major issue on Irish farms. In this regard, I am informed that during slurry handling, the vast majority of deaths and injury are, in fact, associated with the use of tractors and machinery. However, drowning in slurry and slurry gases also pose a major risk to farmers and farm families.

During storage, and as the slurry decays, an anaerobic reaction takes place which produces a cocktail of toxic and potentially lethal gases. These gases include Hydrogen Sulphide, Methane, Carbon Dioxide and Ammonia. The most dangerous of these gases is Hydrogen Sulphide (H2S) as it is extremely poisonous both to people and animals. It affects the nervous system and one lungful at high concentrations can cause death.

There have been many incidents in which people were overcome by slurry gases. Tragically, several people have been killed either by inhaling fumes or drowning associated with slurry pits. In relation to H2S, at very low levels over 3 ppm (parts per million), H2S has a distinctive

smell of rotten eggs. Critically though, exposure to the gas at levels up to 150 ppm will quickly kill the sense of smell leading to the assumption that the gas has gone when, in fact, the levels may have become much higher and lethal.

When slurry is agitated, H2S is released at levels often in excess of 1,500 ppm which can cause immediate unconsciousness, H2S poisoning (pulmonary oedema), Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS), coma and death in just a few seconds. H2S, even at lower levels above 500 ppm, can cause unconsciousness after just a few breaths. One lung-full at high concentrations can cause instant death.

The highest risk occurs when slurry is being "agitated". On such occasions, the gases trapped in the slurry, often beneath a crust, are released when it is mixed. Studies indicate that levels are greatest when slurry is stored for several months, when slurry is mixed in deep tanks, when slurry is mixed in cold weather or after silage effluent or other additives are involved.

In relation to animal bedding; straw, sand and woodchips/shavings/sawdust from virgin timber have often been used as a livestock bedding material. Furthermore, some waste materials may be suitable for use as bedding materials provided they do not pose a risk to the animals bedded on it or to human health. However, while waste plasterboard containing "Gypsum" may have been used in the past as a replacement bedding material, such use is now banned and is not known to occur in Ireland.

The Health & Safety Authority has informed me that a literature search was conducted in the UK to find evidence and scientific studies relating to the use of waste Gypsum and waste plasterboard as animal bedding and the likelihood of H2S being generated. Very little literature was found on the use of waste Gypsum or plasterboard as animal bedding and there appears to have been no studies into the possibility of H2S generation. Similarly, there have been no studies to determine if different bedding systems affect the likelihood of H2S, and if so, whether H2S generation can be prevented.

Gypsum - usually produced from re-cycled plasterboard - can be applied direct to agricultural land as a soil conditioner. In this regard, research is currently commissioned by Health and Safety Executive UK concerning Gypsum and its effect on H2S production in slurry and our Health and Safety Authority, in their regular contacts with their UK counterparts, await the results of that research which they expect within the next few months.

In conclusion, the critical message to farmers is that all slurry contains potentially lethal levels of toxic gases, whether additives are involved or not. In this regard, the recommended prevention strategies are: Never agitate slurry in still air conditions. Open all doors and outlets to provide a draught. Move all animals out of the shed before commencing. At least two people should be present at all times. Keep children and elderly persons away from the area when agitating. Never stand over slats or near tank access points when agitation is in progress. Avoid vigorous agitation in confined spaces. Do not allow slurry to rise within 300mm of the slats or tank covers. Keep all people away from the agitation point for 30 minutes after starting agitation. Never enter the slurry tank (even an empty tank) unless you are wearing suitable breathing apparatus and/or a harness attached to a lifeline controlled by at least two other adults positioned outside of the area. Where possible agitate from the outside the building. Avoid smoking or the use of naked lights as slurry gases are highly flammable. Gases can build up and remain in partially emptied tanks above the slurry, never enter a tank for any reason. Put up warning signs to warn of the dangers when working with slurry. I trust the Deputy finds the foregoing information useful.

Departmental Expenditure

274. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the home of the Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12370/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Records in my Department confirm that no computer hardware or software has been provided to my home or to the homes of the Junior Ministers in my Department, and therefore no costs arise for such provision.

Departmental Expenditure

275. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12388/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The costs paid by my Department for my home telephone and those of the Ministers of State in my Department are set out in the following tabular statement:

	Period	Total costs
Minister Richard Bruton	March 2011 to date	€ 720.63
Minister John Perry	March 2011 to date	€3,187.52
Minister Seán Sherlock	March 2011 to date	€ 0

Departmental Expenditure

276. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly phone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12407/13]

277. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills are being paid to constituency office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12425/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 276 and 277 together.

The ICT needs of my constituency office located in my Department's Kildare Street office are met from a pool of equipment and software created to meet business needs across my Department. Records of costs would therefore relate to batches of items procured by my Department rather than individual items specifically used by my office. The majority of the ICT equipment provided to the constituency offices of the Ministers of State in my Department was supplied by the Oireachtas. Therefore, my Department has no records in relation to that equipment. My Department has provided one laptop each to these offices. These laptops were supplied from a pool of shared laptops created to meet the business needs of my Department. Records of costs would therefore relate to batches of items procured by my Department rather than individual items specifically supplied to those offices. One second hand photocopier was moved from a previous Minister's office to one constituency office.

The costs paid by my Department for telephony services to my constituency office and those of the Ministers of State in my Department are set out in the tabular statement below. The costs for telephones for constituency offices based in the main Department building cannot be identified separately.

	Period	Total costs
Minister Richard Bruton	March 2011 to date	€0
Minister John Perry	March 2011 to date	€10,146.93
Minister Seán Sherlock	March 2011 to date	€ 7, 642.31

No additional costs are being paid to Constituency Offices by my Department.

Departmental Expenditure

278. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of mobile phones in use by him, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12443/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested on mobile phone details since March 2011 to date is set out in following tabular statement:

	Number of mobile phones	Total costs
Minister Richard Bruton	One	€811.27
Minister John Perry	Two	€2,979.66
Minister Seán Sherlock	One	€4,919.67
Six politically appointed staff	Eight	€13,828.95

Departmental Expenditure

279. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12461/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The salary costs in respect of the drivers assigned to me and my Junior Ministerial colleagues are as outlined in the following table. These figures represent the cumulative cost for the two year period to March 2013. The travel and subsistence costs that have been incurred are also included on the table. My Department does not incur any other costs relating to Ministerial transport.

Ministerial Transport - Costs Incurred

	March 2011 to March 2013
Salary Costs - Drivers	
Minister Bruton	140,653.82
Minister Perry	149,598.57
Minister Sherlock	145,109.78

Travel and Subsistence		
	Mileage Costs	Drivers' Subsistence Costs
Minister Bruton	12367.99	1266.99
Minister Perry	55334.86	24482.21
Minister Sherlock	40537.44	33025.68

Departmental Expenditure

280. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12480/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department has issued Credit Cards, on the Departments account, to 3 staff since March 2011. The cards were obtained for use by the Department to accommodate on-line purchases via electronic transactions. The total cost of each card during that time is as follows: Card 1: € 31.00; Card 2: €264.40; Card 3: €755.43.

Foreign Direct Investment

281. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the way the intellectual property protocol here contributes to the country's attractiveness as a location for foreign direct investment, particularly in the areas of ICT and research and development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12579/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Sean Sherlock): The aim of the Intellectual Property Protocol is to encourage the commercialisation of all forms of intellectual property arising from research in the publicly funded research sector, with a view to maximising the economic and societal benefits, in particular the creation of sustainable jobs. The IP Protocol aims to encourage industry – both indigenous and FDI companies – and across all sectors, to collaborate with Ireland's universities, institutes of technology and other publicly funded research institutions; to use and commercialise the IP generated from such research and turn it into products and services for the global marketplace.

A key feature of the IP Protocol is that it establishes "ground rules" which must be followed when agreeing terms around ownership of and access to all State funded intellectual property. Feedback from industry, in particular, small and medium enterprises, is that this provides clarity and certainty and makes it easier to engage with research performing organisations to commercialise IP arising from State funded research.

Another key aspect of the IP Protocol centres around the development of a 'one stop shop' for businesses seeking to use IP deriving from publicly funded research. This will be achieved through the establishment of a 'central Technology Transfer Office' to provide an effective interface between industry and the research community and which will also drive a world class technology transfer system in Ireland, ensuring it is responsive to the needs of both industry and academia. This will improve Ireland's attractiveness for FDI, in particular for research and development across all sectors, including ICT. It will place Ireland in a competitive position internationally and is part of a series of Government measures aimed at realising the vision for Ireland to become the best small country in the world in which to do business. Work on the establishment of the cTTO is progressing well. Recruitment for the Director of the cTTO is

underway and expected to be completed by Q3 2013.

Departmental Schemes

282. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the schemes available for persons taking voluntary redundancy in the public sector who wish to start their own business and create employment; if he intends to put any schemes in place as part of the Action Plan for Jobs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12600/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Anyone interested in starting their own business should in the first instance contact their local County and City Enterprise Board (CEB). The CEBs support the indigenous micro-enterprise sector in the start-up and expansion phases and stimulate enterprise potential at local level. The CEBs are the first port of call in terms of advice, direction, training and grant support for anyone who wishes to start a business. The CEBs will deal with queries from all potential clients (including those who have taken redundancy, whether in the public sector or not). Contact details for the CEBs are available on *www.enterpriseboards.ie* . They offer a range supports including both financial assistance and non-financial assistance. The forms of financial assistance, which are available subject to certain criteria and conditions, are Priming Grants, Business Expansion Grants and Feasibility/Innovation Grants. The provision of non-financial assistance can take the form of a wide range of business advice and information services, management capability training and development programmes, e-Commerce training initiatives etc. Training courses include such topics as start-your-own-business, taxation for beginners, internet marketing, idea's generation and negotiation skills.

In addition, Microfinance Ireland is providing support in the form of loans of up to €25,000 available to start-up, newly established or growing microenterprises employing less than 10 people with viable business propositions that do not meet the conventional risk criteria applied by the banks. The Fund has a significant entrepreneurship focus and is open to anyone with a viable business proposal. Applications for the new Microfinance Fund should be channelled through the local CEB. Contact details for the CEBs are available on *www.enterpriseboards.ie* .

A Guide, entitled "Financial Support for Irish Business" has been published on my Department's website at *www.djei.ie* under "latest publications" and includes information on supports, other than those available from the Enterprise Development Agencies, such as "Revenue Job Assist" and "Back to Work Enterprise Allowance".

A particularly important action in this year's Action Plan for Jobs 2013 is the launch of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) which will see the merger of the CEBs with the Business Support and Enterprise Development functions of the Local Authorities. The APJ recognises that the indigenous micro-enterprise and small business sector is central to economic recovery, job creation and the future prosperity of the Irish economy. This merger will ensure that the national enterprise support model for these sectors is a premium model delivering high quality.

Work Permit Applications

283. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding a work permit in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12655/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Two work

permit applications were received by my Department in 2011 and 2012 in respect of the person named by the Deputy, both of which were refused. A request for a review in each case resulted in the refusal decisions being upheld.

In relation to the earlier two applications in respect of this person that were refused in 2011 and 2012 both of these were refused on the basis that new Employment Permit applications are normally only considered where it is established that a minimum salary of €30,000 per annum is on offer based on a 39 hour week and where the position on offer is one of the occupations currently eligible for a new employment permit. The annual salary and the nature of employment that formed the basis of both applications did not fall within these guidelines. In addition to this it appeared from the information submitted with the first employment permit application that the proposed employee had already worked in the company without having a valid Employment Permit.

A further application was received in respect of this person on 24 January 2013 which was returned to the applicant as the application form was incomplete and all of the required documentation was not submitted. This application was resubmitted on 6 February 2013. This application was also returned to the applicant as it was still not accompanied by all of the required supporting documentation, in particular the most recent Revenue form P30 confirming the company's registration as an employer. When the required supporting documentation in respect of this application has been received in my Department the matter will be given further consideration.

Joint Labour Committees Abolition

284. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he has considered the recommendation of Retail, Grocery, Dairy and Allied Traders Association to abolish the retail grocery JLC, the assertion that independent grocers should be subject to the same minimum wage rates and employment conditions as all other retailers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12660/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The new Section 41A of Industrial Relations Act 1946 (inserted by Section 11 of the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2012) provides that a review of each Joint Labour Committee (JLC) will be carried out by the Labour Court, as soon as practicable after the commencement of the Act, and at least once every 5 years thereafter.

To this end, the Labour Court is currently undertaking an independent review of the ten existing JLCs, including the Retail Grocery JLC. The aim of the review is to ensure that the range of sectors and enterprises to which they apply remains appropriate, with consequent changes to their Establishment Orders if necessary.

Notices were placed by the Labour Court in the national newspapers seeking submissions from interested parties on the issue. The deadline for submissions was 1 March, 2013. I understand that meetings with relevant stakeholders have also taken place on the matter.

In accordance with the provisions of the 2012 Act, the Court is required to conclude its review within 6 weeks of the date specified for receipt of submissions, i.e. by 12 April next.

The outcome of the reviews will inform the Labour Court as to whether any JLC should be abolished, maintained in its current form, amalgamated with another JLC or its establishment order amended, taking into account specific criteria set out in Section 11 of the 2012 Act. The 2012 Act provides that the Labour Court will then make recommendations to the Minister who,

if satisfied that the requirements of the Act have been followed, and where he considers it appropriate to do so, make an order in the terms of the recommendation.

If the Minister is not satisfied that the requirements of the Act have been followed, or he considers that it is not appropriate to make an order in the terms of the Labour Court recommendation, he is required to refuse to make the order and to inform the Labour Court in writing of the reasons for his decision.

Gambling Sector

285. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reason Enterprise Ireland does not support companies that operate in the gambling sector including high-tech companies that earn their revenues from online betting, betting exchange, gambling, competitive social gaming and tipping markets. [12947/13]

286. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reason that companies that earn their revenue from supplying products and services that operate in the gambling sector are not supported by Enterprise Ireland. [12948/13]

287. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will consider changing the remit of Enterprise Ireland to facilitate Irish initiated or Irish based tech companies that operate in online betting, betting exchange, gambling, competitive social gaming and tipping markets or companies that earn their revenue from supplying products and services that operate in the gambling sector. [12949/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 285 to 287, inclusive, together.

The Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956 and the Betting Act 1931 set out the current legal framework for the operation of gambling or betting operations. It is an offence under section 4 of the 1956 Act to promote or assist in the promotion of any kind of gaming or to provide facilities for any kind of gaming. Separately, it is an offence to operate as a bookmaker, or carry on business of a bookmaker, without a licence under the 1931 Act.

Within that legal framework Enterprise Ireland (EI) is precluded from supporting companies that operate in the gambling sector, which includes all companies that earn their revenues from online betting, betting exchange, gambling, competitive social gaming and tipping markets. EI can provide limited support to Financial Spread-Betting Companies (FSB)/ Contracts for Difference (CFD) providers, only if these companies are regulated by a Financial Services Regulatory Authority. EI does support companies that earn revenue from supplying products or services to companies in the gambling sector (provided the earnings are not directly linked to amounts gambled).

It is anticipated that two legislative proposals will significantly change the legislative and regulatory landscape. The Deputy will be aware that, in July 2012, the Minster for Finance published the Betting (Amendment) Bill 2012 which is designed to ensure a fair and equal treatment of all bookmakers and betting exchanges offering services in Ireland and will bring into the licensing and taxation regime all remote bookmakers and betting intermediaries (betting exchanges). The Minister for Justice and Equality has also announced plans to bring Heads of a Bill, provisionally entitled the Gambling Control Bill, to Government soon. The 'Gambling Control Bill' is envisaged to be a comprehensive measure, establishing a transparent regulatory regime to cover betting and gaming, whether by terrestrial or remote means and will include gambling on virtual and actual events.

I am very aware that innovation is a key feature of the gaming, betting and gambling industry; new forms are constantly emerging such as betting exchanges, which permit people to bet amongst themselves, without the need for a bookmaker. Obviously, my Department will review, in conjunction with EI, the current policy on supporting companies that operate in the gambling sector when the above two proposed pieces of legislation have been enacted.

Enterprise Support Schemes

288. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the level of support that will be provided for Kerry Technology Park's collaborative programmes, Young Entrepreneurial Programme, Junior Entrepreneur Programme, Coder DoJo camps, in view of the disbandment of Shannon Development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13041/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Kerry Technology Park (Tralee, Co Kerry) is currently owned and managed by Shannon Development, in collaboration with IT Tralee. Shannon Development, in conjunction with a number of other public and private sector organisations and individuals, provides programmes that benefit the Park and the wider community, namely the Young Entrepreneur Programme (YEP) and the Junior Entrepreneur Programme (JEP).

The Young Entrepreneur Programme (YEP) and the Junior Entrepreneur Programme (JEP) are currently controlled by Nurture Entrepreneurs Ltd, an independent not-for-profit company. Both the YEP and JEP are funded from a combination of public and private sources.

Shannon Development's commitment to the programmes for the academic year 2012/3 was €50k, in line with the 2011 commitment. Following the government decision regarding the future of company this was reduced pro-rata to €13k to cover the period September-December 2012.

My officials are currently in discussions with Shannon Development and other agencies about the future plans for Kerry Technology Park, including the Youth Entrepreneur Programmes run from the park. I expect to receive a recommendation shortly on the matter.

Question No. 289 withdrawn.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

290. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13023/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This application for carer's allowance was disallowed on the 23rd of July 2012. The person in question has appealed this decision. The submission and other relevant papers are being sent to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) for determination. The SWAO will be in touch with the person directly regarding the progress of the appeal.

Child Benefit Appeals

291. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a child benefit appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12293/13]

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 28 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.

Question No. 292 withdrawn.

Disability Allowance Appeals

293. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for on disability allowance issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 4; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12301/13]

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 6 February 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.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

294. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12303/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 5 November 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 1 March 2013 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Code Issues

295. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of hours a person on a welfare payment may work per week without losing their benefits. [12312/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The number of hours a person may work to qualify for a social welfare payment varies depending on the particular scheme.

Jobseeker's Benefit/Allowance

For jobseeker's benefit/allowance the number of hours a person works is not the determining factor to qualify for a payment, but a person must be unemployed for 4 days within a 7 day period. Other factors also apply e.g. for jobseeker's allowance a means assessment applies.

One-Parent Family Payment

For One-Parent Family Payment OFP) the number of hours a person works is not the determining factor to qualify for a payment. OFP is a payment for men and women under 66 who are bringing children up without the support of a partner. To get this payment you must meet certain conditions, you must satisfy a means test and you must have earnings of €425 or less per week.

Farm Assist

For farm assist the number of hours a person works is not the determining factor to qualify for a payment. To qualify for it other criteria also applies, one of which is a means assessment.

Part-time Job Incentive

To qualify for Part-time Job Incentive a person must work less than 24 hours per week. Other criteria also apply to qualify for the scheme.

Invalidity Pension

A person may not work while in receipt of invalidity pension. In certain circumstances, exemptions to this rule are given to people who wish to undertake voluntary work or a course of study or training generally for no more than 19.5 hours per week. Those who are in receipt of invalidity pension and who wish to take up or resume open labour market employment are directed to Partial Capacity Benefit, although some recipients are still availing of a finite duration exemption from the "no work" rule for open labour market work of 19.5 hours per week or less. Once the exemption period expires, the recipient is directed to Partial Capacity Benefit if s/he intends to continue working. Invalidity pension recipients may participate in community employment (CE) schemes.

Disability Allowance

A person may work while in receipt of disability allowance and there is no hours limit. However, the income from the employment is assessable as means subject to the regulations for the scheme.

Carer's Allowance

Recipients of carer's allowance must be providing full-time care and attention to a relevant person. However, they may participate in work outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week. In such cases, adequate arrangements for the care of the relevant person must be put in place while the carer is working. The income from employment is assessable as means subject to the regulations for the scheme.

Carer's Benefit

Recipients of carer's benefit must be providing full-time care and attention to a relevant person. However, they may participate in work outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week. In such cases, adequate arrangements for the care of the relevant person must be put in place while the carer is working. The maximum amount a recipient can earn is €332.50 net per week.

Disablement Benefit/Pension

This is a payment to insured persons who suffer a loss of faculty of more than 15% due to an occupational injury or disease. A person may work for unlimited hours while in receipt of disablement benefit.

Incapacity Supplement

Incapacity Supplement is an increase to Disablement Benefit/Pension where a person is considered to be permanently incapable of work as a result of an occupational accident/disease and does not qualify for another social welfare benefit such as Illness Benefit, Invalidity Pension or Disability Allowance. Recipients are not permitted to do work unless it is work in respect of which his/her earnings do not, on average, exceed €33 per week. However a recipient may, with the prior written permission of the Department, be exempted from the "no work" rule for any period during which s/he is undergoing a course of training with a view to taking up some other occupation or s/he is engaged in part-time work for less than 20 hours a week which is in the nature of rehabilitation or occupational therapy.

Family Income Supplement

This is a support for people working on low wages who have children and who are employed for at least 19 hours per week or 38 hours per fortnight.

Illness Benefit

A person in receipt of illness benefit who wishes to work has the option of applying for the new Partial Capacity Benefit (PCB) scheme, if they have been on Illness Benefit for longer than 6 months. The PCB scheme provides an opportunity for people to have their capacity for work assessed and to receive an on-going income support payment based on this assessment. There is no restriction on earnings or number of hours worked.

A person in receipt of illness benefit may apply for permission to train or attend a course of education. There is no restriction in these instances on the number of hours of attendance. Persons in receipt of illness benefit for more than two years may apply for the Back to Education Allowance to pursue a recognised course of study.

Partial Capacity Benefit

There is no restriction on earnings or number of hours worked.

Occupational Injury Benefit / Medical Care

Persons in receipt of occupational injury benefit or medical care may not work while in receipt of these payments.

Respite Care Grant

Having first cleared it with the Department, the carer may attend an educational or training course or take up voluntary or community work for up to 15 hours a week, or work outside their home for up to 15 hours a week, or a combination of both, provided that the total combined does not exceed 15 hours a week.

State Pension (transition)

It is a social insurance payment payable from age 65 to applicants who have retired from insurable employment, and who satisfy certain contribution conditions. It is not a means tested

payment. An applicant need not give up employment completely. They may still be eligible for this pension from age 65 if they earn less than €38 per week from part-time employment (paying PRSI at Class J), irrespective of the number of hours they work per week, or if they earn less than €5,000 per year from self-employment. The retirement condition ceases to apply when they reach age 66 whereupon they are automatically transferred to a State pension contributory.

State Pension (contributory)

It is a social insurance payment payable to applicants aged 66 and over, who satisfy certain contribution conditions (or who had been in receipt of State pension (transition) up to the date of their 66th birthday). From age 66, the earnings conditions outlined above no longer apply, and a person awarded a State pension (contributory) may commence full-time employment/self-employment and be entitled to receive this pension. Their State pension (contributory) entitlement and rate of weekly payment is not affected by the level of their earnings or by the number of hours they work per week.

Widow(er)'s and surviving civil partner's contributory pension

It is a social insurance payment for people who satisfy certain qualifying conditions. Entitlement is assessed on the basis of the applicant's PRSI record or that of their late spouse or civil partner. It is not a means tested payment. If a person is awarded this pension, and is employed/self-employed, their weekly rate of pension payment is not affected by the level of their earnings or by the number of hours they work per week.

State Pension Non-Contributory

There is no limit on the number of hours a person may work. The payment is means tested.

Deserted Wives Benefit/Allowance & Widows Non Contributory Pension

There is no limit on the number of hours a person may work. Both Deserted Wives Allowance and Widows Non Contributory pension are means tested payments.

Blind Pension

There is no limit on the number of hours a person may work. This is a means tested payment.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

296. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9 had their jobseeker's allowance cut off before Christmas 2012; and when payment will be restored. [12323/13]

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 has been notified of the Appeals Officers decision. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Departmental Expenditure

297. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the costs of providing hardware and software to her home and the home of Ministers of State in her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12373/13]

298. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12391/13]

299. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly phone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in her Department since March 2011; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12410/13]

303. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of mobile phones in use by her, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12446/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 297 to 299, inclusive, and 303 together.

My department has not provided any hardware or software, including telephones, in my home.

Mobile phones have been supplied to me, my advisors Edward Brophy, Paul O'Brien (replacing Kathleen Barrington) and my parliamentary assistant Karen O' Connell.

Since July 2012 my department has availed of the mobile framework agreement negotiated by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform at a monthly cost of €18.50 for all national calls and texts per customer. Total costs before that date are not immediately available but I will forward them to the Deputy separately.

Separate records are not kept of call costs from individual extensions and the cost of telephones to my constituency office cannot be extracted from the overall cost of telephony in the department. ICT services are also supplied generally and no separate records are held of these costs. My department does avail of The Houses of the Oireachtas managed IT support service for the constituency-based offices of Ministers at an annual cost of €4,256.47, reducing to €3,098.10 next year.

The ICT services, including telephony, supplied to me are the normal communications and productivity services required in any modern business environment and are the minimum requirements for the efficient and effective discharges of my responsibilities as a TD and Minister.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

300. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal against the decision to refuse their application for invalidly in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12414/13]

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 Pro-

tection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Departmental Expenditure

301. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills are being paid to constituency office by her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12428/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I understand from clarification received from the Fianna Fáil Office that the information sought by the Deputy relates to staffing costs for Ministers for Social Protection constituency offices which are set out:

2011 – 2013

Constituency Office

Grade - Salary Scale

Ministerial Appointments

1 Personal Assistant - €43,715 - €56,060

1 Personal Secretary - €23,820 - €47,755

Established civil servants

1 Executive Officer* - €30,516 - €47,975

1 Clerical Officer* - €23,177 - €37,341

*Please see staffing costs for 2009 and 2010 in the Constituency Office

2010

Constituency Office

Grade - Salary Scale - Allowance

Ministerial Appointments

1 Personal Assistant - €43,816 - €55,415

1 Personal Secretary - €45,122 - 10% Attraction Allowance

Established civil servants

1 Executive Officer - €30,516 - €47,975*

2 Clerical Officers - €23,176 - €37,341*

* On 1st January 2010 civil service staff salaries were reduced in accordance with Department of Finance Circular 28/2009: Revision of pay of Civil Servants

2009

Constituency Office

Grade - Salary Scale - Allowance

Ministerial Appointments

1 Personal Assistant - €55,030

1 Personal Secretary - €42,391 - 10% Attraction Allowance

Established civil servants

1 Executive Officer - €32,179 - €51,054*

2 Clerical Officers - €24,397 - €39,558*

1 Clerical Officer - €23,174 - €37,584

* Class A PRSI applies as employment commenced after 6 April 1995

Illness Benefit Eligibility

302. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the options available to a person (details supplied) in County Laois at the end of their term of receipt of partial disability payment in the event that they are not in a position to continue in employment; their entitlement to revert to disability and or invalidity pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12432/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned exhausted their entitlement to illness benefit on 9 January 2013.

The person concerned may re-qualify for illness benefit when they have paid 13 reckonable PRSI contributions after this date, and they are unable to work because they are sick or ill. Alternatively, the person concerned may choose to apply for invalidity pension or disability allowance.

Applications to these schemes are subject to various qualifying conditions including medical eligibility requirements. The person concerned was advised of these options on 17 October 2012.

To date no applications have been received for these schemes. If the person concerned is not able to meet their financial needs, they may be entitled to supplementary welfare allowance which is a means tested scheme. They should contact the local Social Welfare representative at their local health centre.

Question No. 303 answered with Question No. 297.

Departmental Expenditure

304. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to her and Ministers of State in her Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of Ministerial cars in 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12464/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): On taking office the Government reformed the transport arrangements for Ministers which has radically reduced the costs of travel.

The Government decision involved confining the use of State cars from 1 May 2011. As a result, the average cost of providing transport has been reduced by 65% - from an average cost of €280,000 per minister in 2010 to a current annual estimate of €100,000 per annum.

In line with the reformed arrangements, I now use my own car for official business. The travel /mileage rates payable depend on the car engine size and also incorporate a number of expense elements associated with the cost of running a car, such as road tax and insurance. The engine size of my car is 1400cc and the rate applicable is 46.25 cent per kilometre.

The mileage costs which I have claimed since 01 May 2011 to 31 January 2013 amount to €14,754.99.

I have two civilian drivers, both on a remuneration rate of €631.75 per week. The total salary costs involved to date has been €112,259.85.

They may also claim travel and subsistence allowances, in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regulations for necessary absences on official duties from home and headquarters. Total cost of travel and subsistence claimed by my drivers to date is €2,298.04.

The total cost incurred in all of the above amounts to €129,312.88 for the period 01 May 2011 to 31 January 2013. This represents a significant reduction on the average cost of €280,000 per minister per annum under the previous system.

The previous practice whereby all Ministers were provided with State cars and Garda drivers fell within the remit of the Department of Justice and in this regard details of the costs involved in respect of 2010 would be a matter for my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality.

There is no Junior Minister assigned to the Department.

Child Benefit Appeals

305. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a child benefit in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12467/13]

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 28 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.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

306. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason for the

continued delay in the awarding of jobseeker's allowance in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12468/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The persons concerned have both made repeat claims for jobseeker's allowance, having both lost their appeal against an earlier disallowance. The first repeat claim was made on the 4 December 2012 and the second person made their claim on 1 January 2013. Both claims are currently under investigation in relation to the assessment of means. Once the means assessment is completed, a decision will be made on each claim and the persons concerned will be advised of the outcome.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

307. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason for the continued delay in the awarding of rent support in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12469/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): One of the persons concerned has a claim for rent supplement on which payment is currently suspended, pending the establishment of his entitlement to a primary social welfare payment.

The person concerned had a claim for Jobseekers Allowance which was disallowed and this decision was upheld on appeal in October 2012. As a consequence, the Rent Allowance claim was suspended with effect from 31 October 2012.

The person has made a repeat claim for Jobseekers Allowance on 4 December 2012. The claim is currently under investigation in relation to the assessment of means. Once the means assessment is completed and a decision is made in relation to the Jobseekers Allowance claim, the position in relation to the Rent Allowance claim will be reviewed, and the persons concerned will be advised of the outcome.

Departmental Expenditure

308. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in her Department and the total cost of each card since March 2011; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12483/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are currently four credit cards in use by officers of the Department and one by the Pensions Ombudsman who operates under the aegis of the Department and for whom the Department makes administrative payments. Details of the cards and the total expenditure on each card since 2009 are set out in the accompanying table:

Credit Card costs 2009 - 2013

	Purpose of card	2009 (€)	2010 (€)	2011 (€)	2012 (€)	2013 to date (€)
1	Hire of rooms for Appeal hearings	61	21,960	92,855	124,883	12,639

	Purpose of card	2009 (€)	2010 (€)	2011 (€)	2012 (€)	2013 to date (€)
2	Purchase of software	564	4,603	1,291	5,400	7,519
3	Ministerial expenditure	3,141	523	1,205	1,450	215
4	Purchase of training materials	929	563	942	5,050	31
5	Pensions Ombudsman expenditure	2,021	2,033	1,376	2,164	122
*6	Purchase of documentation and software. Booking of flights on internet.	443	303	341	40	0
**7	Official entertainment in relation to EU International section.	6,039	105	2,943	0	0
	Totals:	13,198	30,090	100,953	138,987	20,526

*This credit card was cancelled in 2012.

**This credit card was cancelled in 2011.

The costs for each credit card includes annual fees and government stamp duty. Stamp duty is currently €30.00 per year on each card and the annual fee is €75.00 per card for American Express and €31.00 for Visa. The credit cards are managed so as to minimise fees and charges.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

309. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the avenue available to a person who is unemployed or disabled who wishes to pursue a community employment or FÁS training course and so on but who is not in receipt of a payment due to the income of their spouse and where such a course would be beneficial to their rehabilitation and well-being; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12486/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The aim of Community Employment (CE) remains as an active labour market programme with the emphasis on progression into employment and/or further education and training. The core eligibility criterion for CE is that the person is in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment and is either long term unemployed or socially marginalised.

At present, persons signing for credits or who are otherwise ineligible for a social welfare payment, do not meet the current eligibility requirements for participation on the CE Scheme. They may, however, be eligible for participation on other Departmental programmes or FÁS programmes, although they may not qualify for payment of an allowance.

Such persons are advised to contact their local DSP Employment Services Office where an Employment Services Officer will discuss the employment and training options that are open to them.

Within the current budgetary constraints, the number of places has increased by an additional 2,000 places to 25,300 for 2013. In delivering these places, the Department will continue to manage this allocation in order to maximise progression to the labour market, while at the same time facilitating the support of community services.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

310. **Deputy Dara Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a decision has been made on a domiciliary care allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12525/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 17th January 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 13 February 2013 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Community and Employment Schemes

311. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection if there is a resolution available to the anomaly that prevented a person (details supplied) in Cork from pursuing an appropriate supervisory position with TÚS because of participation in a less appropriate community employment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12556/13]

323. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to change the criteria for a scheme (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12639/13]

327. **Deputy Dara Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if it possible for a person (details supplied) in County Cork to accept a job on the Tús scheme having in the past 12 months been on a community employment scheme, which although is not jobseeker's is still a payment from her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12716/13]

337. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person secures a three to six month community employment supervisor contract will that preclude them from applying for a Tús supervisor's position for the following 18 months. [12827/13]

338. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will

clarify the eligibility criteria for the position of Tús supervisor, in the event of the two schemes, Tús and Fás, being linked and if she will outline the eligibility criteria in that situation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12828/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 311, 323, 327, 337 and 338 together.

TÚS, the community work placement initiative introduced during 2011, was initially set up to provide up to 5,000 short-term, quality work opportunities for those who are unemployed for more than a year. As part of the 2013 budget package for the Department of Social Protection, the number of places on Tús is being extended by 2,500 so that the total places approved will increase from 5,000 to 7,500. To date 8,178 people have completed or are currently on work placements. This figure includes supervisory/team leader positions. As a relatively new initiative, Tús continues to be monitored and developed and to date has proven to be effective in meeting its objectives.

A person cannot apply to participate on Tús. All selection is undertaken by random processes conducted at local level by the Department of Social Protection. The selection is focused on those on the live register for a year or more and in receipt of a jobseekers' payment. I consider the current selection process effective and I have no proposals to alter these arrangements. Eligibility for supervisory/team leader positions on Tús is the same for participants, i.e. it is confined to those on the Live Register for at least 12 months and in receipt of jobseeker's allowance at the time of application. A person on a community employment scheme does not meet the criteria as they are not in receipt of a jobseekers payment. Tús is focused on those on the Live Register for a year or more and have more limited job or work placement opportunities.

Ministerial Meetings

312. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide detail on the recent EU EPSCO Council meeting and the agreement reached on an EU youth guarantee; the way a guarantee scheme will provide young persons with better labour market prospects; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12557/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The main item on the agenda of the recent Council of Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Ministers (EPSCO) meeting in Brussels was youth unemployment. Under my chairmanship, EPSCO gave political agreement to a Council Recommendation on an EU-wide Youth Guarantee. The EPSCO Recommendation is that each Member State should ensure that young people receive a quality offer of employment or of continued education, an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed. The Recommendation will be formally adopted by the Council at a later stage in Ireland's Presidency - most likely in May.

The Recommendation encourages Member States to implement its provisions as soon as possible once it is formally adopted. It is also recognised that implementation will need to be more gradual in countries with higher levels of youth unemployment and particularly severe budgetary problems.

In anticipation of the formal adoption of the Recommendation, the government will review the current range of youth employment and training policies in Ireland to assess what measures will need to be taken to commence the gradual implementation of the guarantee. This will include the identification of what would be the appropriate timescale for implementation in Ireland's current employment and budgetary circumstances.

The scale and nature of the measures required will depend on the trend in youth unemployment, and in particular the number of young people likely to experience periods of unemployment of more than four months under current policies. In this context, it is a welcome development that the official labour market figures published by the CSO last week indicated that the number of young unemployed at the end of 2012, at 59,000, showed a reduction of almost 9,000 on the same time a year earlier. It is to be hoped that this is the beginning of a sustained downward movement in youth unemployment as the economy recovers. Even so, the implementation of a guarantee will, almost certainly require an expansion in the range of opportunities currently on offer to young people in the form of further education, training, internships, subsidised private-sector recruitment, and supports for self-employment. All of these initiatives will be designed to enhance the labour market prospects of young people.

In this regard the State already provides a significant number of places which are available to young people and the Department of Social Protection took steps in Budget 2013 to increase funding and places for schemes such as JobBridge, Community Employment, TÚS and a new state employment scheme in the local Government sector. In total an additional 10,000 places will be provided. The Department of Education also made provision for the new momentum programme which is providing 6,500 new training places many of which will be taken up by young people. A new recruitment incentive – JobsPlus – has also been developed by my Department and was approved by the Government as part of the Action Plan for Jobs. This incentive will cover the cost of c. €1 in every €4 of an employer's wage costs and will be launched for availability by July 2013. The size of the any additional provision that is both desirable and feasible will be established over the coming months.

The afternoon session of the EPSCO meeting saw Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton TD, chair a policy debate by Employment Ministers on the Commission's Annual Growth Survey and Joint Employment Report in the context of the European Semester.

The EPSCO meeting also heard a presentation from EU Commissioner László Andor on the "Social Investment Package", which was published by the EU Commission last week. The package contains the Commission's communication on the concept of social investment as providing a direction towards growth and cohesion for the EU, as well as a recommendation on "Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage".

I look forward to working with both the Council and the Commission on how best to give effect to the principles and actions outlined in the social investment communication.

The EPSCO meeting is only the start of this process. My intention is to continue work on this important issue with a view to having formal conclusions at the next EPSCO meeting next June in Luxembourg.

Social protection systems are vital in protecting EU citizens against the worst effects of the crisis. Through investment in education and training, they also have a lead role to play in ensuring that citizens are job-ready and in a position to avail of labour market opportunities as the recovery comes.

A fiscal response to the crisis is not enough - there must also be a social response, and I welcome the Package and Commissioner Andor's strong personal commitment on this issue.

Rural Social Scheme Applications

313. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Social Protection the current position of the rural social scheme; if she will provide details of the likely changes that may be made to

the scheme in the coming year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12562/13]

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 €45.00m, which should enable the scheme to continue as in previous years but does not allow for the recruitment above the numbers stated above.

The Department of Social Protection has recently published a review of employment support schemes which, together with the outcome of the focused 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.

Community Welfare Services

314. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the community welfare offices currently in Curlew Road, Limekiln Road and Cashel Road are being moved into Parnell Road; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12585/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): My Department is examining at present ways to make the delivery of the welfare service more efficient in the areas concerned, having regard to available resources, both currently and in the future.

One model of delivery that has been successful in other areas of Dublin is consolidation of smaller offices, with limited opening times and availability, into a central unit in the area that has an expanded range of availability to the public. The Department's Facilities Management Unit is currently examining options to secure such a premises in the area; including some discussions with the HSE in relation to premises at Cashel Rd.

When clarity is available on this a communications strategy will be put in place, as has happened in other areas, whereby customers, the public, local representatives and other stakeholders are notified well in advance of any change.

Disability Allowance Appeals

315. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite a disability allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied). [12593/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the disability allowance claim of the person concerned was disallowed following an assessment by a Medical Assessor who expressed the opinion that she was medically unsuitable for the allowance. An appeal was registered on 10 December 2012 and in accordance with the statutory procedures the relevant department papers and the comments of the Deciding Officer on the matter raised in the appeal have been sought. In that context, an assessment by another Medical Assessor will be carried out.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social and Family Affairs and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Child Care Services Inquiry

316. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will re examine increasing the number of child care places, currently 6,000, in order to allow for help for one parent families who face a cut in payment from July; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12596/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am very conscious that the forthcoming changes to the one-parent family payment (OFP) scheme highlight the need for additional supports to be in place for lone parents who will be affected by these changes. In particular, there will be a need for additional after-school child care provision to be made available in order to assist former OFP recipients to make their transition into activation and employment. The joint child care initiative that Minister Fitzgerald and I announced as part of Budget 2013 is in recognition of the support that these individuals will require. This initiative will provide approximately 6,000 after-school child care places for low-income families and social welfare income support recipients who gain employment and who have children of primary school age.

Officials from my Department, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (D/CYA), and the Department of Education and Skills (D/ES) are presently working out the exact parameters of the scheme, which will be launched on a phased basis during 2013, commencing with a pilot in April, 2013.

The after-school childcare scheme is being funded from savings of €14 million coming from within my Department. The D/CYA has confirmed that this equates to approximately 6,000 after-school childcare places including full-day care for school holidays. Given the current fiscal constraints it is not possible to allocate any additional funding to the scheme and so the number of places cannot be increased at this time.

Invalidity Pension Eligibility

317. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding entitlement to invalidity pension in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12606/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Invalidity pension is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the contribution conditions.

Entitlement to invalidity pension can only be fully determined on receipt of a completed application form. To date no application has been received from the person concerned.

Departmental Strategies

318. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will detail the clear, controlled targets used within her Department for clearing backlogs in applications and appeals for illness schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12611/13]

320. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the way in which backlogs for illness scheme applications and appeals are prioritised; if there is a defined triage-type protocol to determine and deal with the need of the individual applicant; if she will detail this protocol; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12614/13]

321. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a more permanent solution to handling social welfare assistance applications and appeals is being looked at instead of allowing backlogs to habitually develop and addressing them by redeploying staff temporarily; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12615/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 318, 320 and 321 together.

The Department is committed to delivering the best possible service to its customers and works to ensure that claims are processed in the most efficient and expeditious way possible, having regard to the eligibility conditions that apply to each scheme.

There are no significant backlogs of new claims awaiting decision in illness benefit, domiciliary care allowance or invalidity pension. Claims are processed within a short time of receipt.

In respect of disability allowance, there are approximately 6,500 applications for disability allowance awaiting a decision. The average number of weeks to award a disability allowance application is currently approximately 17 weeks. A recent analysis of the applications pending decision indicated that approximately 60% of them had been waiting for a decision for 12 weeks or fewer. Following completion of a major service delivery modernisation project for the scheme, a plan is in place to deal with day-to-day intake of new claims along with a programme to eliminate the backlog. Temporary staff has been assigned to the disability allowance area to assist in reducing the backlog. The target is to have new applications actioned within a short period of receipt and to have the backlog of disability allowance applications actioned by the end of quarter 2 2013.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office has supplied the following information with regard to the time taken to process appeals in the illness-related schemes:

Average Processing Times of Appeals 2012

-	Summary Decisions(weeks)	Oral Hearings(weeks)
Disability Allowance	34.2	40.6
Domiciliary Care Allowance	32.5	41.4
Invalidity Pension	38.8	48.7
Illness Benefit	41.8	50.6

Appeals processing times are calculated from the registration date of the appeal to the date of its finalisation and include all activities during this period including time spent in the Department for comments by the deciding officer on the grounds of appeal put forward by the appellant and any further investigation, examination or assessment by the Department's inspectors and/or medical assessors that is deemed necessary. A considerable period of time is added to the process when an oral hearing is required because of the logistics involved in this process.

As a consequence of the very high number of decisions made in the last 9 months while backlogs have been reducing, there has been a corresponding substantial increase in the number of appeals being received. Delays in the preparation of claims for appeal are arising as a consequence and this is regretted. In addition, delays have developed in the processing of medical assessments and reviews due to a combination of factors including the increased workload for medical assessors and the reduced number of medical assessors due to retirements. The Department is addressing this issue and has recently run a competition to establish a new panel of medical assessors. Three new medical assessors were appointed from this panel and

all commenced work in November 2012. It is expected that a further 8 medical assessors will be appointed from the panel in the near future.

In the interests of fairness and equity claim for illness-related schemes are generally processed in order of the date in which they are received. However, the individual schemes may operate systems to appropriately prioritise certain claims in view of the particular circumstances. For example disability allowance new claims received from 16 year olds who were previously in receipt of domiciliary care allowance and illness benefit claims from persons who have no other income are given priority.

The aim in respect of all social welfare scheme areas, including the illness-related schemes, is to process new claims within a short time of receipt and to process requests for appeals as quickly as possible. Targets are set and monitored for each scheme. It can happen that, from time to time, a backlog may build up in any scheme. This may be the result of a number of factors, changes in scheme conditions, and other demand on resources, long term sick leave, claim volume increases to name but a possible few. In that event, the Department makes every effort to ensure that there is adequate resource to process the additional work. In some cases, temporary staff may be assigned to help in these situations, but they are not used as a permanent solution.

Service delivery remains a key priority in my Department and processes are kept under continuous review to ensure that services are delivered promptly to customers. Staffing needs are also kept under constant review to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources.

Illness Benefit Applications

319. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of full-time medical assessors who are or have been employed by her Department to oversee illness scheme applications and appeals currently and in each year for the past five years; the number of medical assessors who have been or are employed on a part-time basis; if there is scope to hire new assessors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12612/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are currently 25 Medical Assessors employed in my Department, including the Chief Medical Adviser and the Deputy Chief Medical Adviser. Of this number, 3 were appointed this week. All of the staff in question serve on a full-time basis.

A public competition was held to appoint additional Medical Assessors in 2012 and my Department is liaising with the Public Appointments Service with a view to appointing a further 5 Medical Assessors at the earliest opportunity.

The role of the Medical Assessor is essential in assessing and reviewing illness related claims. I am very pleased that the Department received sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to increase their number thereby enabling the Department to deliver a better service to our customers.

Details of the number of Medical Assessors serving in the Department in March in each of the past 5 years are shown in the table below:

Year	No. of Medical Assessor Posts
2008	19
2009	22

Year	No. of Medical Assessor Posts
2010	24
2011	24
2012	23

Questions Nos. 320 and 321 answered with Question No. 318.

Departmental Equipment

322. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the IT cataloguing system used by her Department to accept and process illness benefit claims and appeals; the procedure from initial application through to final decision after appeals have been exhausted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12616/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The IT system used by the Department of Social Protection to accept and process illness benefit claims is the Integrated Short-Term Scheme (ISTS) computer system. This system provides an integrated IT service for the administration, processing and generation of payments in respect of illness benefit claims. This system also handles the processing of claims for all short term schemes. The ISTS system is integrated with the Department's Central Records System and communicates with other systems as necessary.

Illness benefit claims are submitted to the Department following the customer's consultation with their general practitioner via a written application form (MC1). These claims are then processed by deciding officers of illness benefit branch using the ISTS system. Claims are decided by deciding officers appointed by the Minister under section 299 of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 2005. A written notification of the decision is issued to the claimant automatically by the ISTS system. The average claim processing time for illness benefit claims is one week.

The customer is required to continue to provide certified evidence of their incapacity which is generally provided on a weekly basis in the form of a certificate completed by the customer and their GP (MC2). The claim is maintained on this basis.

During the course of a claim to illness benefit, a customer may be asked to attend for medical assessment by a Departmental Medical Assessor for a second opinion as to whether they are incapable of work. The opinion of the Medical Assessor following this assessment is submitted to a deciding officer for consideration regarding the customer's continued entitlement to illness benefit. Any person who is dissatisfied with a decision made by a deciding officer of the Department, may, by giving notice of appeal to the Chief Appeals officer within the statutory time limit, have the question referred to an appeals officer for determination.

An appeal may be sent directly to the Social Welfare Appeals Office or may be handed in to any office of the Department for transmission to the Appeals Office. In illness benefit cases the question normally at issue is whether the person is incapable of work. When an appeal is received against a decision that a claimant is not incapable of work it is normally referred for a second opinion of a different Medical Assessor. If this Assessor considers that the appellant is incapable the case is referred back to the deciding officer for a revised decision.

If the 2nd Medical Assessor also expresses the opinion that the person is capable of work, the appellant is notified of the result of this examination and is supplied with a form on which

to set out the complete and up to date grounds of his/her appeal. The deciding officer may revise his/her decision at this stage in the light of new evidences provided or the case is passed to the appeals officer for consideration. An appeals officer may decide to hold an oral hearing of the appeal and will invite the appellant to attend. On the other hand the appeals officer may be able to deal with the appeal on the basis of the written evidence provided. The appellant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the appeal. The appeals officer will take account of all available evidence, including medical reports furnished by the appellant and evidence adduced at any oral hearing if one is granted.

Question No. 323 answered with Question No. 311.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

324. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will ensure that an oral hearing is given in respect of an appeal against a decision to refuse an application for an invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12668/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 24 August 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Code Issues

325. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a myriad of self-employed people are deemed to have underpaid in respect of their PRSI and social welfare contributions between 1988 and 1991; if she will outline any particular reason these years should be deemed problematic as accountants have been advising their clients of this period; if she will clarify the position; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12674/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There is no specific group of self-employed people who fit into the above category, as each case is examined on an individual basis. If a person has not fully discharged their liabilities to the Revenue Commissioners under self-assessment, PRSI may be incorrectly returned and in such circumstances underpayments can occur.

It should be noted that all outstanding PRSI liabilities in relation to any tax year must be fully paid before any benefit or pension payment can be processed by my Department.

Family Income Supplement Appeals

326. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position

regarding an appeal for family income supplement in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12713/13]

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 on 26th March 2013. The person concerned has been notified of the arrangements.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Question No. 327 answered with Question No. 311.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

328. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the basis on which the imputed annual income has been determined in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the applicant disputes this figure and has provided evidence of this to her Department; and if she will instruct her Department to take action so that the two figures are reconciled and the case is properly reviewed. [12720/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned appealed the decision to disallow his claim for jobseeker's allowance on the basis that his means were in excess of the permitted amount. As a result of this the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office recommended that a review of his means be carried out by the Social Welfare Local Office. Additional documentation was received from the person concerned and a review of his means was carried out. However the outcome of this review was that his means are still in excess of the permitted amount. He is entitled to appeal this new decision.

The following information was provided under Standing Order 40A

The position in the case of the person concerned is that their means from self-employment were initially assessed at €25,000.

The applicant submitted from his accountant documentary evidence stating that his recent annual earnings from self employment were €10,000.

My reply of 12 March 2013 stated that the applicant had provided evidence to dispute the assessment made. I wish to clarify that the assessment was based, *inter alia*, on the documentary evidence provided by the applicant. I regret if it was not clear in the reply that the most recent documentary evidence submitted by the applicant actually formed the basis of the assessment of self-employment income in this case.

On the basis of the documentary evidence provided a revised decision issued to the applicant on 14 February 2013. This revised decision reduced the amount of self-employment earnings assessable in the case but the applicant's total means remained in excess of the relevant statutory limit.

Subsequent to my reply of 12 March Deputy Shortall provided additional information to the Social Welfare Local Office. This information resulted in a further revised decision. Total means assessed are now €287.00 which means that a weekly payment of €25.80 has been awarded. This decision, communicated to the person concerned on 15 April, can again be ap-

pealed within 21 days of 15 April.

Household Benefits Scheme

329. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the new broadcasting charge will be covered under the household benefits package in the same way that the TV licence currently is; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12728/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The household benefits package comprises the electricity/gas allowance, the telephone allowance and the free television licence. In 2013, my Department will spend an estimated €284 million on this scheme, providing some 410,000 customers with a package worth almost €700 per year. The estimated expenditure on the television licence element of the household benefits package for 2013 is €59 million.

The introduction of a household broadcasting charge in place of the current television licence funding regime is being considered by the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. Officials from my Department are liaising with that Department with regard to this issue. No decisions have been made at this time in relation to the household benefits package.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

330. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a claim for jobseeker's allowance respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9 was suspended; and the reason this person was not notified prior to this action. [12735/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is employed casually and each week is paid a jobseeker's payment, by cheque, in respect of days on which she is unemployed. She should submit dockets on a weekly basis upon which the number of days worked is stated. Cheques are then issued when the docket is received from the client. However, if the docket is not received or is late in arriving at the Local Office, the payment is then suspended. This client has been on casual payments since 28 August 2008 and since then has had payment suspended nine times due to late submission of dockets. This includes the most recent suspension referred to in the Question.

This system of payment is explained in full to clients when they commence signing and also when a suspension occurs due to non-submission, or late submission, of dockets.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

331. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will give consideration to a proposal whereby persons on the live register and in receipt of jobseekers payments can avail of a social welfare holiday for a time limited period in order to allow them seek employment overseas and whereby on their return they would still have the same benefits available to them; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12752/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An unemployed person may qualify for jobseeker's benefit or jobseeker's allowance. Jobseeker's benefit is based on a person's social insurance record and jobseeker's allowance is based on weekly means. A fundamental qualifying condition for a jobseeker's payment is that a person must be available for full-time

work.

Under EU Regulations, in certain circumstances a person on jobseeker's benefit may retain payment for a period of up to 13 weeks, while seeking work in another EU Member State. However, it is not possible to transfer jobseeker's allowance in the same way.

Jobseeker's allowance is listed by EU Regulation 883/2004 as a special non-contributory cash benefit and, as a result, it is paid "exclusively in the Member State in which the persons concerned reside, in accordance with its legislation". A jobseeker's allowance customer, to retain his or her payment, is therefore required to remain in the State. Locally, however, arrangements may be made between a local office and a person on jobseeker's allowance, permitting the person to travel abroad for a job interview or a short holiday.

There are no plans to introduce changes to these arrangements.

Invalidity Pension Payments

332. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection when arrears in relation to invalidity pension will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan. [12762/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Invalidity pension is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the contribution conditions.

The person concerned has been awarded an invalidity pension with effect from 4 August 2011. Her pension went into payment on 10 January 2013. Arrears due, less any benefit or assistance paid for the period, will be in the claimant's nominated bank account on 14 March 2013.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

333. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an application for a domiciliary care allowance now under appeal will be expedited and approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [12774/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received on the 24th April 2012. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who found that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. A letter issued on the 12th June 2012 advising of the decision.

The person concerned requested a review of the decision and the case has been forwarded to another of the Department's Medical Assessors for further consideration. The person concerned will be notified of the outcome of this review.

Question No. 334 withdrawn.

Social Welfare Offices

335. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans regarding the establishment of 62 social welfare offices around the country; in view of the fact that there are

in place a network of offices in most towns, if it is her intention to duplicate those offices; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12822/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): As the Deputy will be aware the Pathways to Work document states that the introduction of the new Intreo service is a multi-annual project. The first ten Intreo offices went live in 2012. These first ten offices were Sligo, Arklow, Tallaght, Kings Inns, Ballymun, Buncrana, Coolock, Dundalk, Finglas and Killarney.

The Intreo Services will be rolled out to all of the Department's existing Local Offices by the end of 2014.

The Department is currently considering how the Intreo Service can best be applied in the situation where a location is serviced by a Branch Office. This consideration will include discussion with Branch Managers, as appropriate.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

336. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person who has been a community employment supervisor is eligible to apply for CE. [12826/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Any person who meets the eligibility criteria for Community Employment (CE) is free to apply for a CE placement. The general requirement is for a person to have been in receipt of a CE-qualifying payment, such as jobseeker's allowance, for 12 months or more and be between 25 and 65 years of age. Another perhaps more appropriate option given that the person maybe job ready is to consider the internship programme JobBridge which offers up to 9 months work experience in a wide range of specific areas.

Questions Nos. 337 and 338 answered with Question No. 311.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

339. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [12833/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 17th January 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 13th February 2013 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Disability Allowance Appeals

340. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a decision has

been made on an appeal for a disability allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12862/13]

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 on 27 March 2012. The person concerned has been notified of the arrangements for the hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Carer's Allowance Applications

341. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12876/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 9th February 2012. The application is currently with a social welfare investigative officer for a means assessment and confirmation that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied. Once the investigative officer has completed and submitted the report a deciding officer will make a full decision. The application will be processed as quickly as possible and when a decision is made the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Question No. 342 withdrawn.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

343. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an application for rent supplement will be expedited in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12899/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A new application for rent supplement was received by my Department from the person concerned on 14 February 2013. It is being examined and assessed at present and a decision will issue shortly. It should be noted that on 21 February he was paid rent supplement for the period until 28 February 2013, after he had moved house. This payment of €211.30 can be used to offset his first rent payment at his new accommodation.

Live Register Numbers

344. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of non-Irish citizens on the live register; the total amount of expenditure in her Department associated with these persons; if she will provide a breakdown of the nationalities of persons on the live register; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12925/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am informed that at the end of February the live register stood at 428,876 of which 76,829 (17.9%) were non-Irish nationals. A

breakdown of the non-Irish nationals into European Union nationals and the largest represented Non-European Union Nationals is in the tabular statement.

With regard to the total amount of expenditure in my Department associated with non-Irish nationals on the live register this is not segregated from the total amount of monies disbursed to registrants on the live register.

Non-Irish Nationals on the Live Register by Country of Origin at 22nd February 2013

UK and EU 13		EU15 to EU27 States		Non-EU countries	
United Kingdom	16,799	Poland	22,746	Nigeria	2,943
Germany	757	Lithuania	7,750	USA	653
Italy	633	Latvia	4,124	Congo	578
Spain	615	Romania	2,433	Ukraine	536
France	599	Slovakia	2,202	South Africa	468
Portugal	453	Hungary	1,234	Pakistan	451
Netherlands	339	Czech republic	1,192	Philippines	449
Sweden	106	Estonia	508	Somalia	413
Belgium	101	Bulgaria	288	Russia	405
Austria	82	Malta	50	Moldova	354
Greece	61	Slovenia	25	Brazil	348
Denmark	53	Cyprus	9	Algeria	313
Finland	48			Other non-EU	5,705
Luxembourg	6				
Total UK and EU	20,652	Total EU15 to EU27 States	42,561	Total Non-EU	13,616

Employment Support Services

345. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the rationale for excluding certain unemployed persons from State supported re-employment and re-entry courses because they have not been unemployed long enough; and if any efforts are under way to reduce the relevant period. [12942/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Given the scale of the unemployment crisis, the key objective of activation policy and labour market initiatives is to offer assistance to those most in need of support in securing work and achieving financial self-sufficiency. This policy objective prioritises scarce resources to those in receipt of qualifying welfare payments. Accordingly the employment services and schemes provided by the Department are focused in the first instance on this cohort of unemployed people. In this context, the major elements of the Government's response are set out in the Pathways to Work policy which is aimed at ensuring that as many as possible of the job vacancies that are created are filled by people from the Live Register, with a particular focus on those who are long term unemployed or at risk of long-term unemployment. Many of those who became unemployed at the height of the jobs crisis in 2009 have found it particularly difficult to find employment. They are now a target

priority group for activation measures.

The Government must also take account of the fact that many people who sign on to the Live Register will exit it again within a short-time frame, without any recourse to employment schemes or intensive activation measures. For example, in 2012, of those who signed on to the Live Register, 43% had left the Register within 3 months of first signing on. Given these high exit rates, it is appropriate to apply a qualifying duration on the Live Register as a criterion to allocate scarce resources, including places on employment and training/educational schemes, to those most in need of support. Of course, some services (for example assistance with job-search activities, use of online job search tools, participation in part-time/evening and on-line training courses) are available to all unemployed persons, regardless of their duration of unemployment, if they register with the Department's employment services offices.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Eligibility

346. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the criteria that must be met to be eligible for the exceptional heating payment. [12943/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, a supplement may be paid in respect of exceptional heating needs where the claimant satisfies the general conditions of entitlement to SWA. In order to qualify for a heating supplement, the applicant must live alone or with a qualified adult or child/children and must have exceptional heating needs due to ill-health or infirmity.

In addition, an exceptional needs payment (ENP) may be made to help meet essential, once-off, exceptional and unforeseen expenditure such as heating costs which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income.

There is no automatic entitlement to these types of payments. Heating supplements and ENPs are payable at the discretion of the officers administering the scheme taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case in order to ensure that the payment targets those most in need of assistance.

Persons who consider that they may have an entitlement to a heating supplement or ENP under the SWA scheme should contact the local officials administering the scheme.

Carer's Allowance Applications

347. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a carer's allowance application that was made in June 2012 in respect of a person (details supplied) has still not been reached and remains in the backlog of applications; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13011/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 11th June 2012. The application was awarded on 11th of March 2013 and the first payment will issue to the person's nominated bank account, payable from 14th of March 2013. Arrears of allowance due from 14th of June 2012 to 13th of March 2013 have issued to the person in question on the 11th of March 2013.

Redundancy Rebates

348. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will investigate the reason it took nine years for a person (details supplied) in Dublin 12 to receive their rebate from her Department in respect of their last remaining employee who was made redundant in 2003; if she will agree to pay the person the interest lost on the refund over the nine years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13024/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Responsibility for the processing of claims under the redundancy payments scheme transferred from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation (DJEI) to the Department of Social Protection in January 2011.

In April 2012 a Chartered Accountant, acting on behalf of company concerned contacted the Department in regard to a redundancy rebate claim in respect of a redundancy which occurred in 2003.

I understand that the forms which should have been submitted in 2003 in order to apply for a redundancy payment were as follows: RP1 - Notification of redundancy; RP2 - calculation of Redundancy and Declaration of receipt of payment and RP3 - Redundancy Application Form.

On foot of the query raised a review of the Department's records was undertaken and the information found indicates that an RP2 form may have been submitted at the time of redundancy. However, there is no record of receipt of an actual redundancy rebate claim form (RP3).

I am advised that a claim would not have been considered as valid at that time until receipt of all the above detailed forms. I am further advised that the documentation submitted in April 2012 included a copy of the RP2 form only. Despite searches undertaken, it is regretted that it is not possible to ascertain whether or not original RP1 or RP3 forms were submitted in 2003.

Notwithstanding the above, the Department took into account the significant timeframe since the redundancy occurred and has accepted the bona fides of the company's stated position on this matter, namely, that a valid redundancy rebate claim was submitted in 2003. In so doing, the Department has acted in good faith and promptly investigated the matter following contact from the accountant in April 2012. On the basis of the documentation provided to my Department at that time, a redundancy rebate payment was authorised and payment issued by cheque to the company concerned on 4th September 2012.

The Redundancy Payments Acts 1967 to 2013 do not contain any provisions enabling a payment to be made in respect of lost interest.

Question No. 349 withdrawn.

Ministerial Appointments

350. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide the names of the four persons she appointed to the Social Welfare Tribunal Board; the amount each member has been paid in expenses and so on from the date of their appointment to 1 March 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13034/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The purpose of the Social Welfare Tribunal is to deal with cases where entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit or Allowance is refused due to an involvement in a trade dispute. Due to its structure and purpose the revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies does not apply to the Social Welfare Tribunal. The

Chairperson is sourced by the Department of Social Protection by way of a recommendation from the Labour Court with regard to a particular candidate's suitability. The current Chairperson has held the position since 2003. He is a former Rights Commissioner (1982 to 2001) with extensive experience in dispute resolution and has been proven to hold all of the qualifications, skills and competencies necessary for the position.

In view of his proven suitability and his stated willingness to continue in the position I reappointed the Chairperson for a further three year term commencing on 5th October 2012.

Relevant legislation provides that the four ordinary members of the Tribunal are appointed by the Minister on the recommendation of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and the Irish Business Employer Confederation (IBEC). As the term of appointment to the Tribunal expired in October 2012 both ICTU and IBEC were requested to forward their nominations for the next term and I subsequently appointed the four ordinary members recommended for a three year period effective from 5th October 2012.

The names of the Chairperson and of the four Ordinary Members of the Board will be supplied to the Deputy directly.

Members of the Tribunal do not receive a salary although attendance fees are payable for hearings and meetings. Members are also entitled to standard travel and subsistence allowances if appropriate. However, demand for the services of the Social Welfare Tribunal is very infrequent. From 2004 to date only three applications for adjudication by the Tribunal have been made, two in 2009 and one in 2010. The total expenditure for all expenses/fees relating to three hearings in 2009 and 2010 came to €6,084. No expenditure has been incurred by any member of the Tribunal since 2010.

Employment Support Services

351. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide an update on the training and internship schemes that are open to self-employed persons who are not signing on but not working; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13073/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Given the scale of the unemployment crisis, the key objective of activation policy and labour market initiatives is to offer assistance to those most in need of support in securing work and achieving financial self-sufficiency. This policy objective prioritises scarce resources to those in receipt of qualifying welfare payments. Accordingly the employment services and schemes provided by the Department are focused in the first instance on this cohort of unemployed people. With specific regard to the Department's internship programme – JobBridge – in order to be eligible to participate an individual must be currently be in receipt of a live social welfare claim (Jobseekers Allowance/Jobseekers Benefit/One Parent Family Payment/Disability Allowance/Signing for Credits).

It is recognised, however, that not all unemployed people (including those previously self-employed) are dependent on the State for financial support and some services (for example assistance with jobsearch activities, use of online job search tools) are also available to such people if they register with the Department's employment services offices.

Unemployed persons (including the previously self-employed) not in receipt of payments may also be eligible to avail of up-skilling opportunities, for example through FÁS training, but are not eligible to receive a training allowance while undertaking such training.

Farm Assist Scheme Appeals

352. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an appeal for farm assist will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan; the reason for the delay in making the decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13122/13]

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, including that adduced at oral hearing, allowed the appeal of the person concerned. The person concerned was notified of the Appeals Officer's decision on 8th March 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.

Departmental Bodies

353. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 456 of 19 February 2013, if he will provide the names of the three board members who have decided to gift their fees back to the State. [12350/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The board members who gifted their fees back to the State are Ms. Pat Moylan, Mr. John O'Donnell and Mr. John Fanning. They are all members of the board of the Arts Council.

Departmental Expenditure

354. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the home of Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12361/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): My Department has not deployed any such computer hardware or software and thus associated costs do not arise.

Departmental Expenditure

355. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12379/13]

356. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly phone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12398/13]

357. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills are being paid to constituency office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12416/13]

358. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of mobile phones in use by him, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12434/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 355 to 358, inclusive, together.

It has not been possible to collate the information requested by the Deputy in the time-frame permitted for a Parliamentary Question but it will be sent directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Departmental Expenditure

359. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12452/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht was established on 2 June 2011, following substantial Departmental reconfigurations. The total amount spent by my Department on drivers and Ministerial transport since that date, in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidance on such matters, is € 415,253.44.

Departmental Expenditure

360. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12471/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht was established on 2 June 2011. The number of cards issued to staff in my Department since that date is two. The value of payments made to date using those credit cards is €19,329.33.

No credit cards have been issued to Ministers during the period referred to.

Departmental Funding

361. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the total amount of grant aid provided under ACCESS I and II for the development of a new museum in County Sligo; the total estimated capital cost of the museum project; where the balance of the funding is to be sourced; the current status of the museum project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12586/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): In August 2001, an amount of €2.9 million was allocated to Sligo County Council from the Arts and Culture Capital Enhancement Support Scheme (ACCESS I), as a contribution towards the construction costs of a proposed new purpose-built county museum.

For a number of reasons the project did not go ahead. The grant was withdrawn in December 2008, following a meeting between Sligo County Council and officials of my Department. The monies were reallocated to other projects. These included The Model - an alternative project put forward by Sligo County Council. A further grant was made to The Model from ACCESS 11 and it received a total of €3.4 million from my Department. That project was completed and the centre is now re-opened.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Properties

362. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the total number of leases held by Udarás na Gaeltachta to which they are the lessor and the total of such leases that have upward only rent clauses. [12588/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): The Deputy will appreciate that the details sought by him are extensive and, accordingly, it has not been possible to collate the requested information in the time available. Údarás na Gaeltachta has been requested to supply the relevant data as soon as possible and I can assure the Deputy that it will be forwarded directly to him when it becomes available.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Funding

363. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the cost per job created and cost per job retained by Udarás na Gaeltachta. [12589/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): I have been informed by Údarás na Gaeltachta that the grant cost per job for 2012 was €8,091 and that the average cost per job over the past five years, which reflects the cost per job sustained, was €10,230.

The figures provided reflect grant expenditure on capital, employment, research and development and training paid by Údarás na Gaeltachta to its client companies but excludes FIFG (Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance) and Research, Development and Innovation (R&D&I) funding and certain other expenditure on training and education.

Broadband Services Provision

364. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the total number of Udarás na Gaeltachta business units that have broadband; the number with broadband access with download speeds less than 5 Mbps; between 5 and 10 Mbps; between 10 to 30 Mbps; between 30 to 70 Mbps; between 70 to 100 Mbps; and more than 100 Mbps. [12590/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): I understand that all tenants in business units owned by Údarás na Gaeltachta make their own arrangements with various broadband suppliers, depending on the options available in the areas in question.

I am advised also that virtually all Údarás na Gaeltachta properties could potentially have access to very fast broadband speeds, as detailed in the Deputy's Question, via point to point radio links. However, as the Deputy will appreciate, this is a matter for the individual companies to decide.

Departmental Advertising Campaigns

365. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will explain the miswording on the advertisement in relation to submissions for the environmental impact statement on Moore Street, Dublin, the lack of clarity on the proposed demolition; if the veracity of the study is now compromised; if he will ensure that the next advertisement is advertised nationally with the EIS available online; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12804/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): My Department has informed the applicant for consent under the National Monuments Acts for works on the site of the Moore Street national monument that the newspaper notice published on 18 January 2013 in relation to the submission of the related environmental impact statement was not compliant with the requirements of section 14D of the National Monuments Act 1930 in that it did not state "the nature and extent of the proposed demolition". The applicant has, accordingly, been required to publish a further public notice, the timing of which is a matter for the applicant. In practical terms, the requirement for a new public notice will recommence the five week period for submissions or observations to my Department in relation to the environmental impact statement already submitted.

Under section 14D of the National Monuments Act 1930: a person submitting an environmental statement is required to publish "notice of his, her or its intention to do so in at least one newspaper circulating in the district in which the relevant national monument is situated"; the environmental impact statement is required to be "available for inspection free of charge or purchase, at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, during office hours at the offices of the Minister or such other convenient place as the Minister may specify".

The production of an electronic version of the environmental impact statement and any question of making it available on the internet or advertising it more widely would be matters for the consent applicant.

Seal Deaths

366. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will meet with the Irish Seal Sanctuary in order to deal with the reports of multiple seal deaths many of which appear to be suspicious and to discuss their offer of assistance in the carrying out of post mortems in the regional veterinary laboratories and colleges. [12824/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 379 of 28 February 2013, where I detailed my Department's response to the recent reports of seal deaths around our coast, including co-operation with the Irish Seal Sanctuary.

I will arrange for officials of my Department to meet with the Irish Seal Sanctuary in order to discuss further options for co-operation in this matter.

Exploration Licences Approvals

367. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will wait until the results of the environmental impact assessment study have come back and are fully considered before granting any exploration licence for onshore

shale gas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12840/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I can confirm that two of the three companies granted onshore licensing options in February 2011 have submitted applications for a follow-on exploration licence. My Department will shortly commence its evaluation, focusing on the technical rationale underpinning the applications, along with the corporate information provided. Where the outcome of this stage of the evaluation is positive, further consideration of the application will then be put on hold until after the findings of the new EPA research have been published.

In addition, I can confirm that I do not propose to consider applications for exploration authorisations in respect of other onshore areas until the EPA research has concluded.

Fisheries Protection

368. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the steps he proposes to take to protect the native oyster beds on Lough Swilly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13064/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I am advised by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) that Lough Swilly is located within a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). As the exploitation of these fisheries is by means of dredging, an "Appropriate Assessment" against predetermined conservation objectives is required. These assessments are undertaken by the Marine Institute an Agency within the aegis of the Department of Agriculture Food and Marine.

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is the agency which issues oyster dredge licences under the 1959 Fisheries (Consolidation) Act. Until the completion of an Appropriate Assessment, IFI must ensure, on a precautionary basis, that no intensification of the oyster dredge fishery occurs. This precautionary policy has been further strengthened by the Habitats Directive as transposed by European Commission (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011

In accordance with this principle, IFI limit the number of licences annually to no more than the average number of licences that have been issued over the previous 5 years when dredging actually took place, prior to 2011. If the number of licences issued in 2011 was restricted then the number issued in the years after 2011 must not exceed that number until the Appropriate Assessment is completed by the Marine Institute.

This precautionary management regime means that a total of 24 licences are available for issue in 2013 in the Lough Swilly area.

The Appropriate Assessment, when completed, will provide a status report on the current fishery, identify potential impacts of current fishing and aquaculture activities in Lough Swilly and identify the necessary conservation measures required to ensure sustainable management of the fishery into the future.

Departmental Expenditure

369. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the home of the Minister of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12363/13]

370. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12381/13]

371. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices, including monthly telephone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12400/13]

372. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills are being paid to constituency office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12418/13]

373. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of mobile telephones in use by him, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile telephones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12436/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 369 to 373, inclusive, together.

Details of all hardware provided by my Department to my home are as follows: One PC and one scanner at a total cost of €325.00. No Departmental equipment has been provided to the Minister of State, Deputy O'Dowd's home and there was no software procured for use by myself or the Minister of State.

I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department at all times seeks to achieve the optimum cost efficiency in the provision of both ICT and communications equipment

and telephone services to the offices of Ministers, and throughout the Department. Regarding the Deputy's specific questions, I can confirm that the Department has

not provided telephone equipment in either my home or the home of the Minister of State.

The cost, from February 2011 to date of the provision of ICT equipment to both of the constituency offices is €5,503, with all printers and scanners provided from existing Department stock. In the same period the costs of telephony for constituency offices amounted to €4,167.90. My Department has not incurred any costs, additional to ICT and communications costs.

A total of 11 mobile communications devices (phone, data and tablet) have been provided to myself, the Minister of State and politically appointed staff. The cost of the provision and operation of this equipment and ancillary equipment was €6,769.63 in 2011, €8,353.22 in 2012 and €1,660.98 to date in 2013.

Departmental Expenditure

374. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12454/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):

The information requested by the Deputy on costs from March 2011 to date is outlined in the tables following.

Minister's Car

Cost of Drivers to date (Includes Employer's PRSI and expenses)	Mileage and other costs
€165,497	€23,272

Minister of State's Car

Cost of Drivers to date (Includes Employer's PRSI and expenses)	Mileage and other costs
€149,351	€29,836

My Department did not incur any Ministerial transport costs in 2010. In that year all Government Ministers were provided with a State car that was driven by a member of An Garda Síochána from a pool of gardaí, two of whom were assigned to the Minister at that time. The cost of this service was funded from the Vote of An Garda Síochána. In addition the Minister of State assigned to my Department in 2010 did not claim mileage in my Department. The decision to terminate state transport for Ministers (other than An Taoiseach, An Tánaiste and the Minister for Justice) has led to savings of 65% to the Exchequer.

Departmental Expenditure

375. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12473/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): In total, there are three credit cards held in my Department since March 2011. The cards are held by the Minister, Private Secretary to the Minister and the Private Secretary to the Minister of State.

The use of cards provides for the efficient management of payments, but all use is subject to the overriding objective of economy and efficiency, full compliance with travel and subsistence rules, value for money and compliance with rules and expenditure limits on hospitality. Total expenditure over the two year period on each of the cards was €1,625.98, €5,440.62 and €3,664.18 respectively.

Wind Energy Strategy

376. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will take steps to initiate and undertake a strategic environmental assessment of Ireland's overall onshore wind energy strategy similar to that which was initiated in 2011 which undertook an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing Ireland's offshore wind energy plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12507/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):

I intend to finalise the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the draft Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDP), on which a public consultation has been held, in the coming months and to publish the final OREDP, including appropriate assessment decision and SEA Statement at that time. EirGrid has undertaken and published an SEA on the implementation plans for Grid 25, and this is available on the EirGrid website, *www.eirgrid.com*.

The Department of Environment has published guidelines related to Wind Energy Planning. These are available on the Department of Environment website at www.environ.ie. A focused revision of these guidelines is currently underway.

The guidelines offer advice to planning authorities on planning for wind energy through the development plan process and in determining applications for planning permission. The guidelines are also intended to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development and the treatment of planning applications for wind energy developments. The guidelines are also intended to be of assistance to developers and the wider public in considering wind energy development. The guidelines were issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which requires both planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála to have regard to them in the performance of their functions.

Each local authority is required to publish a development plan, setting out the overall planning policies of the local area for a 6 year period and in doing so, they are statutorily required to have regard to the Wind Energy Planning Guidelines. Each local authority Development Plan is the subject of a strategic environmental assessment, which has taken wind energy development into account.

Broadband Services Provision

377. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in the interest of choice and price competitiveness, if he will reconsider his policy towards an over reliance on individual private sector broadband service providers to deliver this service in rural areas including Newtowncashel, County Longford. [12521/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Ireland's telecommunications market is fully liberalised and is regulated by the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg), in accordance with an EU Regulatory Framework. It has been liberalised since 1999 and has developed into a well-regulated market, supporting a multiplicity of commercial operators, providing services over a diverse range of technology platforms. Details of broadband services available on a county-by-county basis can be found on the website of the ComReg at *www.callcosts.ie.*

The State can only become involved in the provision of broadband services on a commercial basis in accordance with the market economy investor principle or in the provision of broadband services in instances of clear market failure, in accordance with EU State Aid rules. The Government has undertaken a number of initiatives to bring broadband to those parts of the country where operators have been unable to offer services on a commercial basis.

My Department entered into a contract in late 2008 with Hutchison 3G Ireland Ltd ("3") for the delivery of the National Broadband Service (NBS). The scheme offers a basic broadband service, in line with EU State aid clearance, to fixed residences and businesses located within certain designated Electoral Divisions. In County Longford, NBS services are available within 11 of its 55 Electoral Divisions. Under EU State Aid rules, the NBS is prohibited from provid-

ing a service in served areas where to do so would give rise to an unacceptable level of market distortion.

The Rural Broadband Scheme (RBS) was launched in 2011 in recognition of the fact that despite the widespread availability of broadband throughout Ireland, there still remained individual premises that were unable to receive broadband provision. This Scheme was aimed at making a basic broadband service available to unserved premises in rural areas, not already covered by the NBS. Commercial service providers were in a position to offer services to all applicants under the Scheme from County Longford.

The combination of private investment and State interventions means that Ireland has met the EU Commission's Digital Agenda for Europe target of having a basic broadband service available to all areas by 2013, and the focus is now on accelerating the roll out of high speed services.

The Government's National Broadband Plan, which I published in August last, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed services of at least 30Mbps are available to all of our citizens and businesses, well in advance of the EU's target date of 2020, and that significantly higher speeds are available to as many homes and businesses as possible.

Specifically, it commits to: 70Mbps to 100Mbps available from the commercial market operators to more than half of the population by 2015; at least 40Mbps, and in many cases faster speeds, to at least a further 20% and potentially as much as 35% of the population; and a minimum of 30Mbps for every remaining home and business in the country.

During the preparation of Ireland's National Broadband Plan, the commercial market operators indicated that they expect to provide 70Mbps to 100Mbps services to 50% of the population by 2015. The commercial sector is already making these investments in high speed services, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas. The Government is also committed in the Plan to investing in areas where high speed services are not commercially viable and will not be provided by the market.

My Department is making preparations to commence a formal national mapping exercise to identify where the market is expected to succeed and fail in the delivery of high speed broadband over the coming years. This will inform the level of Government interaction that may be required and the areas that need to be targeted for a State-led investment. It will also form a critical input to an EU State Aid application in respect of any State-led intervention.

Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, we are committed to increasing the availability of next generation speeds significantly, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and business can participate fully in a digitally enabled society.

I would reiterate that the Government remains committed to the delivery of the speeds referred to above, to ensure that all parts of Ireland, including Newtowncashel, County Longford, will have speeds of at least 30Mbps.

Energy Schemes Issues

378. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will outline proposals for the residential sector to transition from the retrofit scheme to a new pay as you save financing model; the way this transition will impact on the homeowner in terms of benefits and ability to finance home improvements; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [12543/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) administers the Better Energy Homes Scheme under the Better Energy Programme. Better Energy Homes provides a financial incentive to private homeowners who wish to improve the energy performance of their homes. Fixed grants are provided towards the cost of a range of measures including attic insulation, wall insulation, heating systems upgrades, solar thermal panels and accompanying BER. By the end of February 2013 the Scheme had dispersed over €150 million in Exchequer funding, providing 353,232 energy efficiency measures to 138,970 homes.

The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan and the Programme for Government include a commitment to roll out a Better Energy Financing (i.e. pay-as-you-save) energy retrofit scheme for domestic buildings after 2013. The Better Energy Financing (BEF) model proposes that the current suite of Exchequer funded grants for energy efficiency measures, excluding the low-income housing retrofit programme, will be replaced by a new financing scheme open to households and commercial operators.

The key benefit to the homeowner of such a financing mechanism is that the scheme will allow them to secure upfront financing for energy efficiency upgrades to their homes, and in the process remove one of the key energy efficiency barriers. The consumer will also benefit through the creation of a robust quality assurance process that will protect consumers and ensure high-quality workmanship.

My Department has put in place a project team to design a replacement retrofit financing scheme under the direction of a Project Board representing key state and industry stakeholders. Project resources have been drawn from industry experts and elsewhere in the public sector. It is planned that the design of the scheme will be developed over the coming months and that a public consultation process will be undertaken later this year.

Renewable Energy Exports

379. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Bord na Móna recently issued a public request for tender seeking expressions of interest for market soundings in relation to wind energy direct export from Ireland to Great Britain; if this is part of a scheme to build up Bord na Móna assets and interests with a view to privatisation; and when and how the outcomes of this public request for tender will be released. [12545/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Earlier this year a Memorandum of Understanding on energy co-operation between the UK and Ireland was signed which will result in completion of consideration of how Irish renewable energy resources, onshore and offshore, might be developed to the mutual benefit of Ireland and the United Kingdom. This will determine whether it is beneficial for both countries to enter into an Inter-Governmental Agreement under the Renewable Energy Directive to provide for renewable energy trading.

If an Inter-Governmental Agreement is entered into, there are potential significant employment opportunities. All relevant State agencies, particularly in the enterprise area, would have to coordinate their activities early in the process to ensure employment potential of export projects is maximised.

There are currently a number of potential project developers that have expressed interest

in renewable export. In terms of our negotiations with the UK, we have not yet determined or agreed the selection process for potential joint projects, which will be a further matter to be discussed and negotiated in the coming year. Any such selection process will, of course, be open and transparent. It is in this context that Bord na Móna recently published a notice on etenders to establish market soundings with a view to exploring the possibility of collaborating with other market participants on a major renewable energy export project. This was not a public request for tenders nor a competition call and Bord na Móna clearly states that no decision to proceed with such a project has in fact been made.

Bord na Móna's traditional peat business is in decline and due to environmental and climate change concerns, the company has embarked on its "New Contract with Nature" strategy, designed to transition the company towards a new more sustainable business. Reducing its dependence on peat and maximising on opportunities in the low carbon economy are the core drivers of Bord na Móna's transformation under its "New Contract with Nature". Bord na Móna has set objectives for the Group over the next 15 to 20 years to transform each of its business units, to be a leading provider of sustainable products and services both nationally and internationally. It is vital for Ireland to grasp the opportunities for underpinning economic growth through sustainable, competitive energy policy.

Bord na Móna's ongoing strategy of diversification and commitment to sustainability is a key driver in the development of installed wind energy capacity at existing cut away bog sites and the company is progressing a number of significant wind farm projects on its properties. The recent notice to determine "market soundings" is a further move in exploring future opportunities consistent with its diversification strategy.

In 2012 the Government announced a programme of State asset disposals which is currently progressing and which includes the sale of Bord Gáis Éireann's energy business and some of ESB's non-strategic power generation capacity. Bord na Móna is not part of the State asset disposal process.

Wind Energy Guidelines

380. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he intends to commission any independent studies into the adverse health effect that low frequency noise has on residents who live close to wind turbines. [12546/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government has published Guidelines related to Wind Energy Planning. These are available on that Department's website at *www.environ.ie*.

The Wind Energy Guidelines offer advice to planning authorities on planning for wind energy through the development plan process and in determining applications for planning permission. The Guidelines are also intended to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development and the treatment of planning applications for wind energy developments. The Guidelines are also intended to be of assistance to developers and the wider public in considering wind energy development. The Guidelines were issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which requires both planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála to have regard to them in the performance of their functions.

A focussed revision of these Guidelines is currently underway. The Department of the En-

vironment, Community and Local Government, in conjunction with my Department, is undertaking a technical update of the guidance on noise (including separation distance) and shadow flicker in the Guidelines (the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006). This update is intended to ensure that the Guidelines are supported by a robust and up to date evidence base on these issues to support wind energy development in a manner which safeguards residential amenity consistent with EU and National Policy. Submissions from the public on these aspects of the Guidelines were received in February 2013 and these are currently being considered.

The two Departments have agreed with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) that SEAI will tender for a desk based study to review and provide advice on the impact of related to onshore windfarms and that the output from this will be used to inform the focussed revision of the Guidelines.

Media Ownership

381. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he is satisfied that there is enough media diversity here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12568/13]

382. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if media ownership has the potential to impact on media diversity here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12569/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 381 and 382 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, Section 25 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 requires that the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) endeavour to ensure that the broadcasting services made available serve the diverse needs of the people of the island of Ireland, and that both programming and control of both commercial and community broadcasters is diverse. To that end, the BAI has a range of powers around the ownership of media as part of its licensing function and, indeed, published a new ownership and control policy for broadcast media in 2012.

I currently have no statutory responsibility for the print media sector. Legislation is in train to transfer responsibilities for the public value aspects of media mergers from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to my Department.

Arising from the critical role of the media in our democracy, and the potentially harmful effects of an over concentration of media ownership, this issue is a vitally important one. The Government remains committed to implementing a set of robust measures that allow for a transparent and objective assessment of the public good in media mergers cases, and to do so as quickly as possible.

Television Licence Fee Collection

383. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will outline the remit of the value for money policy review group dealing with the television licence fee replacement tax, due to report before the end of March 2013; the date on which the group was set up; and the names of the members. [12577/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Value for Money (VFM) Policy Review Group on the introduction of a Public Service

Broadcasting Charge held its first meeting on 4 September 2012. The objective of the Review is to analyse whether an alternative funding model to the traditional TV licence fee model would provide a more stable source of funding for public service broadcasting into the future by being more efficient and effective in terms of revenue intake and lowering the evasion rate.

As required by the Department of Finance guidelines for a VFM Policy Review process, a Steering Group was established comprising officials of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, with an independent external chair.

The primary purpose of the Report is to assist my Department in its deliberations in the context of any recommendations that may, ultimately, be made to Government on this matter. The question of the status of the Report, including the need to make public the names of those on the group, will be addressed in that context once this process has been finalised.

Broadcasting Sector Regulation

384. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the meetings he has had with independent broadcasters of Ireland representing the big media companies (details supplied) and notwithstanding difficulties regarding state aids to commercial interests, the discussions he has had regarding funding independent broadcasters with public service broadcasting funds. [12578/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): In line with my responsibilities for the broadcasting sector, I confirm that I have met with the representative body, Independent Broadcasters of Ireland (IBI), on three occasions (8 June 2011, 3 July 2012 and on 16 January 2013) since my appointment as Minister and that these meetings included discussion of the IBI's proposals regarding public funding.

As I have stated previously in this House, while I fully recognise the contribution of the independent radio sector in bringing diversity to the airwaves, and serving the needs of communities, I remain to be convinced that the distribution of public funds to independent commercial broadcasters represents a sound proposition in terms of policy for the sector. These stations were founded as commercial operations with creating a profit for their owners as their primary objective. Station owners sought and accepted licences on clear commercial terms. In many cases, their success in the licence application process was assisted by the voluntary commitments they gave in regard to the provision of public service type content, over and above that required by the relevant legislation. The fact that some of these stations are now undergoing an understandable degree of financial stress does not mean that the State should immediately step in and provide funding – they are and remain commercial companies. Moreover, it should also be noted that the very popularity of these stations in the communities they serve is, in many cases, as a distinct result of the local news content and current affairs type programming that they provide and which, in turn, gives them a powerful advertising presence and thus earning potential. As the economy recovers, it is to be expected that this commercial pressure will ease as advertising revenues recover apace.

In addition, as the Deputy may be aware, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) is presently engaged in the first five year review of the funding of public service broadcasting corporations, RTÉ and TG4, under Section 124 of the Broadcasting Act 2009. As part of this review, the Authority will specifically examine the impact of further 'top slicing' of the available licence fee fund on the ability of these two broadcasters to deliver on their statutory public service mandates. The findings of this review will be used to inform my Department's policy

making in this area.

Electricity Generation

385. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will give an update on the micro-generation scheme that was announced in February 2009; when decisions will be made and when the scheme will be progressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12725/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): 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.

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.

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.

In terms of current supports, it is noteworthy that the REFIT scheme operated by my Department does not set lower limits. There are currently some very small hydro plants operating in the scheme, as well as some small landfill gas and anaerobic digestion (AD) plants.

In REFIT 3, covering the biomass sector, the tariff structure is weighted in favour of smaller scale developments, with a higher tariff being offered for AD plants of less than half a megawatt (500 kW) and biomass CHP plants that are less than1.5MW (1500kW).

REFIT 3 Tariffs

i. AD CHP (units less than or equal to 500 kWe) 15c per kWh

ii. AD CHP (units of greater than 500 kWe) 13c per kWh

iii. AD (non CHP) (less than or equal to 500 kWe) 11c per kWh

iv. AD (non CHP) (units of greater than 500 kWe) 10c per kWh

v. Biomass CHP (units less than or equal to 1500kWe) 14c per kWh

vi. Biomass CHP (units of greater than 1500kWe) 12c per kWh.

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 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 going forward.

Broadband Services Speeds

386. **Deputy Dara Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources with regard to the roll out of high speed broadband nationally, the action being taken to improve the speed in Whitechuch, County Cork, which is densely populated and growing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12742/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Considerable progress has been made in recent years in both the coverage and speeds of national broadband infrastructure, with a multiplicity of commercial operators, providing services over a diverse range of technology platforms.

The Government has also undertaken a number of initiatives, including the National Broadband Scheme and the Rural Broadband Scheme, to bring basic broadband services to those parts of the country where commercial operators have been unable to offer services. The combination of private investment and State interventions means that Ireland has met the EU Commission's Digital Agenda for Europe target of having a basic broadband service available to all areas by 2013.

In addition to consumer services, there are State-funded Metropolitan Area Networks throughout County Cork, specifically in Bantry, Blarney, Carrigaline, Charleville, Cork City, Dunmanway, Fermoy, Kanturk, Midleton, Mitchelstown, Passage West, Ringaskiddy, Skibbereen and Youghal. These networks provide high capacity fibre connectivity for businesses and telecoms operators in the region.

The Government's National Broadband Plan, which I published in August last, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed services of at least 30Mbps are available to all of our citizens and businesses, well in advance of the EU's target date of 2020, and that significantly higher speeds are available to as many homes and businesses as possible.

Specifically, it commits to:70Mbps to 100Mbps available from the commercial market operators to more than half of the population by 2015; at least 40Mbps, and in many cases faster speeds, to at least a further 20% and potentially as much as 35% of the population; and a minimum of 30Mbps for every remaining home and business in the country.

During the preparation of Ireland's National Broadband Plan, the commercial market operators indicated that they expect to provide 70Mbps to 100Mbps services to 50% of the population by 2015. The commercial sector is already making these investments in high speed services, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas. The Government is also committed in the Plan to investing in areas where high speed services are not commercially viable and will not be provided by the market.

My Department is making preparations to commence a formal national mapping exercise to identify where the market is expected to succeed and fail in the delivery of high speed broadband over the coming years. This will inform the level of Government interaction that may be required and the areas that need to be targeted for a State-led investment. It will also form a critical input to an EU State Aid application in respect of any State-led intervention.

Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, we are committed to increasing the availability of next generation speeds significantly, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and business can participate fully in a digitally enabled society.

I would reiterate that the Government remains committed to the delivery of the speeds referred to above, to ensure that all parts of Ireland, including, Whitechurch County Cork will have at least 30Mbps connectivity.

Mobile Telephony

387. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will consider introducing measures that would require mobile telephone network providers to ensure that all telephone users, including those who opt for the prepaid option, are compelled to register their name and address with their network provider. [13010/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): A proposal to register all customers of mobile phone services was considered previously by my Department which identified many complex legal, technical, data protection and practical issues to be considered. It was concluded at that time that the proposal would be of limited benefit in that it would not solve the illegal and inappropriate use of mobile phones and was not practical. There are no current proposals to compel mobile telephone service providers to register all customers.

Mining Industry

388. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on whether the current use of the former tailing pond site in Silvermines, County Tipperary, is safe and poses no health risk to residents or animals; if he will detail his long term plans for the site; if he will provide a guarantee that this site will be safely maintained into the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13090/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): For the information of the Deputy, I am advised that the remediated area of the tailings management facility at Gortmore, Silvermines, Nenagh, County Tipperary, comprises a substantial cover including geogrid membrane, a rock layer and soil overlaid by vegetation. I understand that there would not appear to be a risk of immediate or irreversible damage to the property. In the circumstances, public or animal health would not be an issue.

In regard to the immediate issue of livestock on the site in question which was brought to my attention, I can advise the Deputy that a recent inspection by an expert, commissioned by the Department, indicated that there were ten horses and a donkey contained on part of the remediated site. These were observed as not causing any damage to the ground that, along with the vegetation, is described as being in good condition.

There are ongoing negotiations with the landowner on the future of the site. It is my intention to reach an accommodation on this and once the statutory process is observed, I would expect that the tailings management facility will be appropriately managed and monitored on behalf of the State in the future.

Motor Tax Exemptions

389. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will consider introducing a special rate of motor tax for pre-2008 seven seat family vehicles similar to the commercial rate in view of the fact that these vehicles have large engines and come under high motor tax bands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12306/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Private vehicles registered prior to 2008 are charged motor tax on the basis of engine

capacity with the rates graduating upwards as the engine size increases. Any reduction in motor tax rates for this category would require a compensatory increase elsewhere in motor tax rates or elsewhere in the tax code. I have no plans to revise the basis of taxation for the vehicles in this category.

Water Meters Expenditure

390. **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 sub-contractor 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 such work; if he will ensure that this threshold is substantially reduced in line with stated policy on facilitating small and medium enterprises participation in public procurement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12859/13]

432. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the terms of reference used by the water metering system in choosing companies to be included on the panel for the installation of water meters; his views on whether the required €400,000 turnover for the listed years discriminates against small, experienced businesses in favour of bigger businesses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13037/13]

445. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the terms of reference used by the water metering system in choosing companies to be included on the panel for the installation of water meters; his views on whether the required €400,000 turnover for the listed years discriminates against small, experienced businesses in favour of bigger businesses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13058/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 390, 432 and 445 together.

I refer to the reply to Question No. 219 of 27 February 2013, which sets out the position in relation to the procurement process. The position is unchanged.

Question No. 391 answered with Question No. 89.

Roads Maintenance

392. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to address the issue of road maintenance in Waterford city and county (details supplied); and the timeframe for same. [12308/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The moratorium on recruitment and promotion in the public service was introduced in March 2009 in response to the financial crisis. My Department operates a delegated sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for implementation of the moratorium in relation to local authorities, and any exceptions to the moratorium in local authorities require sanction from my Department.

Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, each City and County Manager is responsible for staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authorities for which he or she is responsible. In this regard, it is a matter for City and County Managers, in the first instance, to ensure that the moratorium is implemented while

the appropriate service levels are maintained.

My Department examines all staffing sanction requests on a case by case basis having due regard to the continued delivery of key services in the context of staffing and budgetary constraints. In considering sanction requests public safety, maintaining key front line services, and economic issues are given precedence.

My Department works closely with Waterford City Council and Waterford County Council in relation to overall staffing requirements. No request has been received from Waterford City Council for roads maintenance staff; however, in February 2013, my Department sanctioned 9 General Operative (roads and water) positions for Waterford County Council.

Constitutional Amendments

393. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if it will be possible to hold a referendum regarding changing the wording of the Constitution to allow the numbers of Deputies to be reduced by 20; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12314/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government has no plans to hold a referendum on Article 16.2.2 of the Constitution to allow for TD numbers to be reduced by 20. The focus of the Government is on implementing the Programme for Government commitment to reduce the number of TDs following the publication of the results of the 2011 census. The first step in this was taken with the enactment of the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2011 to provide for the Constituency Commission to recommend a total number of members of Dáil Éireann within the range of 153 to 160, reduced from a range of 164 to 168. The next step was the establishment of a Constituency Commission in July 2011 in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Act 1997. The final step was taken with the initiation of the Electoral (Amendment) (Dáil Constituencies) Bill on 5 October 2012 to implement in full the recommendations of the Constituency Commission including a reduction in the number of TDs to 158. That Bill was passed by the Dáil on 28 February 2013. It is now being considered by the Seanad. The provisions in that Bill, if it is enacted, would come into effect after the dissolution of the Dáil next following its enactment.

Local Authority Housing Provision

394. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a list of all properties purchased since 2003 for the purpose of providing homelessness accommodation by local authorities; if the property is occupied or currently vacant; the price paid and the intended purpose of the purchased property; if his Department funded the cost of the purchase; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12324/13]

395. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a list of all properties purchased since 2005 by local authorities; if the property is occupied or currently vacant; the price paid and the intended purpose of the purchased property; if it is being used for that purpose; if his Department funded the cost of the purchase; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12325/13]

396. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a list of all properties purchased since 2005 by Dublin City

Council; if the property is occupied or currently vacant; the price paid and the intended purpose of the purchased property; if it is being used for that purpose; if his Department funded the total or partial cost of the purchase; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12326/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 394 to 396, inclusive, together.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 58 of the Housing Act, 1966, local authorities are responsible for the management and maintenance of their social housing stock, including policy and practice in relation to tenancy arrangements and decisions in relation to the acquisition of specific properties to meet identified social housing need.

Local authorities acquire properties to meet a range of housing need, including accommodation for persons with specific categories of housing need such as the homeless, older persons, persons with a physical, intellectual or mental health disability etc. Subject to my Department's approval, the cost of acquiring properties to add to the social housing stock may be recouped out of the annual capital allocations to local authorities under my Department's Social Housing Investment Programme.

Information in relation to the numbers of properties acquired by local authorities since 2003 is published in my Department's Housing Statistics Bulletins, copies of which are available on my Department's website at www.environ.ie.

The detailed information sought in relation to each of the 8,300 properties acquired across all local authorities over the 10 year period in question is not readily available in my Department and its compilation would involve a disproportionate amount of time and work.

Fire Service Issues

397. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his Department has completed its consideration of a formal sanction in consultation with Dublin City Council, for the recruitment of 28 positions in Dublin Fire Brigade and the decision he reached. [12348/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The moratorium on recruitment and promotion in the public service was introduced in March 2009 in response to the financial crisis. My Department operates a delegated sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for implementation of the moratorium in relation to local authorities, and any exceptions to the moratorium in local authorities require sanction from my Department.

Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, each City and County Manager is responsible for staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authorities for which he or she is responsible. In this regard, it is a matter for City and County Managers, in the first instance, to ensure that the moratorium is implemented while the appropriate service levels are maintained.

My Department examines all staffing sanction requests on a case by case basis having due regard to the continued delivery of key services in the context of staffing and budgetary constraints. In considering sanction requests public safety, maintaining key front line services, and economic issues are given precedence.

My Department works closely with Dublin City Council in relation to the Council's overall staffing requirements and, in February 2013 sanctioned 28 Emergency Services Controller positions.

Departmental Expenditure

398. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the home of Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12366/13]

399. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12384/13]

400. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices, including monthly telephone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12403/13]

401. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly telephone bills are being paid to constituency office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12421/13]

402. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of mobile telephones in use by him, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile telephones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12439/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 398 to 402, inclusive, together.

The information requested is set out in the following table.

		Minister Hogan		Minister of State Penrose		Minister of State O'Sullivan
	Home	Constituency Office	Home	Constituency Office	Home	Constituency Office
Hardware/ Software costs	Nil	€3,895	€707 (returned when left office)	Nil	Nil	€158
Telephone lines costs	Nil	€11,560	€678	Nil	Nil	€4,293
Mobile Phone numbers		5		3		6
Mobile Phone costs		€12,964		€1,643		€4,169

My Department does not fund the costs of providing the above mentioned services to the offices of Minister of State O'Dowd.

Departmental Expenditure

403. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12457/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In line with Government policy, I do not use a State car. My Department has employed two civilian drivers since May 2011 for driving duties in my own car in line with approved arrangements, and their salary and subsistence costs, together with the mileage costs paid to me to date, are set out in the Table. The Table also sets out similar costs for the Ministers of State in my Department since the present Government was formed.

	Drivers Salaries and Subsistence Costs €	Mileage Costs €
Minister	170,682.82	33,624.97
Minister of State O'Sullivan	105,760.11	12,839.69
Former Minister of State Penrose	59,961.35	10,622.55
Totals €	336,404.28	57,087.21

My Department spent a total of €130,946 on transport costs for former Minister of State Finneran in 2010. My predecessor's transport costs under the previous scheme of Garda drivers and State cars for 2010 are a matter for the Department of Justice and Equality.

Departmental Expenditure

404. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12476/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department has issued credit cards to the 8 office holders listed below. The Table also sets out the total amount spent on each credit card since March 2011.

Credit card holder	Total €
Private Secretary to the Minister	14,298.07
Private Secretary to Minister of State (Housing)	2,847.17
Private Secretary to Minister of State (New Era)	1,510.06
Principal Officer, ICT Section	17,172.59
Head of Administration and Training Division, Met Eireann	21,458.11
Principal Advisor, Environment Inspectorate	19.05
Assistant Principal Officer, Environmental Compliance and Air Quality Section	19.05
Assistant Principal Officer, Environment International and Sustainable Development Section	3,820.54

Departmental credit cards are issued for authorised official use only in circumstances where a strong business case has been established. Cards are withdrawn when the business case no longer exists and transferred into the name of the incoming officer, as appropriate, when there is a reassignment of duties.

Credit cards are issued to the private secretaries to the Minister and Ministers of State to facilitate payment for goods or services which would prove more difficult under normal invoicing arrangements, such as reserving hotel accommodation abroad. In the cases of Met Éireann and ICT, the credit cards are used to facilitate the purchase of ICT hardware and software licences and for the renewal of subscriptions to work-related publications. The remaining three staff have been issued with credit cards to facilitate the conduct of official business during the Irish Presidency.

Question No. 405 answered with Question No. 120.

Non-Principal Private Residence Charge Collection

406. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding the non principal private residence payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [12661/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009, as amended, broadened the revenue base of local authorities by introducing a charge on non-principal private residences. The charge is set at €200 and liability for it falls, in the main, on owners of rental, holiday and vacant properties. It is a matter for an owner, whether resident in Ireland or elsewhere, to determine if he or she has a liability and, if so, to declare that liability and pay the charge.

The provision of information to potentially liable owners was regarded as an important element in the introduction of the Non Principal Private Residence Charge in 2009 and in subsequent years. The associated communication campaign, includes media advertisements funded by my Department, information made available by local authorities, and website hosted information, in circumstances in which the legal onus is on the liable owner to declare liability and make payment has achieved its general goals of raising awareness and encouraging compliance. Much of this information, such as information available online and press advertisements in Irish communities, was available to liable persons living abroad.

Under the Act, it is a function of a local authority to collect the Non Principal Private Residence Charge and late payment fees due to it, and all Charges and late payment fees imposed and payable to a local authority are under the care and management of the local authority concerned. In this regard, application of the legislation in particular circumstances is a matter for the relevant local authority. Guidelines have also been issued to local authorities in relation to the operation of the "care and management" provisions of the Local Government (Charges) Act 2009 and local authorities are expected to implement these guidelines appropriately.

Mortgage Arrears Rate

407. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has carried out an impact assessment on the potential effect on the numbers in mortgage distress if water charges are introduced. [10567/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Programme for Government and the Memorandum of Understanding with the EU, the IMF and the ECB provide for the introduction of domestic water charges. It is not intended that domestic water charges will commence before 2014. The Government considers that charging based on usage is the fairest way to charge for water and it has decided that water meters should be installed in households connected to public water supplies. The Government has also decided that Irish Water, a new State-owned water company to be established as an independent subsidiary within the Bord Gáis Éireann Group, will be responsible for the metering programme.

The Water Services Bill 2013, which completed its passage through the Dáil last week, will assign the necessary powers to allow Irish Water to undertake the metering programme. The Bill also assigns to the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) the power to advise the Government on the development of a regulatory framework for water services.

Affordability measures will be addressed by my Department and the Department s of Social Protection and Public Expenditure and Reform, in consultation with the CER, Irish Water and other stakeholders, in the context of developing a water pricing framework. The agreed approach will then be reflected in the charging structure established by the CER.

In addition, Irish Water will be required to have a range of options in place to assist householders who have difficulties in paying their bills. For example, a wide range of flexible payment options are available for the other utility services and it is expected that these will be replicated for water services.

European Parliament Elections Issues

408. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will specify the time frame for the re-drawing of the European Parliament Constituencies; if his new regional authorities as outlined in Putting People first will from the basis for future Euro Constituencies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12756/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): There is a need to adjust the distribution of seats in the European Parliament to take account of the accession of Croatia this year. This is done on the initiative of the European Parliament which will vote this week on a recommendation, from its Constitutional Affairs Committee, on the composition of the European Parliament for the 2014 – 2019 term. The recommendation includes a reduction, from twelve to eleven, in the number of representatives to be elected in Ireland. After the vote in the European Parliament the matter will go to the European Council for decision by unanimity and with the consent of the European Parliament.

In the event that the number of MEPs to be elected to represent Ireland is reduced it will be necessary to review and revise the constituency arrangement. This can be addressed once decisions are made in Europe. In the meantime my Department is giving consideration to how such a review might be carried out having regard to the provisions of the relevant legislation, that is the Electoral Act 1997 and the European Parliament Elections Act 1997.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Status

409. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding a proposed sewage scheme (details supplied) in County

Donegal. [12801/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Gweedore Sewerage Scheme is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 - 2013 as a scheme to commence construction during the lifetime of the Programme. My Department is awaiting the submission by Donegal County Council of their Contract Documents for the scheme.

Local Authority Funding

410. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the money collected for the household charge will be distributed to local authorities in view of the fact that it is a year since the charge was introduced and local authorities are yet to see the benefits; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12830/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011 provides that income from the Household Charge is to be paid in to the Local Government Fund. I have generally disbursed Household Charge revenues to local authorities, quarterly and in advance, within General-Purpose Grant payments. As of 8 March 2013, the Household Charge has raised in excess of €118.8 m for the provision of essential local authority services.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Provision

411. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in view of his plans to extend the Ringsend waste water plant, Dublin, if he will ensure that appropriate assessments are carried out to ensure the protection of fishing jobs in the area. [6955/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Dublin City Council's proposal for the Ringsend Waste Water Treatment Plant Upgrade is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme, 2010 – 2013 as a scheme to start during the lifetime of the Programme. I understand that Dublin City Council's application for approval of an EIS and planning consent for the proposed expansion of the Ringsend plant was approved by An Bord Pleanála in November 2012. I am informed that the City Council submitted an application to the Environmental Protection Agency for a Dumping at Sea Permit, in accordance with Section 5 of the Dumping at Sea Acts 1996 to 2010, in early December 2012, seeking approval of an alternative to the land-based disposal of the tunnel spoil and that a period of public consultation in relation to this permit application ended on 31 January 2013.

Matters relating to planning applications, permits, licences and authorisations are matters for the relevant statutory regulators such as An Bord Pleanála and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Security of the Elderly

412. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if funding will be made available to enable senior alert schemes to provide carbon monoxide alarms to the disabled and the elderly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12857/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Seniors Alert Scheme provides grant assistance towards the purchase and installation of equipment to enable older persons, without sufficient means, to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind. The Scheme provides for monitored personal alarms for persons over 65 years of age living on their own or with other qualifying persons. In the current economic climate, the Department's priority is to continue to provide for the maximum number of personal monitored alarms to as many older persons as possible in 2013. I have no plans at present to extend the measure to carbon monoxide monitors.

Leader Programmes Funding

413. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline in tabular form the amount of LEADER funding available, approved and paid out by each local partnership company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12912/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In late 2011 the European Commission approved a change in the maximum co-funding rate from 55% to 85% for the Axes 3 and 4 elements (LEADER) of Ireland's Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013. Prior to this the Axes 3 and 4 RDP measures were co-funded at a rate of 55% by the EU, with the remaining 45% coming from national exchequer sources. The 2011 agreement reduced the national exchequer input to 15% on a net basis for 2012 and 2013 without a concomitant increase in the amount of funding to be provided by the EU. This resulted in a reduction in the overall Programme complement from €427m to approximately €314m on the basis of the Programme achieving full spend by the end of 2013.

In this context the original project allocations given to each Local Development Company (LDC) contracted to deliver the LEADER elements of the RDP required readjustment. My Department is currently determining the level of project commitments across all LDCs and all RDP measures in order to complete the rebalancing of the programme in as equitable a way as possible. In addition, given the levels of spending by the LDCs from 2009 to date it is very unlikely that full spend will be achieved by the end of 2013. The co-funding rate will revert to 55% for all expenditure beyond the end of 2013 and as a consequence of this the overall Programme requirement will also change. Until such time as the rebalancing exercise as outlined has been satisfactorily completed it is not possible to be definitive regarding the remaining funding available for project commitments under Axis 3&4 of the RDP. I expect this exercise to be completed shortly.

The table details the current level of project approval and expenditure in all of the LDCs contracted to deliver Axes 3&4 of the RDP.

LDC	Committed	Total Paid
Avondhu Blackwater Partnership Ltd.	4,217,878.38	3,385,710.10
Ballyhoura Development Ltd.	14,429,162.29	5,268,439.46
Carlow County Development Partnership Ltd	3,486,286.22	2,778,461.28
Cavan-Monaghan LEADER	6,314,067.95	2,869,133.36
Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teo	5,071,129.39	1,990,890.79

LDC	Committed	Total Paid
Clare Local Development Company Ltd.	10,686,208.00	5,163,073.00
Co Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	6,436,001.03	3,917,653.61
Co Wicklow Community Partnership	3,525,781.00	2,507,862.00
Co. Sligo LEADER Partnership Company Ltd	6,593,078.55	4,369,172.57
Comhar na nOileáin Teoranta	2,796,223.99	1,863,384.47
Donegal Local Development Company Ltd.	5,794,695.99	4,342,364.36
Fingal LEADER Partnership Co.	2,090,851.39	758,607.42
FORUM Connemara Ltd.	2,715,975.79	1,866,918.03
Galway Rural Development Company	7,315,283.19	4,528,771.51
Inishowen Development Partnership	4,920,640.57	3,151,737.98
IRD Duhallow Ltd.	9,222,328.87	4,067,790.60
Laois Community and Enterprise Dev	6,016,828.44	2,721,392.88
Leitrim Integrated Development Co Ltd	5,300,346.55	3,100,806.09
Longford Community Resources Ltd	4,509,771.15	2,533,703.81
Louth LEADER Partnership	3,043,973.10	2,200,084.05
Mayo North East LEADER Partnership Co.	4,019,323.71	2,765,372.50
Meath Community Rural and Social Dev.	7,146,281.83	2,913,623.42
Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta	4,169,606.03	1,968,042.53
North East Kerry LEADER Partnership Teo	4,683,785.14	2,529,210.54
North Tipperary LEADER Partnership	8,618,373.67	4,342,465.82
Offaly Integrated Local Dev Co. Ltd.	6,868,635.22	3,725,898.21
Roscommon Integrated Development Company	5,949,155.96	3,409,081.80
South and East Cork Area Dev Ltd.	5,395,952.82	3,423,500.20
South Kerry Development Ltd.	4,255,947.63	2,435,958.98

LDC	Committed	Total Paid
South Tipperary Local Development Co Ltd	8,911,725.37	4,216,241.13
South West Mayo Development Company Ltd	5,387,662.76	4,040,148.06
Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd.	6,832,761.05	3,717,463.09
West Cork Development Partnership Ltd.	7,329,807.97	4,371,683.45
West Limerick Resources Ltd	4,570,850.87	2,757,936.41
Westmeath Community Development Ltd	4,131,133.17	2,210,001.36
Wexford Local Development	7,616,928.25	4,375,536.35
	210,374,443.29	116,588,121.22

Leader Programmes Funding

414. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the overall amount of Leader funding made available under the 2007 to 2013 for Gaeltacht areas; if he will advise on the amount of funding already approved and paid out; the steps being taken to approve further projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12913/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta (MFG) was the Local Development Company contracted by my Department to deliver Axes 3 & 4 (LEADER) of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) in Gaeltacht Areas for the current 2007-2013 programming period. MFG went into liquidation on the 7 September 2011. The delivery of RDP funding to most of the Gaeltacht areas previously served by MFG is now being facilitated by the geographically contiguous Local Development Companies (LDCs). Between February 2009 and September 2011 MFG registered expenditure of €1.9 million and at the time of the liquidation had outstanding project commitments of €4.1 million which are now being dealt with by the contiguous LDCs.

In late 2011 the European Commission approved a change in the maximum co-funding rate from 55% to 85% for the Axes 3 and 4 elements (LEADER) of Ireland's Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013. Prior to this the Axes 3 and 4 RDP measures were co-funded at a rate of 55% by the EU, with the remaining 45% coming from national exchequer sources. The 2011 agreement reduced the national exchequer input to 15% on a net basis for 2012 and 2013 without a concomitant increase in the amount of funding to be provided by the EU. This resulted in a reduction in the overall Programme complement from €427m to approximately €314m on the basis of the Programme achieving full spend by the end of 2013.

In this context the original project allocations given to each Local Development Company (LDC) contracted to deliver the LEADER elements of the RDP including MFG required readjustment. My Department is currently determining the level of project commitments across all LDCs and all RDP measures in order to complete the rebalancing of the programme in as equitable a way as possible. In addition, given the levels of spending by the LDCs from 2009 to date it is very unlikely that full spend will be achieved by the end of 2013. The co-funding rate will revert to 55% for all expenditure beyond the end of 2013 and as a consequence of this the overall Programme requirement will also change. Until such time as the rebalancing exer-

cise as outlined has been satisfactorily completed it is not possible to be definitive regarding the remaining funding available for project commitments for any areas covered by the RDP, including Gaeltacht areas. I expect this exercise to be completed shortly.

Local Authority Staff Issues

415. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of staff who have been lost by the four Dublin region local authorities each year for the past five years, in tabular form and per local authority; if he is satisfied that each of these local authorities is adequately staffed in view of the great pressure facing them and their staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12914/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The moratorium on recruitment and promotion in the public service was introduced in March 2009 in response to the financial crisis. My Department operates a delegated sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for implementation of the moratorium in relation to local authorities, and any exceptions to the moratorium in local authorities require sanction from my Department.

Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, each City and County Manager is responsible for staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authorities for which he or she is responsible. In this regard, it is a matter for City and County Managers, in the first instance, to ensure that the moratorium is implemented while the appropriate service levels are maintained. My Department examines all staffing sanction requests on a case by case basis having due regard to the continued delivery of key services in the context of staffing and budgetary constraints. In considering sanction requests public safety, maintaining key front line services, and economic issues are given precedence.

The reduction in staff numbers at each of the four Dublin Region Local Authorities is set out in the table on a whole time equivalent basis (WTE).

Local Authority	Year	Total Staff (WTE)	Staff Reductions (WTE)
Dublin City Council	2007	6874.65	----------
	2008	6931.50	+(56.85)
	2009	6480.45	451.05
	2010	6298.30	182.15
	2011	6072.35	225.95
	2012	5772.70	299.65
Dun-Laoghaire / Rathdown CC	2007	1285.00	--------
	2008	1242.00	43.00
	2009	1195.90	46.10
	2010	1143.40	52.50
	2011	1063.60	79.80
	2012	1028.30	35.30
Fingal CC	2007	1599.88	--------
	2008	1589.79	10.09
	2009	1490.39	99.40

Local Authority	Year	Total Staff (WTE)	Staff Reductions (WTE)
	2010	1441.90	48.49
	2011	1391.90	50.00
	2012	1330.70	61.20

Local Authority	Year	Total Staff (WTE)	Staff Reductions (WTE)
South Dublin CC	2007	1461.50	--------
	2008	1472.25	+(10.75)
	2009	1402.55	69.70
	2010	1344.70	57.85
	2011	1277.60	67.10
	2012	1176.47	101.13

Question No. 416 answered with Question No. 120.

Planning Issues

417. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if local authorities are obliged to follow the development contributions guidelines for planning authorities as issued by his Department. [12944/13]

418. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if local authorities are obliged to follow the development contributions guidelines for planning authorities. [12945/13]

419. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 214 of 27 February 2013, if he will clarify the meaning of his statement that guidelines published by Dublin City Council are substantially in accordance with the draft guidelines. [12946/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 417 to 419, inclusive, together.

My role, as Minister, is to provide the necessary statutory and policy framework within which individual development contribution schemes are adopted by each local authority. The adoption of individual development contribution schemes is a reserved function of the locally elected members of each planning authority. While planning authorities, and An Bord Pleanála, are required to have regard to the guidelines in performance of their functions under the Planning Acts, it is a matter for the members to determine the level of contributions and the types of developments to which they will apply. Dublin City Council's current development contributions scheme was adopted by the elected members before the publication of the new statutory guidelines. Nevertheless, the scheme reflects very closely the final content of the statutory guidance and contains several innovative provisions that are fully consistent with the pro-jobs/pro-planning objectives of the guidelines.

The guidelines were issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000

- 2012. This means that planning authorities are required to have regard to the guidelines in performance of their functions under the Planning Acts. However, the guidelines do not seek to alter the roles and functions of the elected members, the executive functions of local authorities or the role of my Department. They are intended, rather, to provide the necessary statutory and policy framework within which individual development contribution schemes are adopted by each local authority.

Homelessness Strategy

420. **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied that he has the most up-to-date information on homelessness; the sources of this information for the homelessness policy statement; the funding available to bring to an end long-term homelessness here; the issues involved in youth homelessness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12954/13]

422. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on whether the development of sustainable, permanent social housing owned by local authorities is an important part of the drive to end long term homelessness. [12957/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 420 and 422 together.

I recently published a Homelessness Policy Statement in which I outlined the Government's aim to end long-term homelessness by the end of 2016. The statement emphasises a housing-led approach which is about accessing permanent housing as the primary response to all forms of homelessness. The availability and supply of secure, affordable and adequate housing is essential in ensuring sustainable tenancies and ending long-term homelessness. When I published the statement, I announced a set of indicators which will be used to demonstrate the dynamics of homelessness as it is addressed. These indicators will give a clearer picture of homelessness in Ireland, and, in quantifying its on-going extent, will support the bringing forward of realistic and practical solutions.

While I acknowledge that the approach to all forms of homelessness, including child, youth and adult homelessness should be fully integrated, my colleague, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is currently overseeing a review of the Youth Homelessness Strategy. I established a high-level three-person oversight group for the purpose of reviewing the approach being advocated in the statement, reviewing progress with indicators, identifying obstacles and proposing solutions. In relation to the funding available for homelessness accommodation and related services, the Revised Estimates Volume to be published shortly by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform will outline the level of funding available in 2013. The allocation of this funding to housing authorities will be undertaken by my Department in the coming weeks.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

421. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update on his Department's pursuit of the use of social housing bonds to develop more permanent social housing units particularly those in public ownership. [12956/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department is exploring, including in consultation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and sector stakeholders, options to facilitate the increased provision of social housing using innovative funding approaches, including, potentially, social housing bonds and social impact bonds. A number of proposals are being developed in this regard but are at a preliminary stage of development.

Question No. 422 answered with Question No. 420.

Local Authority Housing Provision

423. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans for measures to ensure that local authorities properly draw down funding allocated to them to provide for the needs of local people to whom they are responsible, especially in the case of Traveller specific accommodation. [12958/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department closely monitors progress by housing authorities in relation to the implementation of annual work programmes for the supply and improvement of social housing and funded under the Social Housing Investment Programme (SHIP). Capital allocations in respect of 2013 have recently issued to all housing authorities who, in turn, have been requested to submit quarterly profiles of expenditure under each of the eight principal measures within the SHIP, including the Traveller Accommodation Programme. Expenditure will be closely monitored against profiled amounts and will also be the subject of discussions between my Department and the authorities at meetings to review housing work programmes, commencing in Quarter 2, 2013.

Local Authority Housing Rents

424. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will make a commitment to local authority tenants that their rents will not increase or other services be cut as a result of the levying of the property tax on local authority properties. [12959/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The current arrangements for determining local authority rents will be substantially replaced on the coming into force over the next year of section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. The rent payable by individual households will be determined by the housing authority in accordance with a rent scheme made by the elected members of the authority. Each rent scheme must comply with regulations that I will make under section 31, which does not make specific provision for the Local Property Tax to be taken into account in the determination of rents. In accordance with the legislation, councils will have a degree of discretion in making their rent schemes as regards the manner in which they provide for the determination of rents and other charges for works and services to their dwellings.

Pyrite Remediation Programme Implementation

425. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local

Government if he will provide an update on the removal of pyrite from affected homes; the numbers that have successfully been completed in targets for 2013; and when the remediation scheme proposed will be operational. [12960/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In December, 2012 the Government approved the imposition of a levy on the quarrying and insurance sectors as a mechanism to fund a pyrite remediation scheme. Primary legislation is required to underpin the imposition of the levy and my Department is currently advancing the drafting of the General Scheme of a Bill to provide for this. It is my intention that the Bill will be published and enacted in the shortest possible timeframe and there will be no delay on my part in this regard.

The Government also approved the establishment of a Pyrite Resolution Board and I have previously announced its establishment under the Chairmanship of Mr. John O'Connor, former Chairman of An Bord Pleanála, and the appointment of four Board members. The construction stakeholders (the Construction Industry Federation, the Irish Concrete Federation and Home-Bond) have agreed to establish a not-for-profit entity to operate the remediation scheme. The Resolution Board will work closely with the entity to oversee and ensure the effective implementation of a pyrite remediation scheme for homeowners who have no other avenues of redress open to them. The Pyrite Resolution Board is working on drawing up the precise scope of the remediation scheme, eligibility criteria, procedures, priorities, etc. It is also in the process of developing its own website where it will publish documentation and a system for receiving applications from eligible homeowners.

My Department is also engaging in discussions with a number of financial institutions facilitated by the Irish Banking Federation with a view to securing a loan facility which the not-for-profit entity would draw down to permit the earliest possible commencement of remediation works. It is intended that detailed negotiations with the prospective lenders on the terms and conditions of this facility will be concluded by the not-for-profit entity. Loan funds drawn down would be repaid over time from the proceeds of the statutory levies.

Pyrite remediation works have been completed on a number of social housing projects and in a number of other cases they are at the early stages of investigation and testing. Extensive remediation work to address pyrite problems in the apartment complex of 124 units at Sillogue 4, Ballymun and the Clancarthy Senior Citizens complex have been completed, while tenders have been received in the case of six units at Avilla Park. While my Department is making funding available for these projects, in the longer term, all legal liabilities will be pursued with a view to recouping the cost of these works.

The report of the Pyrite Panel indicated that 1,100 private dwellings had been or were in the process of being remediated at March, 2012. I understand remediation works, funded under various forms of insurance cover, are progressing in a considerable number of cases and are also being undertaken directly by builders.

Unfinished Housing Developments

426. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update on works to an estate (details supplied) in County Longford including the specific works that have been carried out; the timetable for future works and any additional funding which may be available or needed. [12961/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Gov-

ernment (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department has made allocations under the public safety initiative totalling €291,753 to Longford County Council to assist in their efforts to tackle the difficulties faced by the residents of this development, and has been kept informed of the extensive range of works which the local authority is currently carrying out and which will continue for some time. While it is a matter for the local authority to determine the nature and scale of the works required to make relevant unfinished housing developments safe, I understand that in this case a comprehensive survey has been conducted into the condition of underground services, that a new public lighting system has been installed and that works are underway to facilitate services diversions and improvements to roads surfaces so that the public areas in the development are to an acceptable standard. As with all allocations made under the public safety initiative, it is incumbent on local authorities to pursue the responsible parties for reimbursement of funds expended, and once recovered to return these to the Exchequer.

Local Authority Housing Waiting Lists

427. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a breakdown on a Dáil constituency basis of the number of persons on social housing waiting lists, specifying numbers waiting five years and more and ten years and more. [12962/13]

440. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will indicate by county or local authority the number of persons currently awaiting rehousing by the local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13051/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 427 and 440 together.

My Department does not maintain a record of the number of households on local authority waiting lists, which changes from day to day according as households are allocated housing and other households apply for social housing support. A breakdown by housing authority of the last point-in-time assessment of housing need, carried out in March 2011 under the Housing Act 1988, is available on my Department's website at www.environ.ie and the Housing Agency's website at www.housing.ie. Social housing assessments are now carried out by housing authorities under section 20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and I have directed authorities, under section 21 of that Act, to provide a summary of these assessments as at 30 April 2013. The findings from these summaries will be published in the Autumn.

Community Development Initiatives

428. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the measures he is taking to ensure better community relations between the Traveller and settled community particularly in areas which have experienced difficulties with this in the past. [12963/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department's role with regard to Travellers relates primarily to accommodation issues. In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes, designed to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers, rests with individual

housing authorities. My Department's responsibility is to ensure that there is an adequate legislative and financial system in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation.

The 1998 Act places a strong emphasis on consultation with all stakeholders and interested parties, an important requirement in ensuring good community relations between the Traveller and settled community on the issue of Traveller accommodation. Local Authorities are required to prepare their multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes in consultation with other statutory bodies, community groups and other relevant parties, Travellers and the public in general. Local authorities are also required to establish a Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC), which is representative of Travellers, local authority elected members and the public. The primary role of the LTACC is to advise on Traveller accommodation issues locally. The purpose of these consultative arrangements is to ensure that the interests of all concerned with, or affected by, proposals for Traveller accommodation are considered and to facilitate a planned and comprehensive response by housing authorities to the accommodation needs of Travellers.

The current round of Traveller Accommodation Programmes will conclude at the end of 2013 and local authorities are currently making arrangements for the adoption of a new round of programmes for the period 2014-2018. The wider issue of community relations generally is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Housing Statistics

429. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of publicly owned social housing units that were delivered in 2011 and 2012, respectively; and the targets for same in 2013. [12964/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department collates and publishes a wide range of housing and planning statistics that inform the preparation and evaluation of policy and those data are available on my Department's website, www.environ.ie.

Data on the number of local authority and voluntary and co-operative units delivered are included as part of that range. Data from 2012 are still being finalised and will be released in due course.

Given the current volatility of the market and different challenges to the channels of supply, it is difficult to estimate the likely output of new units for social housing this year. However, it is provisionally estimated that in excess of 5,000 units will be provided for social housing in 2013. This will include:

- 350 units for people with special housing needs;

- 150 units specifically for people leaving institutional care;

- an additional 400 permanent homes delivered through capital expenditure under the Social Housing Investment Programme;

- 300 transfers under the Mortgage to Rent Scheme;

- some 4,000 units will be delivered under social leasing, including property transfers from NAMA, the Rental Accommodation Scheme and mortgage to lease.

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

430. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the measures he is undertaking to ensure an improved system of social housing maintenance in local authorities with faster reaction times to serious maintenance issues and less stop gap measures to deal with recurring problems. [12965/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Under Section 58 of the Housing Act 1966, the management and maintenance of the local authority housing stock, including the carrying out of routine and planned maintenance programmes to properties and estates, is the responsibility of the relevant housing authority. Housing and estate maintenance programmes are funded directly by local authorities from their own resources, including from rental income and receipts from the disposal of properties and sales of houses to tenants.

It is a matter for each local authority to determine its own spending priorities in the context of the annual budgetary process having regard to both locally identified needs and available resources. The adoption of the Local Authority annual budget is a reserved function and I, as Minister of State, have no direct function in relation to this area or in relation to spending of rental income from local authority lettings.

I appreciate the need for improved systems of social housing maintenance in local authorities with faster reaction times to repair and maintenance issues and the timely execution of pre-letting repairs. We need better, real-time information to inform my Department's policy on improving the social housing stock and to give a sharper focus and better targeting of scarce resources at those areas which will give the best return on the investment made. In order to better understand the quality and distribution of the stock and to facilitate the setting of sound and robust improvement targets, my Department, in conjunction with the local authorities, is undertaking an audit of the 130,000 social housing units. Over time, this will build up a comprehensive profile of the stock and enable the compilation of targeted strategies to address deficiencies in terms of overall quality, thermal efficiency etc.

Local Authority Housing Provision

431. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a breakdown based on local authority area of the current average turnaround time for local authority housing that has become vacant; the current number of vacant public housing units; and the number that have been vacant for six months and more and one year and more, respectively. [12966/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Seventh Annual Report on Service Indicators, published by the Local Government Management Services Board in August 2012, which details service indicators in local authorities in 2010, provides a range of information in relation to the social housing stock in each local authority. Specific information is provided with regard to vacant housing units and on the average number of weeks taken by each local authority, from the date of vacation of a unit to the date when all necessary repairs are carried out, to re-let a unit. Copies of the report are available from the Local Government Management Agency and may be downloaded from their website (www.lgmsb.ie).

Question No. 432 answered with Question No. 390.

Dublin City Development Plan

433. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will establish the new north fringe urban district as a strategic development zone to provide a statutory underpinning for the work of Dublin City Council and Fingal planning staff, to ensure the urgent completion of all works and services for the vast new urban district and to avoid the developer led chaos of the past; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13038/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Specific responsibility for the planning and delivery of the North and South Fringe development rests, respectively, with Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council. Dublin City Council adopted its Dublin City Development Plan 2011-2017 and Fingal County Council adopted its Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017 both of which set out statutory objectives for the development of the North and South Fringe, respectively.

A North Fringe Cross-Authority Forum established in 2004 continues to monitor progress in the implementation of the North Fringe Framework Development. Meetings continue to be held on a cross-authority basis at which a wide range of issues relating to the planning and delivery of the North Fringe development are discussed and actions taken.

Furthermore, Dublin City Council recently adopted a Local Area Plan (LAP) for Clongriffin-Belmayne (North Fringe) in December 2012.

On the basis of the on-going cooperation within the statutory framework of the existing development plans, and local area plan, I do not believe that a strategic development zone is a necessary vehicle to deliver on the North Fringe.

Urban Renewal Schemes

434. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will offer assistance towards urban renewal to towns or villages in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13044/13]

437. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which he has had dialogue with the local authorities in the context of town centre urban renewal/regeneration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13047/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 434 and 437 together.

A wide range of property-based tax relief schemes was introduced up to the mid 2000's including town renewal and living over the shop schemes. While many important developments were encouraged by these schemes, independent reviews concluded that the tax costs of the initiatives were high relative to the outputs achieved. The Department of Finance wound down previous schemes to take account of the current adverse economic climate and the legacy costs of such schemes to the Exchequer, as investors sought to use their reliefs and capital allowances. Similarly, the Urban and Village Renewal Programme 2000-2006, through which grant assistance was provided by my Department to local authorities for a range of interventions to upgrade the fabric of the built environment in cities, towns and villages, ended in early 2008. That scheme involved total EU and Exchequer co-financed expenditure of over €158m. The

2007-2013 Urban and Village Regeneration Programme, administered by my Department, was deferred due to budgetary constraints.

Nonetheless, my Department remains committed to working with local government and other community development and enterprise stakeholders to ensure that a recovering economy will result in an even distribution of opportunity. In this regard there is a need to target in an integrated way urban areas which face particular problems resulting from both the economic downturn and investments in the past which did not facilitate the development of sustainable communities capable of benefiting from the period of high prosperity or coping with the subsequent downturn. Major regeneration programmes in Ballymun and Limerick together with a range of other remedial works schemes across the country are being prioritised to assist in addressing this deficit.

In addition, I am also seeking to ensure that the forward planning process plays a part in supporting urban development. My Department recently published statutory guidelines for planning authorities on Development Contributions. These contain a strong focus on supporting vibrant town centres by directing planning authorities to put in place reduced rates of development contributions or waivers to support town centre development and to incentivise activity through lower development contributions in the areas prioritised for development in the relevant core strategy.

Electronic Voting Machines

435. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total realised for the saledisposal of the electronic voting equipment which he inherited from his predecessor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13045/13]

436. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total all in costs including manufacture, storage and security of the electronic voting equipment; the extent of any ongoing costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13046/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 435 and 436 together.

A total sum of €69,403.25 was received by the State, in 2012, in respect of the completion of the contract for the recovery as waste of the electronic voting equipment.

Expenditure on the electronic voting project, including equipment purchase, storage and other costs, totalled €54.986 million. There are no ongoing costs. Costs may arise in 2013 from the cessation of one storage lease.

Question No. 437 answered with Question No. 434.

Water Pollution

438. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which he expects to be in a position to fund ground water pollution alleviation measures in the current year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13048/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 440 of 26 February 2013 which sets out the position in relation to the grant scheme for septic tanks.

The priorities in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme include the provision of works required to comply with Water Framework Directive requirements, to improve sewage treatment and collection infrastructure in accordance with the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, to respond to judgments of the European Court of Justice and to achieve environmental and public health objectives arising from various regulations and EPA reports dealing with water quality. A total of €328.7 million in Exchequer funding is being provided for water services capital investment this year including investment under the Rural Water Programme. My Department also provides funding from the Local Government Fund towards the operational costs of group water schemes.

EU Directives

439. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which his Department has yet to import any outstanding EU directives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13049/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department is up to date on the transposition of all relevant EU Directives, apart from transposition of the complex and multi-faceted Industrial Emissions Directive 2010/75/EU, which was partially transposed into Irish law by the transposition deadline of 7 January 2013. Three Chapters of the Directive remain to be transposed, but work is nearing finalisation, in consultation with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to the Government, to complete the transposition process in the very near future.

Ireland topped the latest EU Internal Market Scoreboard (covering the latter half of 2012), which measures Member States' success in transposing EU law into domestic legislation. During this period, Ireland transposed all required EU legislation within the set deadlines: indeed Ireland was the only Member State to achieve a position of full transposition.

Question No. 440 answered with Question No. 427.

Local Authority Housing Waiting Lists

441. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his proposals to address the housing need as expressed by the number of families currently on waiting lists of local authorities or in private rent supported accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13052/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department does not hold information on the number of households on local authorities' waiting lists. This figure continually fluctuates as households are allocated housing and new households apply for housing support. Detailed information on the latest statutory assessment of housing need, carried out in March 2011 and including a breakdown by housing authority, is available on my Department's website – www.environ.ie, or on the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency's website at www.housing.ie.

The Government's housing policy statement, published in June 2011, clearly identifies that

the priority for Government will be to meet the most acute needs of households applying for social housing support.

I am determined to ensure that the social housing programme optimises the delivery of social housing and the return for the resources invested. To achieve this, it is essential that we tailor the use of available Exchequer supports to prevailing conditions and explore the full range of solutions to address housing needs. The social housing capital budget has been reduced from €1.535 billion in 2008 to €332.7m in 2012, with an anticipated outturn of some €299m for 2013, and the financial parameters within which we will be operating for the coming years rule out a return to large capital funded construction programmes. The Government is committed to responding more quickly and on a larger scale to social housing support needs through a variety of mechanisms, including through increased provision of social housing. In spite of the challenging circumstances within which local authorities are forced to operate, the outcome for 2012 is expected to be in the region of 4,000 to 4,500 housing units. Given the current volatility of the market and different challenges to the channels of supply, it is difficult to estimate the likely output of new units for social housing this year. However, it is provisionally estimated that in the region of 5,000 units will be provided for social housing in 2013.

Delivery of social housing will be significantly facilitated through more flexible funding models such as the Rental Accommodation Scheme and leasing, but the Government is also committed to developing other funding mechanisms that will increase the supply of permanent new social housing. Such mechanisms will include options to purchase, build to lease and the sourcing of loan finance by approved housing bodies for construction and acquisition. There is also obvious potential, across a range of housing programmes, for the Government's objective of sourcing and providing suitable residential units for use as social housing to be aligned with the commercial objectives of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA). My Department and the Housing Agency are engaged with NAMA to ensure delivery of housing units for social purposes.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Provision

442. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his priorities to meet in full the requests as set out by the various local authorities in the context of group water schemes; if he has sought or received submissions in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13053/13]

443. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total funding available through his Department to meet the requests in respect of both group water and sewage schemes including small schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13054/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 442 and 443 together.

Responsibility for the administration of the Rural Water Programme, which includes group water schemes, group sewerage schemes and small public water and sewerage schemes, has been devolved to local authorities since 1997.

The selection and approval of individual scheme proposals for advancement and funding under the programme, within the overall priorities set by my Department and subject to the block grant allocations provided, is therefore a matter for the water services authorities.

The block grant allocations provided by my Department to the water services authorities are

based, in the first instance, on the requests for funding received from the water services authorities at the beginning of each year. There may also be some additional allocations, or variations to existing allocations, during the course of the year based on responses from the authorities to any reviews of expenditure which may be carried out.

Decisions on the block grant allocations for each authority under the programme in 2013 will be made as soon as possible following examination of the requests for funding that have been received by my Department.

A provision of €35 million is available under the programme this year towards group water schemes, group sewerage schemes and small public water and sewerage schemes.

Water and Air Pollution

444. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total number of reported instances of water or air pollution in each of the past four years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13055/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): With regard to detection of air pollution, ambient air quality monitoring and assessment in Ireland is carried out in accordance with the requirements of Directive 2008/50/EC on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe, also known as the CAFE Directive. The CAFE Directive which consolidated and replaced the earlier Air Quality Framework Directive and the first three so-called "daughter" Directives, sets limit values/target values for the following pollutants: Sulphur Dioxide; Nitrogen Dioxide and Oxides of Nitrogen; Particulate Matter (PM10 and PM2.5); Lead; Benzene; Carbon Monoxide; and Ozone. In addition, the Arsenic, Cadmium, Mercury, Nickel and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons in Ambient Air Regulations 2009 transpose the fourth "daughter" Directive 2004/107/EC and specify target values and monitoring requirements for arsenic, cadmium, mercury, nickel and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

The EPA publishes a comprehensive annual report on air quality, based primarily on the monitoring requirements of the CAFE Directive. The most recent report, Air Quality in Ireland 2011 – Key Indicators of Ambient Air Quality, was published in September 2012 and provides an assessment of air quality in Ireland for 2011, compared to the CAFE Directive standards, based on data obtained from the 29 monitoring stations that form the national ambient air quality network. The Report confirmed that air quality in Ireland is of a high standard, with no individual exceedances of EU limit values recorded for 2011.

However, the EPA's latest figures on air pollutants responsible for long-range transboundary air pollution such as acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution, published in February 2013, suggests that emissions of nitrogen oxide (NOx) were above the specified emission ceiling in 2011, caused primarily by emissions from the transport sector.

In respect of monitoring of water quality, the EPA, local authorities, Inland Fisheries Ireland and the Marine Institute all monitor rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waters plus groundwater quality under the Water Framework Directive on a three-year cycle. This extensive monitoring programme provides a good overview of current water quality and trends as they develop.

Water quality trends emerging in recent years include a notable decline in the incidence of serious pollution events from 39 sites in the 2004-2006 period, to 20 sites in the 2007-2009 period and currently down to 11 sites. There has also been a stabilisation in the length of river channel regarded as unpolluted, at approximately 71% of the length surveyed. However, the period has also been marked by a steady decline in the number of river sites at high ecological

status.

Comprehensive reports on water quality are published every three years by the EPA and are available for download at www.epa.ie.

Question No. 445 answered with Question No. 390.

Local Authority Development Schemes

446. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there are any plans in place to reduce the level of development contribution charges which Wicklow County Council currently has in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13069/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As Minister of State my role is to provide the necessary statutory and policy framework within which individual development contribution schemes are adopted by each local authority. The adoption of these 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. Copies of individual schemes are available for consultation on the local authorities' websites. My Department has recently issued updated guidance for local authorities on the issue of development contributions which recommends, *inter alia* , that development contribution schemes facilitate job creation through targeted support for specific development types. As part of the new guidance, planning authorities are asked to consider whether there are any measures open to them to support new or existing enterprises in their areas by, for example, reduced development contribution rates, deferral of payments, etc.

The guidelines have been issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act s 2000 - 2012. This means that planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála are required to have regard to them in performance of their functions under the Planning Acts.

Housing Adaptation Grants Funding

447. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount allocated to each local authority for housing adaption grants. respectively' from 2008 to 2013, inclusive. [13075/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department's involvement with the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability relates primarily to the recoupment of a proportion of local authority expenditure on the payment of individual grants. These schemes, introduced in November 2007, are funded by 80% recoupments available from my Department together with a 20% contribution from the resources of the local authority.

Details of the combined Exchequer plus local authority own resources allocations in respect of the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability over the period 2008 - 2012, are set in the following table:

Local Authority	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Carlow	€1,404,663	€1,868,125	€1,868,125	€1,349,014	€1,349,014	€747,079
Cavan	€1,429,983	€1,412,500	€1,883,664	€1,879,903	€1,625,000	€1,038,155
Clare	€1,824,055	€2,064,584	€3,125,000	€3,000,000	€1,445,000	€1,445,000
Cork	€2,173,581	€2,412,500	€8,116,492	€6,250,364	€6,250,364	€4,561,160
Donegal	€3,894,604	€4,599,166	€4,614,625	€3,100,769	€2,448,146	€827,280
D'Laoghaire/ Rathdown	€2,175,664	€2,260,000	€2,141,638	€1,165,228	€1,110,602	€731,197
Fingal	€1,695,371	€2,458,750	€2,625,000	€2,072,365	€2,072,365	€1,588,467
Galway	€2,043,451	€1,901,166	€2,529,370	€2,387,900	€2,375,000	€1,644,387
Kerry	€2,749,871	€3,447,084	€4,061,250	€3,459,023	€3,257,865	€1,445,971
Kildare	€1,818,289	€2,502,084	€3,750,000	€3,563,545	€2,025,000	€2,025,000
Kilkenny	€935,748	€1,035,834	€1,867,500	€1,867,500	€1,867,500	€1,406,162
Laois	€1,788,166	€1,987,313	€1,830,000	€1,146,093	€1,084,827	€260,923
Leitrim	€1,440,724	€1,640,834	€1,668,334	€990,189	€576,305	€65,953
Limerick	€1,672,134	€1,522,334	€1,936,567	€1,719,225	€1,473,454	€1,473,455
Longford	€710,585	€1,211,834	€1,262,000	€1,260,000	€1,243,575	€687,674
Louth	€2,101,304	€2,598,750	€2,695,500	€1,345,716	€1,186,266	€1,103,145
Mayo	€2,714,774	€3,402,916	€3,720,000	€2,724,401	€2,575,216	€2,575,216
Meath	€2,466,856	€1,000,000	€1,464,096	€1,464,096	€997,208	€487,123
Monaghan	€2,064,606	€2,080,000	€2,090,834	€1,319,083	€1,152,172	€837,211
North Tipperary	€1,815,724	€1,851,666	€1,651,250	€1,607,181	€1,200,000	€425,757
Offaly	€1,185,168	€1,940,146	€2,250,000	€2,059,313	€1,125,000	€625,000
Roscommon	€1,975,821	€2,237,291	€2,757,208	€2,562,790	€1,009,251	€709,957
Sligo	€825,808	€1,218,750	€1,218,750	€997,800	€997,684	€276,982
South Dublin	€3,720,081	€4,563,334	€4,766,000	€3,084,098	€2,728,308	€1,213,986
South Tipperary	€1,606,588	€2,145,416	€3,126,666	€3,125,000	€3,111,713	€1,087,989
Waterford	€1,625,000	€1,702,500	€1,702,500	€1,238,324	€994,766	€414,024
Westmeath	€1,838,480	€1,645,000	€1,854,963	€1,143,266	€988,155	€435,722
Wexford	€2,247,941	€2,950,416	€3,276,875	€2,603,404	€2,566,772	€1,210,765
Wicklow	€1,302,418	€1,791,250	€2,609,992	€1,151,969	€954,794	€567,118
Cork City	€2,075,984	€2,707,916	€2,707,916	€2,707,916	€1,749,741	€1,749,741
Dublin City	€11,586,213	€13,497,084	€14,208,334	€11,361,211	€10,629,459	€4,932,320
Galway City	€1,337,033	€1,226,666	€1,226,666	€1,024,632	€928,352	€301,280
Limerick City	€1,030,298	€1,387,500	€1,525,000	€1,525,000	€1,525,000	€1,010,885
Waterford City	€538,628	€725,000	€872,500	€790,310	€740,282	€348,842
Sligo Borough Council	€381,095	€772,750	€625,000	€418,084	€385,844	*

*(With Sligo Co Co figure for 2013).

Housing Adaptation Grants Funding

448. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Lo-

cal Government the total funding on an annual basis allocated to Cavan County Council for the housing adaptation grants scheme for older people and people with a disability schemes from 2008 to 2013 inclusive; the actual draw-down of such funding by the Cavan County Council on a yearly basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13105/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department's involvement with the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability relates primarily to the recoupment of a proportion of local authority expenditure on the payment of individual grants. These schemes, introduced in November 2007, are funded by 80% recoupments available from my Department together with a 20% contribution from the resources of the local authority.

Details of the initial Exchequer allocations to Cavan County Council for the years 2008 – 2013 , together with the amounts recouped to the Council over that period are set out in the following table.

Cavan Co. Co.	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Initial Exchequer Allocation	€1,143,986	€1,130,000	€1,500,000	€1, 500,000	€1,050,000	€830,524
Amount recouped	€1, 007,408	€1,144,682	€1,309,505	€ 1,176,998	€1,081,291	€0

Housing Adaptation Grants Funding

449. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total funding on a yearly basis allocated to Monaghan County Council for the housing adaptation grants scheme for older people and people with a disability schemes from 2008 to 2013 inclusive; the actual draw-down of such funding by Monaghan Council on a yearly basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13106/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department's involvement with the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability relates primarily to the recoupment of a proportion of local authority expenditure on the payment of individual grants. These schemes, introduced in November 2007, are funded by 80% recoupments available from my Department together with a 20% contribution from the resources of the local authority.

Details of the initial Exchequer allocations to Monaghan County Council over the period 2008-2013, together with the amounts recouped to the Council over that period, are set out in the following table.

Monaghan Co. Co.	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Initial Exchequer Allocation	€1,651,685	€1,664,000	€1,664,000	€1, 250,000	€ 1,200,000	€669,769
Amount recouped	€ 1,236,946	€ 1,173,169	€ 1,353,219	€ 1,232,862	€ 1,202,542	€0

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

450. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if following approval for Phase 3 of the Mullaghmatt remedial works scheme, Monaghan town, and the expected commencement of construction work mid-year, if urgent consideration will be given to the early progression of a further phase to upgrade the remaining 74 dwellings to ensure that such necessary improvement works are undertaken immediately following the phase 3 project, to ensure the earliest possible completion of the remedial works scheme for the entire estate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13109/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department continues to work closely with Monaghan County Council on the delivery of its ambitious remedial works project at the Mullaghmatt Estate. Funding of over €10 million has been approved for remedial works on this estate to date, including €1.5 million approved in respect of Phase 3 of the project which is due to commence mid-year. I recently allocated €550,000 to Monaghan County Council for construction works on Phase 3 of the scheme this year with the balance of the funding to be provided in 2014.

To date, no proposal has been received from the Council in respect of any further phases of works on this estate. Any such proposal will be considered in the context of existing commitments under the Remedial Works Programme and the level of funding available.

Press Council Powers

451. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on whether the Press Council has sufficient powers to enable them to balance press freedom with accuracy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12571/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The print media is regulated by an independent Press Council. Section 44 of the Defamation Act 2009 provides for the Minister for Justice and Equality to make an Order, subject to the approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas granting statutory recognition as a Press Council to a body that seeks recognition as such. It requires that the Minister be satisfied that the applicant body complies with the provisions set out in Schedule 2. No more than one such body can be recognised and the order may be revoked. On 21 April, 2010, the then Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform signed the Defamation Act 2009 (Press Council) Order 2010 (S.I. No. 163 of 2010) granting recognition to the Press Council of Ireland. e Order took immediate effect.

e new complaints system which is operated by the Press Council recognised pursuant to the Defamation Act is, I believe, providing a useful, efficient and cost free remedy for members of the public who are affected by breaches of the Code of Practice.

Formal recognition of the Press Council grants qualified privilege to the decisions and reports of the Press Council and the Press Ombudsman. is strengthens and underpins the system of press regulation in Ireland which can only serve to improve the service to the general public.

It is appropriate that strong emphasis is being placed by the Press Council and Ombudsman on resolving complaints through conciliation or mediation. Moreover, the print industry is, in general, committed to the press complaints initiative and has provided the necessary financial backing to support its operation. is cooperation is vital to the long term success of the new Irish press complaints system.

A most important requirement is that publications that are members of the Press Council have to publish in full, decisions of either the Press Ombudsman or the Press Council, which uphold complaints made under the Code of Practice for Newspapers and Periodicals.

A review of the operation of the Defamation Act 2009 is required within five years of its coming into operation.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission Issues

452. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the role that he has in the location of speed cameras on the road network; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12740/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by An Garda Síochána that the outsourced safety camera network commenced operations in November, 2010. The objective of the network is to reduce the number of speed related collisions and so save lives, as excessive or inappropriate speeding is a major factor in road traffic collisions and fatalities.

An Garda Síochána determine the scheduling of the speed monitoring and survey sessions carried out. I have no role in this process, it being an operational policing matter for the Garda Commissioner. I am informed that a targeted approach to speed enforcement is being undertaken in order to significantly reduce the incidence of fatal and serious injuries and improve road safety. To this end, An Garda Síochána, in conjunction with the National Roads Authority, completed an extensive analysis of the collision history on the road network. Sections of road have been identified where a significant proportion of collisions occurred whereby speed was deemed the primary contributory factor.

Based on this analysis, a list of speed enforcement zones has been developed with the aim of providing information to motorists in order to raise awareness of speeding in these zones. An Garda Síochána utilises these zones in order to direct speed enforcement activity, in a proportionate and targeted manner.

I am also advised that safety cameras only operate on sections of road which have a history of collisions occurring where speed was a contributory factor. The locations of these speed enforcement zones are in the public domain and are available on the Garda website www.garda.ie.

These speed enforcement zones are continually reviewed in light of survey data, collision history and local feedback to ensure that enforcement activity is properly targeted. Surveys continue to be conducted to ensure the appropriate deployment of safety cameras on roads which have been identified as subject of inappropriate speed and where fatal and serious injury collisions continue to occur.

Departmental Contracts

453. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the annual cost to the Exchequer for G4S service contract for the new criminal courts building; the services provided by G4S under the terms of the contract; the term of the contract; if the contract payments are linked to the consumer price index; and if so, the way that this is applied. [12795/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy may be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the respon-

sibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions, including the provision and maintenance of accommodation for court sittings.

I am informed that no payments are made directly to G4S. The Deputy is aware that Criminal Courts of Justice complex was provided on the basis of a public private partnership contract covering the design, construction, fit out, maintenance and provision of services. Following an extensive procurement exercise, the Courts Service entered into a contract with a Public Private Partnership Company (PPPCo) in October 2007.

The Courts Service contract is therefore with the PPPCo which has sub-contracted various elements including the design and construction, as well as the provision of services, to a range of third party contractors. G4S is one of these subcontractors and has been contracted by the PPPCo to provide a range of facility management services in the Criminal Courts of Justice including maintenance, cleaning, security, health & safety, portering and management of utilities.

A monthly unitary charge payment which covers the provision of the above services by G4S in addition to payments for the design and construction of the Criminal Courts of Justice amounts to €1.6 million per month (VAT exclusive). Financing, insurance and ICT services are also covered by the unitary charge. In addition there are some items which are paid on a per usage basis. Therefore G4S receives a proportion of the above unitary charge payment. These contractual and financial arrangements between the PPPCo and its subcontractors are internal commercial matters for the PPPCo.

The contract provides that 43% of the unitary charge is subject to indexation based on the CPI each year. The contract runs until February 2035 at which time the complex will be handed over to the ownership of the Courts Service in a 'as built' standard.

It is worth noting that this PPP contract was dealt with in detail by the Comptroller and Auditor General in his 2008 Annual Report and was also examined by a sitting of the Public Accounts Committee of this House in July 2010.

I should also mention that, following the construction of the Criminal Courts of Justice, the Courts Service was able to cease leaseholds on various buildings in which courtrooms had been provided, including the Distillery Building, King's Inns, the old Richmond Hospital and Bow Street. In addition to the very considerable annual lease and rental costs, buildings also had to be maintained, cleaned and secured. Ongoing operational savings have also been made for other criminal justice agencies, including the Irish Prison Service and An Garda Síochána.

Asylum Applications

454. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 582 of Tuesday 19 January 2013, if the eight persons purporting to be Syrian nationals provided documentation to support this claim to immigration officers and if this documentation was deemed inauthentic; if any of the eight persons concerned applied for asylum in another EU member state prior to arriving here; and the basis on which their application was refused. [12349/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed that, four (4) of the eight (8) persons referred to in the response to Parliamentary Question No. 582 of 19 February 2013, purporting to be Syrian nationals, presented a travel document to an Immigration Officer in the course of seeking permission to land in the State. Two (2) of the said documents were determined to be bogus; the other two (2) documents were issued by another EU Member State.

The four (4) persons who did not present a travel document to the Immigration Officer to whom they made an application for permission to land in the State, had all travelled from within the common travel area (CTA).

It is understood that inquiries revealed that one of the persons concerned at the time of the refusal of leave to enter the State was in the asylum process of another Member State.

As the Deputy is aware it is the long-standing practice not to comment in detail on individual cases. Therefore I do not propose to make any further comment on the individuals in question.

Anti-Social Behaviour

455. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to take action with all the relevant local stakeholders and agencies to address serious anti-social behaviour in Dublin's north inner city especially in the vicinity of public transport facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12359/13]

465. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the action that is being taken by An Garda Síochána to address street safety concerns and concerns regarding the presence of drug addicts in the Connolly Station and Amiens Street area of Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12573/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 455 and 465 together.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the areas referred to are within the Store Street Garda District and that a proactive approach is being applied to tackle anti-social behaviour and public disorder in these areas with the emphasis being placed on known locations associated with this type of behaviour. Policing measures are in place to address difficulties being experienced by local residents and businesses including the designation of certain areas as hotspots for such criminality with additional high-visibility patrols being directed by local Garda management, including regular patrols by uniform and plain clothes units, including the Community Policing and Garda Mountain-Bike Units, local Detective and Drug Unit personnel, supplemented as required by Divisional Crime Task Force and Traffic Corps personnel.

Local Garda management closely monitors such patrols, and other operational strategies in place, in conjunction with crime trends and policing needs of the communities in these areas to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources, and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public.

I am also informed that a number of Garda Operations are being conducted in the North Inner City which actively combat anti-social behaviour and drug related criminality.

Operation Stilts utilises a high visibility presence to intensively police identified areas including O' Connell Street, Marlborough Street, Talbot Street, North Earl St, Abbey St, Eden Quay, the Boardwalk, Wolfe Tone Street, Parnell Street and adjacent side streets by tackling rigorously the activities of persons involved in the commission of anti-social behaviour and drug use and dealing offences.

Operation Redline, which is carried out by uniformed Gardaí and plain clothes members on surveillance duty, targets criminals using the Luas Red Line and supports the Veolia staff working on the Red Line. The purpose of the Operation is to combat public order, drunkenness, loitering and thefts from persons on the Luas trams and at Luas stops. Gardaí at Store Street

are also engaging with Veolia Transport in relation to recurring anti-social behaviour and Public Order issues on Luas trams. Operation Clean Tram is an ongoing operation which deals with these issues.

The Garda authorities also engage extensively with local communities, businesses and others relevant parties with a view to addressing concerns of this nature. In particular, local Garda Management in Store Street were part of the multi-stakeholder Strategic Response Group (SRG) who issued the report 'A Better City for all', and are presently part of the implementation group which is tasked with implementing the recommendations contained in the report to address public substance misuse and perceived anti-social behaviour in Dublin's City Centre.

I can further assure the Deputies that I am in regular contact with the Garda Commissioner about all aspects of policing and community safety with a view to ensuring that the street of our cities and towns and safe for all.

Departmental Expenditure

456. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the home of Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12371/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that I was provided with an iPad 2 at a cost of €519 (including VAT). This is a mobile device allowing remote access from any location outside of my Department.

I can also advise that my Department has not supplied any equipment to the home of Ms. Kathleen Lynch, T.D., Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Older People, Equality and Mental Health.

Departmental Expenditure

457. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12389/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that since my appointment as Minister for Justice and Equality my Department has borne no costs relative to my home telephone or that of Ms. Kathleen Lynch, T.D., Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Older People, Equality and Mental Health.

Departmental Expenditure

458. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly telephone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12408/13]

459. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills are being paid to constituency office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12426/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 458 and 459 together.

I can inform the Deputy that I have no external constituency office but I have established one in the Department of Justice and Equality. It is not possible to disaggregate costs including telephone costs from other data for the period in question. IT assets deployed in this office are from existing stock so no additional costs are therefore incurred. Staff in the office use the Department's IT Shared Service and are supported in the same manner as the other users of that service.

I can also inform the Deputy that my Department does not supply any equipment or pay any of the day to day costs incurred in the constituency office of Ms. Kathleen Lynch, T.D., Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Older People, Equality and Mental Health. The Minister of State does not have a constituency office within my Department.

Departmental Expenditure

460. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of mobile telephones in use by him, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile telephones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12444/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that the total cost of the mobile phones used by me and my politically appointed staff between 1 March 2011 and 28 February 2013 is contained in the following table:

	Number of mobile phones	2011	2012	2013
Minister Shatter	2	€1,192.33	€2,242.81	€160.14
Official A	1	None	€413.67	€36.29
Official B	1	€257.23	€479.39	€32.62
Official C	1	€364.05	€625.19	€37.92
Total		€1,813.61	€3,761.06	€266.67

I can also confirm that my Department does not supply or pay any bills for mobile phones used by Ms. Kathleen Lynch, T.D., Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Older People, Equality and Mental Health or her staff.

Departmental Expenditure

461. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12462/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy will be aware, shortly after the current Government took office in March 2011 it decided to introduce a number of very significant changes in respect of the provision of Office Holder transport. One of the consequences of that decision was that the transport arrangements in place for Ministers of State became applicable to Government Ministers, subject to very limited exceptions on secu-

rity grounds. In addition, it was decided that former Presidents and Taoisigh would only be supplied with official transport for important State occasions. The revised transport arrangements came into operation for Government Ministers on 1 May 2011 and for former Office Holders on 16 June 2011.

The Garda Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote. In that context, I am informed by the Garda authorities that records in relation to the cost of providing Office Holder transport have not been maintained in a manner which allow for the identification of costs associated with individual Office Holders. However, the Garda authorities have indicated that total expenditure on the provision of Office Holder transport in 2010, 2011 and 2012 was as outlined in the following table:

Year	Expenditure
2010	€7.503 million
2011	€4.595 million
2012	€2.201 million

With regard to the table, some of the costs arising in 2011 included costs associated with the service prior to and after the new transport arrangements had been introduced.

No transport costs for Ministers of State have been paid by my Department in the period since March 2011.

Departmental Expenditure

462. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12481/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): There are currently a total of four official credit cards held in my Department. These comprise of two Executive Visa Corporate Cards and two Visa Business Cards. The total cost of these cards for the period in question are, €430 for each of the Executive Visa Corporate Cards and €98.10 for each of the Visa Business Cards.

As the Deputy will no doubt be aware, credit cards of this nature are no more than a tool which facilitates the efficient discharge of Departmental business; in many cases it is not possible to procure goods and services without a credit card where for example suppliers insist on advance payment.

Proposed Legislation

463. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on progressing the Charities Act 2009; if a charities regulatory authority will be established to ensure accountability and public confidence in the charity sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12550/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Charities Act 2009 provides for an integrated system of mandatory registration and proportionate regulation and supervision of the charities sector in Ireland. The various sections of the Charities Act are subject

to implementation through commencement orders. Sections that it was possible to commence in advance of the establishment of the Charities Regulatory Authority, as provided for under the Act, have been commenced. The remainder will be commenced following the establishment of the Authority.

The Deputy will appreciate that the full implementation of the Charities Act, including the establishment of a Charities Regulatory Authority, had to be examined in the context of the comprehensive review of expenditure, which took place in 2011. Arising from this review, I delayed bringing this legislation into force as we considered how best to achieve the objectives of the Act in a context of Government spending reductions. It remains an objective of the Government to strengthen the regulation of the sector in effective and proportionate ways.

To advance this, a public and stakeholder consultation is being conducted by my Department on the implementation of the Charities Act and the establishment of a register of charities. Issues covered in the consultation paper include the establishment of a Charities Regulatory Authority; the statutory registration of charities and granting of charitable status; and reporting requirements for registered charities. Submissions should be made at *www.justice.ie/en/JELR/CharitiesConsult?OpenForm*.

The consultation period will run until 20 March 2013.

Crime Data

464. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide the figures for crimes committed by persons who have absconded from Shelton Abbey, County Wicklow and Loughan House, County Cavan, open prisons over the past five years by category of crime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12572/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed that the compilation of the information requested by the Deputy would require a disproportionate and inordinate amount of staff time and effort to prepare.

The Garda Síochána Act 2005 makes provision for the compilation and publication of crime statistics by the Central Statistics Office, as the national statistical agency, and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose.

I have requested the CSO to provide any available statistics which may be relevant to the question directly to the Deputy.

Question No. 465 answered with Question No. 455.

Maintenance Orders

466. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he will take to ensure that maintenance orders are enforced. [12576/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The law contains a number of provisions to ensure that payments are made by spouses in support of their dependent spouses and children. These include enabling powers for the courts to order attachment of the earnings of a debtor spouse, to order the securing of payments to the maintenance creditor, to order the payment of lump sums and to order arrears of maintenance to be paid by instalments.

As the Deputy may be aware, following my appointment I introduced amending legislation in Section 31 of the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 which provided for the amendment of the Family Law (Maintenance of Spouses and Children) Act 1976. The amendment, which came into effect on 2 August, 2011, provides for the insertion of two new sections into the 1976 Act which set out procedures to be followed in the District court regarding arrears of maintenance payments and confers power on the District court to regard as contempt of court a failure by a maintenance debtor to comply with a previous court order and to deal with such a breach accordingly, including by means of imprisonment.

In addition, the enforcement of maintenance orders from abroad is provided for in the Maintenance Act 1994, which enabled Ireland to ratify the UN Convention on the Recovery Abroad of Maintenance Payments (the New York Convention), which came into effect for Ireland in November 1995. EU countries are covered specifically by Council Regulation (EC) No 4/2009 on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of decisions and cooperation in matters relating to maintenance obligations. Under both instruments, a Central Authority has been established in my Department to facilitate the transmitting and receiving of maintenance claims.

Garda Recruitment

467. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason candidates who have been on a Garda recruitment panel for years will have to reapply and start from scratch when the force seeks new members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12581/13]

473. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will advise on a recent statement he made in which he signalled his intention to disband the Garda recruitment panel in view of the fact that it was five years old; the way this will affect a person who has only been on the panel three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12671/13]

486. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if candidates who sat and passed the aptitude test, interview, medical examination and physical assessment for entry into the Garda between August 2008 and July 2009 and were placed on the panel for entry into Templemore will have to reapply for the 2013 competition in view of his statement that a recruitment campaign will open shortly. [13008/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 467, 473 and 486 together.

As I have already indicated, I intend bringing proposals to Government shortly in relation to the strength of the Garda Síochána and when recruitment might recommence. While no decision has been taken in relation to the recruitment panel created as a result of the last recruitment process, that fact that this panel is now approximately five years old gives rise to significant issues which will have to be taken into account.

Liquor Licensing Laws

468. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is considering a review of existing licensing laws or proposing to introduce new legislation in or around late bar exemptions or on the way applications are currently being considered by Dis-

trict Courts. [12594/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The position is that the Government Legislation Programme provides for publication of the Sale of Alcohol Bill in late 2013. It is intended that the Bill will modernise the law relating to the sale, supply and consumption of intoxicating liquor in licensed premises and registered clubs, including the statutory provisions which permit exemptions from normal licensing hours, by repealing the Licensing Acts 1833 to 2011 and the Registration of Clubs Acts 1904 to 2008 and replacing them with streamlined and updated provisions.

Property Services Regulation

469. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 489 of 26 February 2013, if he will provide an estimate of the total number of commercial leases here and the total number that will be captured on the new commercial leases database; and if he will outline the principal reasons for omissions of extant leases from the commercial leases database. [12635/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As indicated in my reply to Question No. 489 of 26 February 2013, Section 87 of the Property Services (Regulation) Act 2011 provides that the Property Services Regulatory Authority (PSRA) shall maintain and establish a database relating to commercial property leases.

I am not in a position to advise the Deputy as to the total number of commercial leases here. However, I am advised by the Authority that it estimates that approximately 18,000 to 20,000 commercial leases will initially be detailed on the new commercial leases database, which is expected to be published in the near future. It is anticipated that the database will contain information in relation to all commercial leases entered into on or after 1 January 2010.

Section 87 provides that in respect of each relevant commercial lease, the Database shall contain: the address and description of the commercial property the subject of the lease; the date of the lease of the property; the term of years of the lease; and the rent payable in respect of the property. It is further provided in Section 87(3) that such information may, at the Authority's discretion, be included in the Database, notwithstanding the fact that such a lease was entered into before the commencement of Section 87. Section 87(4) provides that Section 87(3) shall not apply to a commercial property lease entered into more than 5 years before the commencement of Section 87. I am advised by the Authority that it is satisfied that the information available on commercial leases entered into on or after 1 January 2010 is accurate and reliable and that it proposes, on the initial publication of the database, to include all leases entered into with effect from that date.

Section 88 of the Act also provides that the Authority make the information available on the Commercial Leases Database publicly available "on the payment of the appropriate fee". While the Authority will make certain limited information available free of charge, all of the information, which tenants are required to furnish to the Authority under Section 88 of the Act, will only be made available on the payment of a fee.

Garda Investigations

470. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to the publication of what is claimed to be a transcript of a conversation (details supplied), if a complaint

has been made to An Garda Síochána and-or if An Garda Síochána is investigating the matter to establish if an offence may have been committed under tribunals of inquiry Acts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12636/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I understand that An Garda Síochána are aware of the matter referred to by the Deputy. As the Deputy will be aware, the Report of the Moriarty Tribunal has been examined by the Garda authorities and the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions has now been sought by them, with a view to determining whether or not a full Garda investigation should now be commenced. As this process is ongoing and as I am informed by the Garda authorities that the matter referred to by the Deputy is currently the subject of attention it would not be appropriate to comment in any further detail in respect of the matter at this stage.

Magdalen Laundries Issues

471. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will give consideration to the inclusion of former residents of an institution (details supplied) in the redress scheme under the aegis of Mr. Justice Quirke. [12641/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): While it is not a matter which comes under the remit of my Department, I understand from my colleague, the Minister for Education and Skills, that the institution referred to is one of the institutions on the schedule of the Redress Act, 2002. I also understand that the Redress Board are now processing the remaining applications and expect to complete its work in the next year or so. The Government decision of 19 February relates to Magdalen Laundries. It does not relate to the type of institution referred to by the Deputy.

Competition Law

472. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will use the powers provided to him under the Criminal Justice Act 2011 to order that criminal offences under the Competition Acts be specified as relevant offences under the Criminal Justice Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12658/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): An arrestable offence is an offence punishable by imprisonment for a period of 5 years or more. Section 3(2) provides that the offences that may be specified as relevant offences by Ministerial order are offences relating to banking, investment of funds and other financial activities, company law, money laundering and financing terrorism, theft and fraud, bribery and corruption, competition and consumer protection, cybercrime or the raising and collection of taxes and duties.

The Minister must be of opinion that the powers under the Act are necessary for the investigation of such an offence by reason of the nature of the offence concerned and the prolonged period of time generally required for the investigation of such an offence as a result of the complexity that generally arises in such an investigation due to any of the following factors that may be expected to be involved:

(i) the number of witnesses,

(ii) the volume of documents,

(iii) the wide distribution and proliferation of documents arising from the use of electronic

means of communication,

(iv) the number of transactions,

(v) the complexity of transactions, or

(vi) other factor.

The Minister must consult with any other relevant Minister before making an order under section 3(2). I have been in consultation with the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on the question of specifying offences under the Competition Acts as relevant offences for the purposes of the Act. I understand that issues arising in relation to this matter are under examination in the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

Question No. 473 answered with Question No. 467.

Citizenship Applications

474. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attenttion has been drawn to the fact that the visa office is currently experiencing an upsurge in applications for Join Irish Citizen in the past six months and are dealing with the applications in chronological order; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that for many families this delay is causing difficulties and uncertainty; if he has provided additional staff to deal with this upsurge; the number of applications currently waiting to be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12721/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): There has been no particular surge in visa applications for the purpose of joining an Irish citizen in recent months. So called "Join Irish Citizen" applications are taken to include Join Spouse (Irish National), Join Partner (Irish National) and Join Parent (Irish National). Application numbers in this cohort have remained relatively consistent over time, with only minor variations from month to month.

There is no significant backlog in the processing of applications. On average fewer than 100 applications are awaiting a decision at any given time and decisions on applications received in my Department in early February are currently being finalised. However, as each application is individually considered on its own merits, the actual processing time for dealing with such applications can vary depending on the particular circumstances of each case and the level of investigation required. The long term or permanent nature of the intended stay in Ireland means that they require more in-depth consideration than straightforward short-stay visa applications. In many cases, extra documentation or clarification must be sought from the persons involved and those cases cannot be finalised until the relevant documentation or clarification has been received. Staff in my Department are fully aware of the importance of these applications to the families involved, and commencing processing of applications in the order in which they arrive is considered the fairest approach.

On a broader note, policy in relation to visas for purposes of family reunification (not solely Join Irish Citizen applications) is currently being revised. As a result, consideration of visa applications from dependent relatives in the ascending line, e.g. parents, to join family members in Ireland is temporarily suspended pending publication of the policy. Applications may continue to be made, but applicants should note that these will be considered in the framework of the revised policy when published. A notification to this effect has been posted on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, www.inis.gov.ie.

Immigration Status

475. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding an appeal to the immigration bureau in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 1; and when a decision will be decided. [12723/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned has been in the State without the permission of the Minister since April, 2012. Consequently, in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 18th July, 2012, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making written representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should not have a Deportation Order made against him. Written representations have been submitted by and on behalf of the person concerned.

The position in the State of the person concerned will now be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be fully considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to 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.

Prisoner Transfers

476. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Irish nationals serving IPP sentences in British prisons; and if he has discussed this matter with his British counterpart in the context of allowing these prisoners to be returned to this jurisdiction under the TERS scheme after they have served their minimum tariff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12757/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that issues generally relating to Irish nationals serving sentences abroad is a matter for my colleague, the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade. However, in the context of possible repatriation to this jurisdiction under the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons, I understand that a legal difficulty arises in cases of persons serving an indeterminate sentence for public protection in that no comparable sentence currently exists in this jurisdiction. It is not therefore possible to process the transfer here of such persons.

Garda Vetting Applications

477. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to speed up the processing of Garda vetting applications; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [12758/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) provides employment vetting for approximately 20,000 organisations in Ireland which employ personnel to work in a full time part time, voluntary or student capacity with children and or vulnerable adults and who are registered with the Unit for this purpose. The Unit processed approximately 328,000 vetting applications on behalf of these organisations in 2012.

It is my objective that processing times should be kept to a minimum, while maintaining the overall integrity of the vetting system. In that regard, following recent discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, sanction was recently granted for an additional 25 staff to be re-deployed from the Department of Agriculture to the Garda Central Vetting Unit in the near future.

The Deputy may also wish to note that Garda Central Vetting Unit will become the National Vetting Bureau under the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 and will have a substantially expanded role under that legislation. I am currently engaged with An Garda Síochána and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in addressing the staffing issues relevant to the coming into force of the 2012 Act.

Garda Recruitment

478. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will consider providing career paths for members of the Garda Reserve to become full members of An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12789/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Recruitment to An Garda Síochána is governed by the Garda Síochána (Admissions and Appointments) (Amendment) Regulations 2006. These regulations provide that in a competition for full-time membership of An Garda Síochána, the Public Appointments Commission shall take into account any service by the candidate as a Reserve member of the Garda Síochána, and shall give due recognition to evidence of satisfactory service as such a member.

Departmental Legal Costs

479. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of money spent by his Department on appeals to High Court decisions in Hamzq, Hassan and Sulaimon; further, with reference to Mr. Justice Hardiman's statement in his decision in Sulaimon that it is dispiriting to see State litigation conducted in this way at public expense, the cost benefit analysis procedures that are in place in his Department to determine whether to appeal a High Court decision. [12805/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): At the outset I think it important to state that it is the long-standing policy and practice for the Department not to comment in detail on the outcome of cases which have been before the Courts. This policy applies equally to cases which the Department's interpretation of the law have been upheld in the Courts as it does to cases where the Courts have found against such interpretation. There are sound and well grounded reasons for this approach; to comment in detail on specific cases would carry the risk that the Department would be accused of interfering with the doctrine of the separation of powers between the State and the Courts. This doctrine which is enshrined in the Constitu-

tion is of course a fundamental cornerstone of our system of justice and its interface with the executive.

However, I would point out that my Department in its approach to legal challenges acts on foot of the legal advice available to it from the State's law officers. In considering its approach, as well as considering the specific facts of each individual case, it must have regard to the wider implications of any such challenges and as such is required to act in order to maintain the integrity of the State's immigration policies and procedures. My Department in dealing with all such cases acts in good faith, with integrity, in accordance with the law as it understands it to be at that time, and in accordance with the legal advice available to it.

I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service that Bills of Cost have not been yet processed. This process can take a considerable period of time often depending on when the Bills are submitted and, in any event, are referred to the Taxing Master as appropriate.

Garda Deployment

480. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí by Garda station and rank who were in service in each county in the State on 31 December for each year from 2002 to 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12834/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The information requested by the Deputy for the years 2002 - 2007 is not readily available and can only be obtained by the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of time and resources. The information requested by the Deputy for the years 2008 - 2013 is in the tables.

The tables are available as an attachment, entitled Stations by Rank 2008 - 2013.xls, at the top of the web page.

Personal Injury Claims

481. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question 381 on 7 February 2012, when a person (details supplied) may expect payment; and the reason for the long delay in making a decision in this case. [12851/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy should note that under the terms of the Scheme of Compensation for Personal Injuries Criminally Inflicted, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal is entirely independent in the matter of individual applications under the Scheme. However, in order to be of assistance in the matter I have had enquiries made with the Tribunal on your behalf.

I understand that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal is in the process of issuing a decision in this case, which will issue to the person concerned in the near future.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission Issues

482. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has commissioned any person within his Department to examine international best practice in policing methods that could be adopted that may reduce road traffic offences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12856/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Commissioner has responsibility for roads policing and works in conjunction with the Road Safety Authority and other relevant partner agencies and institutions in the development and implementation of the actions and initiatives as set out in the Road Safety Strategy. As the Deputy will be aware, the Road Safety Strategy is drawn up by the Road Safety Authority, following extensive consultation and informed by national and international experience and research in the field of road safety. I am further advised that the Garda authorities work closely with the European Traffic Police Network (TISPOL) organisation, including with respect to that organisation's work in initiating and supporting road safety research. In this context I have no plans to commission separate advice on this subject.

Legal Services Regulation

483. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality with reference to the Legal Services Bill, if he will outline his vision to increased competition in the provision of legal services here; his views on the envisaged role of legal executives in ensuring greater value and competition for citizens; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12881/13]

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 the coming 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.

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.

In addition, the Bill facilitates the setting up of new business models for the profession, in line with some of the innovations and advances made in other common law jurisdictions. These new or "alternative" business structures will be optional in parallel to the current and more traditional forms of legal practise and their introduction will, as provided in the Bill, follow a process of public consultation. 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 competitive legal service models building on the enormous advances that have been made in supporting business technologies.

In relation to the role of legal executives, and as I have set out in previous Replies, the Legal Services Regulation Bill does not make any provision in relation to the role or status of legal executives nor is any such provision envisaged. As the Deputy will be aware, a number of proposals have been circulated in this regard by the Irish Institute of Legal Executives Ltd on behalf of its members. However, these are very far-reaching and represent a major and substantive departure beyond the currently recognised status and functions of a legal executive in this jurisdiction. They relate *inter alia* to "a right of audience in the District and Circuit Courts, before tribunals and, subject to review, subsequently in all courts", and to the eligibility of members for quasi-judicial and judicial appointments (e.g as District Court judges or as members of Tribunals). These proposals also draw heavily from the regulatory and practise models of England and Wales which have a distinct history and do not always correspond to those of our jurisdiction nor to those set out under current Government policy in the Legal Services Regulation Bill 2011.

While recognising that there may be additional benefits and efficiencies to be found for consumers and for the legal services sector in a more developed role for "legal executives" in the future, the very far-reaching proposals being made on their behalf at this time lie beyond the scope of the Legal Services Regulation Bill. They impinge on fundamental issues of substance including in relation to the courts and the judiciary. Such matters will, therefore, need to be considered separately on their own merits and in their own right, while others may come to be considered in due course by the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority. I would also point out that it remains open to legal executives, who are so minded, to pursue the career of solicitor or barrister by way of capitalising on their acquired legal knowledge and experience.

Sentencing Policy

484. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to increase the mandatory minimum sentences already in place for offences to bring them more in line with the UK (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12908/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The UK case referred to by the Deputy was a conviction for murder. In the UK , as in Ireland, the mandatory penalty for murder is life imprisonment. The Irish case referred to by the Deputy was a conviction for manslaughter which does not attract a mandatory penalty in either jurisdiction but is punishable in both by a maximum of life imprisonment.

Illegal Moneylenders

485. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce legislative change in the area of illegal money lenders since it is considered that current legislation prevents the vigorous pursuit of illegal money lenders; if he will liaise closely with the credit union movement who are represented in most local areas to ensure that some form of debt solutions can be formulated with the support of some State agencies. [12917/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): With regard to the issue of illegal money lending it may be helpful if I briefly set out the measures currently in place govern-

ing money lending generally. Legislative provisions relating to the regulation of money lending are provided for in the Consumer Credit Act 1995, which is the responsibility of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

The regulation of licensed money lending is a matter primarily for my colleague, the Minister for Finance and the Central Bank of Ireland is the competent authority in this jurisdiction with regard to licensed money lending activity. Under the 1995 Act unlicensed money lending is an offence. Persons who engage in money lending and who do not hold the necessary licence granted by the Central Bank are committing an offence under section 98 of the Act. A person found guilty of an offence is liable on conviction on indictment, to a fine not exceeding €100,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or both.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation acts as a liaison point between An Garda Síochána and the Office of the Director of Consumer Affairs with regard to investigations of unlicensed money lending. I am further informed that all allegations of unlicensed money lending are investigated by An Garda Síochána at local level, with the assistance of the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation, where necessary.

As I have said previously, I would strongly encourage those who may have information concerning the operation of unlicensed money lenders to notify An Garda Síochána who will take all measures open to them to enforce the law in this area. I can assure the Deputy that where there is any identified requirement for additional legislative provisions in aid of An Garda Síochána's powers under the Consumer Credit Act 1995, I will not hesitate in bringing proposals to the attention of my colleague the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

The Deputy will appreciate that responsibilities in this area arise for a number of Departments. Insofar as my Department has a role in this area and in the context of the investigation of illegal money lending, I would, of course, consider any views which the credit union movement put forward.

Question No. 486 answered with Question No. 467.

Garda Deployment

487. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the policing strategy and resources in place for the upcoming St. Patrick's bank holiday weekend; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13028/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will be aware that the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the detailed allocation of all resources, including personnel, throughout the organisation and I have no direct function in the matter. This allocation of resources is constantly monitored in the context of demographics, crime trends, policing needs and other operational strategies in place on a District, Divisional and Regional level to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public. However I have been informed by the Garda authorities that policing plans have been put in place, by Senior Garda Management, in each Division and District to ensure appropriate arrangements are made and resources are available to police the upcoming St. Patrick's bank holiday weekend. Local Garda Management liaise closely with local communities, local authorities, event-organisers and other stakeholders in putting plans in place to address the issues that arise around the St. Patrick's bank holiday period. Local Garda Management also liaise closely with the event-organisers when considering and determining the appropriate deployment of Garda resources at such events.

Proposed Legislation

488. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he intends to revise the Sex Offenders Act 2001 to protect vulnerable persons against sexual exploitation and abuse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13061/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The General Scheme of a Sexual Offences Bill, which includes amendments to the Sex Offenders Act 2001, is at an advanced stage of preparation in my Department. This will be wide-ranging legislation. In addition to the amendments to the 2001 Act, it will implement the recommendations of two Oireachtas committees and reform the law on incest. It will also facilitate full compliance with the criminal law provisions of relevant EU, UN and Council of Europe instruments. I expect to bring the General Scheme to Government shortly with a view to seeking approval for drafting of the necessary legislation.

Prison Security

489. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of CCTV cameras in Castlerea Prison, County Roscommon; the number of those in use; the number that can be viewed simultaneously on monitors within the prison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13087/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can assure the Deputy that there is a comprehensive system of CCTV coverage in place at Castlerea Prison including its perimeter boundaries.

The detailed information requested in relation to the number and operation of the various cameras and equipment cannot be supplied. As the Deputy will appreciate its disclosure could potentially compromise the security of the prison.

Departmental Properties

490. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total projected cost of the refurbishment of Harristown House, County Roscommon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13088/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Harristown House is a 22 roomed two storey property constructed circa 1920. It is located just outside of the boundary wall of Castlerea Prison. It was most recently used for accommodating persons who were under the care of the Probation Service. The property has been in disuse for the past four years and it suffered significant water damage as a result of burst pipes in the Winter of 2010/2011. Following a competitive tender process completed in the latter part of 2012, the Irish Prison Service appointed a contractor to undertake a complete refurbishment of Harristown House. The objective of the works is to leave the property in a suitable condition for use as a low security pre-release facility for selected prisoners. The anticipated total cost of the project referred to will be €180,000 including VAT.

Open Prisons

491. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a security assessment has been completed regarding the use of Harristown House, County Roscommon as an open prison adjoining an existing secure facility; if such models exist in other jurisdictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13089/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As advised to the Deputy during the Adjournment Debate on 27 February 2013, Harristown House will not be an 'Open Prison'. The house will be utilised as a low-security facility to be managed and staffed by Castlerea Prison which it adjoins.

No decision has yet to be made in relation to the type of prisoner to be housed there, however, the normal selection criteria will apply and the safety of the public will be the over-riding consideration.

State Airports

492. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Defence the cost of providing security by the Defence Forces to Shannon Airport for 2003 to 2012 on a year by year basis and the money recouped by the State from Shannon Airport or others; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12748/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): An Garda Síochána has the primary responsibility for law and order, including the protection of the internal security of the State. Among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces is the provision of aid to the civil power (meaning in practice to assist, when requested, an Garda Síochána), which duties include the protection and guarding of vital installations, the provision of certain security escorts etc. The Gardaí, who undertake threat assessments for Shannon Airport on an ongoing basis, requested the Defence Forces to provide assistance in securing the Airport. Such assistance has been rendered by the Defence Forces since 5 February 2003. The following items are taken into consideration when calculating the costs involved in providing aid to the civil power at Shannon Airport i.e. Security Duty Allowance, rations and fuel. The table below sets out the amount of costs incurred for the period in question.

Year	Amount (€)
2003	1,113,200
2004	760,500
2005	225,900
2006	403,375
2007	275,054
2008	286,273
2009	258,040
2010	203,366
2011	259,739
2012	275,008

These costs are met from within the Defence Vote.

Air Ambulance Service Provision

493. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Defence the number of aeromedical

call outs by the air ambulance based in Athlone since its inception; the number of patients transported for each category of emergency including STMI patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12347/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): A twelve-month pilot Emergency Aeromedical Support (EAS) service was established on 4 June 2012 by agreement between my Department and the Department of Health for the Air Corps to support the HSE's National Ambulance Service. The purpose of the pilot is to assess the level and type, if any, of dedicated emergency aeromedical support needed to assist the National Ambulance Service in the west of Ireland for certain types of patient, particularly in light of the requirements of the HSE Clinical Care Programmes such as Acute Coronary Syndrome and Stroke.

The EAS service is operated by the Air Corps out of Custume Barracks, Athlone. A full evaluation of the service is to be undertaken by the stakeholders within three months of the end of the pilot programme (June 2013) and submitted for consideration by my colleague the Minister for Health. This evaluation process is now underway.

In the first 9 months of the service, up to 3 March 2013, there were 150 EAS missions completed. An analysis of these missions indicates that 46 were segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) patients, 43 were trauma, 38 were medical, 10 were pediatric and 13 were other time-critical cases, as tasked by the HSE's National Aero-Medical Coordination Centre.

Departmental Expenditure

494. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the home of Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12364/13]

495. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12382/13]

496. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly telephone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12401/13]

497. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly telephone bills are being paid to constituency office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12419/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 494, 495, 496 and 497 together.

There are no costs relating to the provision of hardware and software to my home and the home of Junior Minister in the Department. There are no costs relating to the provision of telephone in my home and the home of Junior Minister in the Department. There are no costs relating to the provision of telephones and ICT to the constituency offices including monthly phone bills of Ministers and Junior Ministers in the Department since March 2011. There are no additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills being paid to constituency office by the Department.

Departmental Expenditure

498. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence the number of mobile phones in use by him and Junior Minister and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12437/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): There are no mobile phones in use by me. The details of mobile phones in use by the Junior Minister and politically appointed staff and the costs of same since March 2011 are detailed below.

-	Number of Mobile Phones	Total Cost Since March 2011
Junior Minister	1	€3,784.57
Politically Appointed Staff	1	€786.92

Departmental Expenditure

499. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12455/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): In accordance with Government Decision of 15 March 2011, I retain a State car and Garda drivers in my capacity as the Minister for Justice & Equality. The cost of this service is funded from the Vote for an Garda Síochána. The Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Defence, Paul Kehoe T.D., was assigned two civilian drivers in May 2011. Any mileage and car related expenses due to Minister Kehoe are met by the Department of the Taoiseach. The costs associated with the drivers are met by my Department and amounted to €183,763 for the period 1 May 2011 to 8 March 2013.

Departmental Expenditure

500. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12474/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): During the period March 2011 to date, a total of five post-holders in my Department were authorised to use credit cards. The total cost of each card is set out in the table below:

POSTHOLDER	CHARGES from March 2011 to date
Secretary General	€91.00
Human Resources Manager	€6,865.24
Principal Officer ISDP Branch	€6544.07
Private Secretary to Minister	€664.20
Private Secretary to Minister of State	€3280.28

The decision to issue an official credit card is made on the basis of business need having re-

gard to the individual's duties. Official credit cards are intended to obviate the need for staff to use their personal credit cards where substantial business-related costs are likely to be incurred. Their usage is restricted solely for official purposes. There are currently four postholders authorised to use official credit cards.

Departmental Properties

501. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Defence his plans for a building (details supplied) in north County Dublin and if it will be handed to the local community for its use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12850/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The building in question, currently used by the Reserve Defence Force, is one of the properties identified for closure under the re-organisation programme for the Reserve. All RDF properties identified for closure under the programme, including the property in question, will be vacated by the end of March. At that stage my Department will be inviting Government Departments and other Public Bodies to identify any interest in the properties in question including the building in North County Dublin. If no interest is expressed by any other Government Department or Public Body the property will be disposed of by public tender/auction.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

502. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in view of the fact that for many years employees of his Department were seconded to the Irish Horse Board Cooperative Society Ltd and Horse Sport Ireland Ltd to administer the Irish Sport Horse Studbook, if he will confirm whether this practice continues; if there are other cases in which civil servants have been seconded to work in private companies and their salaries have continued to be paid by the Irish taxpayer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12770/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In answer to the Deputy's question, I can confirm that two Executive Officers have been seconded from my Department since 1994 to Horse Sport Ireland Limited. The salaries in respect of the two individuals are recouped from Horse Sport Ireland Limited.

One Superintending Veterinary Inspector has been seconded to Animal Health Ireland as its Chief Executive in September 2009 and my Department continues to pay his salary as part of its annual subvention to AHI. No other civil servants have been seconded from my Department to work in private companies.

Animal Welfare Issues

503. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the consideration that has been given to including removing the current distinction between owned animals and those animals living in a wild state in the proposed animal welfare Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12296/13]

529. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will ensure that protection is given to feral cats by removing the distinction between owned cats and animals living in a wild state in the animal health and welfare Bill. [12842/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 503 and 529 together.

All animals will be given protection under the Animal Health and Welfare Bill. Section 12 of the Bill outlaws cruelty to all animals irrespective of whether they are classified as protected.

The term "protected animal" is applied to animals under the protection i.e. ownership of humans. The difference between "protected animals" and those living in the wild lies in the specific obligations placed upon their owners or keepers. Wild animals, including feral cats, are defined as having no owner or keeper. It would not be sensible to apply the same provisions to these animals because it is not possible to impose an obligation on any owner to care for them. In my view, to remove the distinction between domesticated and feral animals would significantly weaken the protection given to those animals with an identifiable owner, while not serving to increase the protection for those animals living in the wild.

Departmental Expenditure

504. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the home of Minister of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12360/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has not incurred any costs in relation to the provision of hardware and software in the homes of the Minister and the former Minister of State.

Grassland Sheep Scheme Applications

505. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an appeal for grassland sheep scheme payments for 2010 and 2011 in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12377/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Applications under the Grassland Sheep Scheme for years 2010 and 2011 have been received from the person named. As per the Terms and Conditions which govern the Grassland Sheep Scheme, applicants are required to submit a Sheep Census each year to my Department.

In view of disparities in data submitted by the applicant at different times, relating to the number of breeding ewes on the holding, my Department has requested submission of the flock book in order to verify the position at the time of census.

Departmental Expenditure

509. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of mobile telephones in use by him, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile telephones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12433/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Details of the mobile phones currently in use by the Minister, the former Minister of State in my Department

and by politically appointed staff are set out in the table. The table also includes the total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011.

Costs including VAT.	The Minister	The Minister of State	Politically appointed staff.
Number of mobile phones	2	1	9
Costs	€3,318.19	€2,428.95	€ 10,349.67

Departmental Expenditure

510. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12451/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The amounts spent by my Department in respect of the drivers of the private cars of the Ministers of State and I from 10 March 2011 to date and the mileage expenses paid are set out in the table.

Salary related Costs of the Drivers	Travel and Subsistence of Minister's Drivers	Travel and Subsistence of Minister of State's Drivers	Mileage Costs of the Minister	Mileage Costs of Minister of State
€329,029.79	€36,161.82	€13,415.12	€36,098.95	€31,152.57

The costs associated with the Ministers of State's cars in 2010 amounted to €214,131.84, including severance and redundancy payments made to four civilian drivers.

The system for the provision of transport for Ministers changed from the use of official to private cars on the appointment of the Government in March 2011. The average annual cost of providing a state car under the previous administration in 2010 was €280,000.

Departmental Expenditure

511. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12470/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): There were 25 Department credit cards used by staff in my Department since 1 March 2011 and the total expenditure on each is listed in the table.

Card numbers 1 and 19 were used for the purchase of publications for the Department's library and the remainder were used mainly in respect of approved foreign travel and subsistence expenses. Card numbers 1, 5, 6, 12, 14 and 18 were cancelled during this time frame and are no longer in use.

Card No	Expenditure	Card No	Expenditure	Card No	Expenditure	Card No	Expenditure
1	€122,367.75	8	€1,263.49	15	€16,655.72	22	€1,953.37
2	€1,374.88	9	€5,411.77	16	€7,449.03	23	€1,029.18
3	€2,210.00	10	€11,642.68	17	€22,897.97	24	€848.16
4	€7,547.52	11	€0.00	18	€4,108.84	25	€0.00
5	€2,711.62	12	€0.00	19	€149,731.74		
6	€0.00	13	€10,819.72	20	€7,472.83		
7	€1,598.00	14	€0.00	21	€1,138.15		

Single Payment Scheme Eligibility

512. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if farmers who planted land with forestry after 2006 will continue to receive the single farm payment for this land post 2014; the amount of forested land claimed for single payment in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12528/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the provisions of Council Regulation (EC) No 73/2009, land, which was afforested from 2009, is eligible to activate payment entitlements under the Single Payment Scheme and to benefit from payment provided that the following criteria are met by applicants:

- The land to be afforested was declared under the 2008 Single Payment Scheme (SPS).

- The applicant who declared that land was paid under the 2008 Single Payment Scheme and the land was eligible to draw down an SPS payment

- The afforested land meets all the requirements of the Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme, FEPS or the Native Woodland Establishment Scheme.

- Eligible forestry parcels that are declared on SPS applications to activate entitlements will also be subject to cross-compliance requirements.

The proposals for the Reform of Common Agricultural Policy published by the EU Commission provide for the continuation of the existing provisions in relation to the eligibility of afforested land under the Basic Aid Scheme. The Deputy will be aware that negotiations are ongoing on these proposals and they must be adopted by both the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers before that can enter into force.

The area of eligible afforested land declared by farmers under the 2012 Scheme was 12,380 hectares.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Applications

513. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an application for agri-environment options scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12533/13]

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 7 December 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 a number of 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.

Limistéir faoi Mhíbhuntáiste

514. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén uair a dhéanfar íocaíocht faoi scéim na limistéar faoi mhíbhuntáiste, 2012 le duine (sonraí leis seo); cén fáth go bhfuil moill leis an íocaíocht seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [12540/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Faoi Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste 2012, ní mór do ghabháltais a bheadh ag iarratasóirí incháilithe íos-cheanglais dlús-stoic de 0.15 aonad beostoic ar feadh tréimhse coinneála sé mhí as a chéile a chomhlíonadh, chomh maith le meánmhéid bliantúil de 0.15 aonad beostoic a choimeád, arna ríomh thar an dá mhí dhéag de bhliain na scéime. De bharr nach bhfuil sé léirithe fós ag an iarratasóir go sásaíonn an gabháltas íos-cheanglais dlús-stoic na scéime faoi láthair, níl aon íocaíocht dlite i ndáil le Scéim 2012.

Limistéir faoi Mhíbhuntáiste

515. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén uair a dhéanfar íocaíocht faoi scéim na limistéar faoi mhíbhuntáiste, 2012 le duine (sonraí leis seo); cén fáth go bhfuil moill leis an íocaíocht seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [12541/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Faoi Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste 2012 ní mór do ghabháltais iarratasóirí incháilithe íos-cheanglais dlús-stoic de 0.15 aonad beostoic ar feadh tréimhse coinneála sé mhí as a chéile a chomhlíonadh, chomh maith le meánmhéid bliantúil de 0.15 aonad beostoic a choimeád, arna ríomh thar an dá mhí dhéag de bhliain na scéime. De bharr nach bhfuil sé léirithe fós ag an iarratasóir go sásaíonn an gabháltas íos-cheanglais dlús-stoic na scéime faoi láthair, níl aon íocaíocht dlite i ndáil le Scéim 2012.

Dairy Efficiency Programme

516. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when final payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary under the 2011 dairy efficiency programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12549/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payment in respect of the 2011 Dairy Efficiency Programme issued on 29 February 2012, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Departmental Agencies Issues

517. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine with regard to the ice plant in Dingle, County Kerry, if a group of persons were to come together to open the ice plant, if his Department will agree to the following, that day to day cost and maintenance of the plant would be borne by the persons operating the plant, but that if new equipment was needed to be installed that his Department would foot this bill; if his Department will allow the diversification of the use of the plant, that is, for other harbour-fish related issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12582/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Until recently, BIM operated a network of ice plants in ports and harbours around the Irish coast, including Dingle, supplying bulk ice to operators in the seafood industry. However, the Board of BIM decided to cease the operation of these plants by the end of 2012. BIM is an independent statutory body and policy in relation to operational matters, such as this, is a matter for BIM itself.

I am advised that the Dingle ice plant was closed in September 2011. BIM then offered the plant by tender as a going concern in January 2012, but no tenders were received by the closing date.

In relation to the building itself I wish to advise that the ice plant building at Dingle Fishery Harbour Centre was designed, constructed and located specifically for the production of ice and is not suited to alternative uses.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

518. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when an agri-environment options scheme 1 capital payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12604/13]

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 €570.85 and €3,555.42 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. Payments in respect of the 2012 scheme year are subject to a similar administrative checking process. These checks have been successfully completed and full payment totalling €3,553.87 has now issued to the person named.

Aquaculture Licences Applications

519. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the cost incurred by Bord Iascaigh Mhara of producing and distributing a flyer entitled Deep Sea Fish Farm, Galway - Telling Our Story as circulated in a local Galway newspaper on 28 February 2013; his views on the appropriattness of such in view of the fact that the period of public consultation on this proposal is now over; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12608/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Bord Ias-

caigh Mhara is an independent statutory body. As the matter referred to by the Deputy is an operational decision, it is a matter for Bord Iascaigh Mhara itself. Bord Iascaigh Mhara has submitted an application to my Department for an aquaculture and a foreshore licence for the cultivation of Finfish near Inis Oírr in Galway Bay. The application and its accompanying environmental impact statement are being considered fully in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act and the 1933 Foreshore Act, as amended. It would not be appropriate for me to comment further on an application which is under active consideration as part of a statutory process.

Animal Diseases Issues

520. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in relation to the official bovine tag order form as issued by his Department used partly for the purpose of bovine identification and now partly for BVD scheme purposes, if he will confirm the statutory basis for giving effect to the official bovine tag order form and to require the transfer of farmer personal data from his Department to the ICBF for the purported purposes of the statutory BVD scheme; if he will confirm whether or not in requiring the farmer's permission to transfer such personal data as part of the tag ordering process is in compliance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2003; if he will confirm if he has he had any communications from the data protection office concerning possible data protection breaches relating to this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12763/13]

521. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the purported role of the Irish Cattle Breeders' Federation in relation to the statutory BVD scheme; if he will confirm the reason the ICBF role under the scheme appears to lack a statutory basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12764/13]

522. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine under which statutory authority farmers are being asked to pay for bovine approved ear tags; if he will confirm the statutory authority that authorises his Department and-or his approved agent Euro tags Mullinahone Co-operative to require a farmer contribution towards the operational costs of the Irish Cattle Breeders' Federation as part of the total tag cost under the statutory BVD scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12765/13]

523. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine whether or not the tissue sample and or blood sample are approved tests for the purposes of determining or confirming that an animal is truly infected or not with the disease; if he will confirm whether or not the purported tests used to detect or confirm the existence of BVD are 100% accurate and reliable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12766/13]

524. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason the purported statutory BVD scheme appears to not provide for the compulsory removal of animals that give a positive reaction to test given the compulsory nature of the scheme since 1 January 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12767/13]

525. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will confirm whether the tissue tag or second approved ear tag purportedly used for the purposes of the BVD scheme is authorised by European law; if he will confirm the relevant EU legal provisions; if approval was required for its use and if so if it was sanctioned by the relevant EU authorities; if he will confirm the statutory authority that enables him to require a farmer, as opposed to his statutory authorised officers, to take a sample from the bovine using a tissue tag and submission of same to a designated laboratory; if he will confirm the statutory

authority under which farmers are being asked to pay the fees demanded by the designated laboratories; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12771/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 520 to 525, inclusive, together.

The statutory basis for the BVD eradication programme is S.I. No. 532 of 2012, which provides the legal basis for requiring herd owners to take tissue samples and to forward these samples to a designated approved laboratory. The tissue tag meets the requirements of the relevant EU regulations on the identification of bovine animals. As BVD is not subject to control at EU level, EU approval is not required for the eradication programme. However, my Department has advised the EU Commission of the programme. With regard to the BVD test, testing both blood and tissue (ear punch) samples are widely used diagnostic testing methods for BVD and, when combined with appropriate validated test methods, are suitable for the detection of persistently infected cattle. Testing is carried out by laboratories designated for that purpose as listed in S.I. No. 532 of 2012. One of the requirements for designation of a laboratory is that it performs BVD testing according to externally accredited standards. The test methods in use in Ireland (ELISA and RTPCR) have been extensively used in similar national BVD programmes, including Switzerland and Germany. The tests are considered to be accurate and reliable. However, it is recognised that no biological test is 100% accurate. A disclaimer to this effect is included on the BVD information leaflet distributed to farmers.

With regard to the compulsory removal of animals once they give a positive reaction to the test, one of the key objectives of the BVD programme is to prevent transfer of infection between herds. The data generated through the voluntary phase of the programme has highlighted the risks presented by the trade in animals of unknown status. The BVD Order 2012 addresses this risk by prohibiting the movement of animals that are under suspicion of being affected with BVD, except for disposal directly to slaughter or under ministerial permit. My Department recognises the importance of prompt removal of persistently infected animals to prevent further spread of infection within and between herds and encourages herd owners to remove persistently infected animals immediately. I am satisfied that the BVD regulations are in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1993.

While the Irish Cattle Breeders Federation does not have a statutory role in the BVD eradication scheme, it plays an important role in the programme in that it receives the test results from designated testing laboratories and transfers these to the AIM/AHCS system in a cost-effective and time-effective manner. The Irish Cattle Breeders Federation also issues letters and SMS text messages relating these test results to farmers on behalf of my Department. In addition, it provides data to the BVD implementation group in relation to the management of the programme. Any contribution made by herd owners to the operational costs of the Irish Cattle Breeders Federation in the context of purchasing tags is voluntary. This voluntary contribution pre-dates the introduction of the BVD eradication scheme and is completely unrelated to it. I emphasise that my Department attaches considerable importance to the successful eradication of BVD and is making a significant contribution towards the scheme, in particular through its financial support to Animal Health Ireland. In addition, my Department has already committed to providing, free of charge, a blood-based test to confirm the persistently infected status of those calves that give a positive result on tag testing. It will also provide a blood test for the dams of those calves and any progeny of persistently infected cows.

Farm Safety

526. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his

attention has been drawn to the fact that gypsum is now a very prominent form of animal bedding being used by farmers in slatted units and other holding facilities; his views regarding the promotion of such material for this purpose, due to the toxic gases therefrom when it is broken down; if in this context he will implement a ban on the use of same for this purpose in view of the fact that it has been banned in other jurisdictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12788/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am advised that use of gypsum as a bedding material is a recent development. A very small number of farmers are using it, with lime and sawdust more commonly used as bedding material for cubicle beds for Dairy and Suckler cows. Slurry is an inherently dangerous material that produces toxic gasses, including hydrogen sulphide, particularly during agitation. The addition of gypsum to slurry has the potential to increase the toxic gas levels, but all slurry is highly dangerous and must be handled with great caution. My Department is examining the potential of the use of gypsum to increase the level of hydrogen sulphide production in slurry. Other jurisdictions are evaluating the use of gypsum as a bedding material with research being carried out in the United Kingdom. It is expected that this research will be completed by the end of the year. My Department has been in contact with the Health and Safety Authority and Teagasc and will consider what action, if any, may be necessary. Farm safety is a number one priority. My Department works closely with the Health and Safety Authority on farm safety issues. My Department is represented on the Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee which includes representatives from the Health and Safety Authority, Teagasc, the IFA, the ICMSA and others. My Department has issued guidance on the safe handling of slurry and this should be followed at all times. Slurry should only be agitated from a point outside of the animal house, with all of the animals removed from the house, all doors and vents fully opened, and on a breezy day. Further, for best practice, operators should also stand back from tank while the tank is being agitated as toxic gasses will be released during the agitation of any slurry.

Aquaculture Licences Applications

527. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason his Department is refusing to make public the submissions lodged to his Department in relation to the proposed licence sought by Bord Iscaigh Mhara for a fish farm in Galway Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12794/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Bord Iascaigh Mhara has submitted an application to my Department for an aquaculture and a foreshore licence for the cultivation of Finfish near Inis Oírr in Galway Bay. The application and its accompanying environmental impact statement are being considered in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act and the 1933 Foreshore Act, as amended. The Public Consultation stage in respect of the aquaculture and foreshore licence application is now closed and a total of 410 valid submissions have been received by my Department. As the application is under active consideration as part of the statutory process, it would not be appropriate to publish the submissions in advance of a determination in respect of the case.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

528. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details provided) in County Galway may expect to receive an agri-environment options scheme payment. [12809/13]

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 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. This process has been completed and payment will issue shortly. 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. The person named has been informed of the situation. Following payment in respect of 2011 and the receipt of a valid capital investment claim, this process will get under way in respect of 2012 with a view to payment as quickly as possible.

Question No. 529 answered with Question No. 503.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

530. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a rural environment protection scheme 2012 payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12843/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in March 2009 and received payments for the first three years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. These checks have now been completed for 2012 in this case and the 75% Year 4 payment amounting to €4,756.99 issued for payment on 7th March 2013. The remaining 25% Year 4 balancing payment will issue shortly.

Single Payment Scheme Eligibility

531. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person (details supplied) in County Kerry is entitled to a single farm payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12846/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Single Payment Scheme commenced in 2005 and was applicable to farmers who established entitlements by actively farmed during the reference years 2000, 2001 and 2002, and who were paid Livestock Premia and/or Arable Aid in one or more of those years. It is necessary to have entitlements and to have a hectare of land per entitlement to qualify for payment under the Single Payment Scheme. Farmers who have no entitlements or who wish to acquire additional entitlements may lease or buy entitlements from other farmers. Full details of the Terms and Conditions governing the Scheme are made available to all applicants.

The person named has submitted application forms under the Single Payment Scheme in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. However, he does not have any entitlements established under the Scheme and therefore has not qualified for payment. In addition, the area of 0.39 hectares declared is not sufficient to qualify for payment under any other area based scheme, such as the

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

532. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if final payment under rural environment protection scheme 4 has been paid to a person (details provided) County Tipperary and if not, when payment will issue. [12860/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in October 2007 and received payments for the first four years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. Following the administrative check an area discrepancy was discovered between the Single Farm Payment Scheme application for 2012 and the REPS Agri-Environmental Plan which has resulted in the need for further clarification. This issue is currently being investigated with the intention of an early resolution and payment in respect of 2012.

Fishing Fleet Modernisation

533. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will outline his long-term plans for dedicated white-fish boats over 24 metres which are subject to increasing costs, fuel regulation commitments, [12861/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My overarching goal for the Irish Fishing Industry and for white fish dedicated fishermen is to ensure that we build a sustainable, profitable and self reliant fishing industry which protects and enhances the social and economic fabric of rural coastal communities dependent on the seafood sector. I believe that this can be achieved only in the context of a significantly reformed EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) which places long term sustainability at its core. These objectives need to be balanced with the need to deliver a sustainable and ecologically sound fisheries landscape not just for the coming year but for future generations. This is at the heart of my efforts in the Irish Presidency to progress the process of CFP reform between now and the end of June. We have already made significant progress along this road with the agreement at the February Fisheries Council of a process to finally end the practice of discarding fish at sea over a phased basis. This policy and the other elements of the Basic Common Fisheries Policy Regulation will be negotiated with the EU Parliament and the EU Commission over the coming months with a view to securing overall agreement during the Irish Presidency.

In the current economic climate, it is necessary to have a policy that supports innovation, quality and added value in the sector. In that regards, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) operates a scheme that provides a framework of support for the Irish Seafood Industry intent on achieving internationally accredited, third party audited, standards for wild capture fisheries. Accordingly, appropriate standards provide an opportunity for the Irish fishing industry to not just reassure but also demonstrate their commitment to responsible fishing practices and to thereby retain and build market share. I am also pleased to report that BIM will shortly launch a new Fleet Modernisation Scheme co-funded by my Department and the European Fisheries Fund. This new scheme will provide grant aid to fishing vessels for investment in on-board equipment to improve working conditions, hygiene, product quality and energy efficiency. Grants of up to

40% will be available up to a maximum of €15,000 for vessels over 24 metres. Under the terms of the scheme, grant aided equipment must not increase the ability of the vessel to catch fish, however it may improve the value of catch through improvement of product quality.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

534. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a rural environment protection scheme 4 payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12877/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in July 2008 and received payments for the first four years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. Following the administrative check an area discrepancy was discovered between the Single Farm Payment Scheme application for 2012 and the REPS Agri-Environmental Plan which has resulted in the need for further clarification. This issue is currently being investigated with the intention of an early resolution and payment in respect of 2012.

Bord Iascaigh Mhara

535. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cé mhéad airgead atá caite go dtí seo ag Bord Iascaigh Mhara ar an togra feirmeoireachta éisc i gCuan na Gaillimhe; cé mhéad a chaithfear i mbliana ar an togra; cé mhéad atá caite go dtí seo chun eolas faoin togra a scaipeadh; cad iad na céimeanna atá tugtha ag Bord Iascaigh Mhara le cinntiú go bhfuil an t-eolas atá á scaipeadh acu neamhchlaonta agus cruinn; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [12882/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Is comhlacht reachtúil neamhspleách é Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) agus is saincheisteanna oibríochta iad na nithe a luaigh an Teachta agus is nithe do BIM féin iad, dá bharr sin. Is féidir liom a dhearbhú gur trí bhuiséad reatha BIM ón Státchiste a íocadh gach costas a bhaineann leis an iarratas ar cheadúnas dobharshaothraithe do Chuan na Gaillimhe. Chuir BIM ar aghaidh chuig mo Roinn iarratas ar Cheadúnas Dobharshaothraithe agus ar Cheadúnas Urthrá d'fhonn iasc eite a sha-othrú gar d'Inis Oírr i gCuan na Gaillimhe. Tá breithniú iomlán á dhéanamh faoi láthair ar an iarratas agus ar an Ráiteas Tionchair Timpeallachta (EIS) a ghabhann leis de réir fhorálacha an Achta Iascaigh (Leasú) 1997 agus an Achta Imeall Trágha 1933, arna leasú.

Ní bheadh sé cóir domsa tuilleadh a rá faoi iarratas atá faoi bhreithniú gníomhach mar chuid de phróiseas reachtúil.

Fish Quotas

536. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if boats of less than 15 metres will be considered for extra quota for herring in Area Vla in view of the fact that fewer than ten such licensed boats operate in the fishery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12891/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I consider that the industry itself is best placed to advise me on the management of fishing opportunities, given the wide range of factors which contribute to the optimum usage of available quotas. In relation to the monthly allocation of fishing opportunities, my Department officials and the representative producer organisations in the industry, both fishermen and onshore processors, meet each month and industry representatives make recommendations to me in relation to the quota to be allocated in the coming month for whitefish and some pelagic fisheries, including the small vessel herring fishery in Area Vla.

I will ask my Department to raise the Deputy's proposal with the Industry at the monthly meeting when considering their recommendation on the catch limit to apply in the Under 20m vessel herring fishery in Area VIa for April and I will then consider all the issues raised when making my decision on the matter.

Aquaculture Licences Applications

537. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on correspondence regarding the granting of a licence for a salmon farm (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12898/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) has submitted an application to my Department for an Aquaculture and a Foreshore Licence for the cultivation of Finfish near Inis Oirr in Galway Bay. The application and its accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is currently being considered in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act and the 1933 Foreshore Act as amended.

The legislation provides for extensive consultation with stakeholders, including Inland Fisheries Ireland, which has responsibility for wild salmon stocks. The legislation also provides for a period of general public consultation. The public consultation stage of the process is now complete and submissions received are under active consideration by my Department.

All matters associated with the application including the impact, if any, on wild salmon stocks, will be given very careful consideration by my Department. It would not be appropriate for me to comment further on this application which is under active consideration as part of a statutory process.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

538. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 581 of 12 February 2013, when the person will receive their payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12919/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in November 2008 and received payments for the first four years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. This process has now been completed in this case and I expect payment to issue shortly.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

539. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the rural environment protection scheme payment for 2012 will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12932/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in February 2009 and received payments for the first three years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. Following the administrative check an area discrepancy was discovered between the Single Farm Payment Scheme application for 2012 and the REPS Agri-Environmental Plan which has resulted in the need for further clarification. This issue is currently being investigated with the intention of an early resolution and payment in respect of 2012.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Applications

540. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when an application for REP scheme payment in respect of of a person (details supplied) in County Laois will be approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12940/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The holding of the applicant was subject to an eligibility inspection in respect of the application made under the 2012 Schemes, including REPS. The findings of that inspection have been communicated to the person named in writing. The applicant has sought a review of these findings and this matter is currently under consideration by my Department. On completion of the review, the applicant will be informed of the outcome without delay.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

541. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person (details supplied) in County Kerry who had to sell some of their stock due to health issues will qualify for a area aid payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13018/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person concerned has already received payment in respect of the 2012 Single Payment and Disadvantaged Areas Schemes. As regards 2013, the case will be assessed in the context of processing of applications submitted under the 2013 Schemes at the appropriate time. However, the principles of Force Majeure/Exceptional Circumstances will continue to be provided for within Scheme criteria to enable particular circumstances to be appropriately considered.

Fisheries Protection

542. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the actions that have been taken to eliminate the damage being caused by Jagis Pacific Oyster in Lough Swilly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13065/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Pacific oyster (Crassostrea gigas) is included in Annex IV of Council Regulation (EC) 708/2007 concerning use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture. Article 2(5) of the Regulation specifically exempts those species listed in Annex IV from the provisions of the Regulation, with the exceptions of articles 3 and 4. Article 4 requires Member States to ensure that all appropriate measures are taken to avoid adverse effects to biodiversity, and especially to species, habitats and ecosystem functions which may be expected to arise, inter alia, from the spreading of these species into the wild.

The exemption in the Regulation for the Pacific Oyster is that it has been in production for many years and has been moved from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Based on the results of a research study the Marine Institute has confirmed that Pacific oysters (*Crassostrea gigas*) have reproduced in a number of Bays in Ireland, including Lough Swilly. It has not, however, been demonstrated that the presence of *C. gigas* has resulted in ecological damage to marine communities within the Lough.

In response to the presence of Pacific oysters in the Lough, a fishery, regulated by Inland Fisheries Ireland, has developed for feral oysters which would appear to have resulted in the removal of considerable biomass of Pacific oysters from the Lough over the last 2 years. In addition, oyster aquaculture operations have started to use triploid Pacific oysters which are considered, for the most part, reproductively sterile and, therefore, will reduce the contribution of larvae from this source.

The Marine Institute is in the process of finalising an "Appropriate Assessment" under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and this will include management recommendations in respect of oyster production in the Lough.

Aquaculture Licences Applications

543. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of aquaculture licences which have been granted on Lough Swilly and the purpose of each licence;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13066/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Fourteen aquaculture licences have been granted in Lough Swilly. The breakdown is as follows:

- two oyster licences,

- eight mussel licences,

- two oyster and mussel licences,

- one finfish (salmon) licence.

An aquaculture licence is required for the culture or farming of any species of fish, aquatic invertebrate animal of whatever habitat or aquatic plant, or any aquatic form of food suitable for the nutrition of fish.

Aquaculture Development

544. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the checks that have been carried out by his Department to examine potential oyster diseases in

Lough Swilly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13067/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Fish health surveillance is carried out by the Marine Institute under Council Directive 2006/88EC.

Under that Directive, the entire coastline of Ireland has been declared free from Marteilia refringens while there have been recorded instances of Bonamia ostrea and Ostreid herpes virus (OsHV1-uvar).

Specifically in relation to Lough Swilly, over the period since 2007, the bay has been tested for the presence of all 3 pathogens. It remains free from Marteilia refringens but is infected with Bonamia ostrea and Ostreid herpes (OsHV1-uvar).

Beef Industry Irregularities

545. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to the broadcast of a BBC "Spotlight" programme on 5 March 2013 on the horsemeat scandal, if he will confirm that his Department responded to an approach two years ago which raised concerns about Irish horses and the food chain; and if the approach was responded to by his Department with a statement that the mess will clean itself. [13081/13]

546. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to the broadcast of a BBC "Spotlight" programme on 5 March 2013 on the horsemeat scandal, if he can confirm that he was requested to provide a comment to the programme makers but responded that he was too busy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13082/13]

547. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to the broadcast of a BBC "Spotlight" programme on 5 March 2013 on the horsemeat scandal, if he will confirm that information was provided to his Department two years ago which raised concerns about Irish horses and the food chain; and if so, the way in which his Department responded to those concerns. [13083/13]

548. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to the broadcast of a BBC "Spotlight" programme on 5 March 2013 on the horsemeat scandal, if he proposes to investigate the claims made in the programme regarding passports for low weight and less valuable horses to the meat trade being switched for higher weight and more valuable horses to the meat trade. [13084/13]

549. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to the broadcast of a BBC "Spotlight" programme on 5 March 2013 on the horsemeat scandal, if he will confirm the number of horses slaughtered in the State in 2012; and if he will quantify the way the slaughtered animals were subsequently processed. [13085/13]

550. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to the broadcast of a BBC "Spotlight" programme on 5 March 2013 on the horsemeat scandal, if he will confirm that he is satisfied with the operation (details supplied) in County Offaly; and if any of the concerns raised in the programme will be investigated by his Department. [13086/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 545 to 550, inclusive, together.

Some 11,402 horses were slaughtered in slaughter plants approved by my Department in

2012. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland has advised that 12,960 horses were slaughtered in local authority approved slaughter plants in 2012. I understand that the bulk of the meat from these animals was exported for human consumption, some following further processing in approved cutting plants in Ireland. The remainder was exported as full carcasses. The main export markets are Belgium, France and Italy.

Under EU law, responsibility for compliance with food safety and traceability requirements rests in the first instance with food business operators (FBOs). This is augmented by official controls, applied at different stages in the food supply chain. My Department implements official controls in relation to horse identification at marts and other sales venues, in abattoirs under its supervision and at points of entry to the country.

All equines (which include horses, ponies and donkeys) are required to be identified in accordance with EU and national legislation. Equines issued with a passport after 1 July 2009 must have a corresponding microchip implanted by a veterinarian, which is recorded in the passport and creates a link between the passport and the animal. The passport includes information on any veterinary medicines administered to equines. An equine for slaughter for human consumption must be accompanied to the slaughterhouse by its passport and the information on the passport determines whether the animal can be slaughtered for human consumption. Horses treated with certain veterinary medicines such as phenylbutazone, known in the industry as 'bute', are permanently excluded from the human food chain in order to protect public health and the passport of the horse in question is endorsed by the prescribing veterinary practitioner to this effect.

My Department has detailed procedures for the slaughter of horses in abattoirs under its supervision and has communicated these and the checks required both to its staff and the business operators. It has liaised with passport issuing agencies in Ireland and has developed protocols to allow abattoir operators to check the details of passports with these agencies to seek to ensure that they are valid and that only those horses eligible for slaughter are slaughtered. Where forged or tampered passports accompanying horses to slaughter are detected, it is the policy that such animals are destroyed and removed from the food chain.

Ongoing vigilance is maintained in relation to official controls in this area. In that connection, the European Communities (Equine) (Amendment) Regulations, S.I. No. 371/2012, introduced recently, provide for the updating of S.I. No. 357/2011 (European Communities (Equine) Regulations 2011) to strengthen the powers of the Minister in relation to approval of an issuing body for equine passports, authorised officers and prosecutions in relation to equine identification.

My Department is establishing a centralized equine database. The intention is that this database will be used at abattoirs to assist in verifying the authenticity of horse passports for the equine presented and to record its date of slaughter.

I can confirm that my Department has received a number of complaints in this area, some of which have been non-specific in nature. Information received in relation to alleged illegal activities in this State is taken seriously and investigated as appropriate by my Department and in certain cases by the Gardai. There is ongoing contact in this regard between the Department and the authorities in Northern Ireland and Britain. It must also be noted however that some claims have been made in the public domain in relation to this issue which, when examined by my Department, did not stand up to close scrutiny or warrant further investigation.

While my Department does not comment on ongoing investigations, appropriate corrective action is taken if non-compliances are detected. I can advise that during 2011-2012 the Department issued Compliance Notices to two horse slaughter plants under its supervision. This led to

temporary suspension of activities while corrective measures were put in place. In addition the approvals of one organisation to maintain a stud book and issue horse passports were revoked during 2012.

With regard specifically to the BBC Spotlight programme on 5 March, it would not be appropriate for me to comment publicly on allegations made. I was not available for interview for this particular programme because of other commitments but I can advise that my Department did comment on queries received from the programme makers. I understand that some of the allegations made in this programme relate to activities outside the State, in which case appropriate checks would be a matter for authorities in the jurisdictions concerned. I understand issues were also raised in relation to an equine slaughter plant in this jurisdiction, which at the time concerned was under the supervision of a local authority. At present there are two local authority supervised equine slaughter plants in operation – one in Co. Offaly and one in Co. Limerick. I have decided to take both these plants under the supervision of my Department.

Land Issues

551. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide statistics for the number of hectares of leased and rented land by county for the most recent years available. [13111/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The data requested by the Deputy are set out in the table.

	2011		2012	
COUNTY	RENTED	LEASED	RENTED	LEASED
CARLOW	10,679.11	6,002.27	10,784.21	5,537.73
CAVAN	18,680.98	12,504.11	19,062.82	12,531.53
CLARE	17,571.11	15,310.27	18,126.59	15,389.48
CORK	69,897.30	61,937.69	69,768.51	62,168.77
DONEGAL	33,590.00	24,688.35	32,832.48	24,848.46
DUBLIN	14,496.83	1,869.65	13,904.61	1,872.79
GALWAY	32,544.58	27,653.47	32,496.87	27,704.69
KERRY	29,262.20	33,412.51	28,860.74	32,973.34
KILDARE	23,662.94	6,436.77	23,809.91	7,081.08
KILKENNY	21,865.30	15,130.00	21,457.21	16,340.81
LAOIS	14,892.24	9,815.59	14,624.26	9,850.24
LEITRIM	13,252.41	9,026.33	13,932.80	9,124.50
LIMERICK	29,263.78	17,771.91	30,237.27	17,517.09
LONGFORD	9,355.66	6,301.75	9,652.79	6,137.40
LOUTH	17,565.15	3,831.21	17,529.45	4,039.36
MAYO	25,243.76	22,933.65	25,908.16	23,179.56
MEATH	43,093.15	12,157.28	43,224.28	12,288.03
MONAGHAN	14,782.41	10,507.03	14,957.25	10,860.99
OFFALY	15,894.23	10,005.24	16,090.90	10,012.41
ROSCOMMON	20,509.05	10,853.99	21,212.30	10,931.05
SLIGO	13,948.84	8,399.42	14,203.19	8,424.59

COUNTY	RENTED	LEASED	RENTED	LEASED
TIPPERARY	45,683.79	36,971.81	46,306.91	35,627.76
WATERFORD	17,573.63	16,020.10	17,311.44	16,439.79
WESTMEATH	18,143.96	10,533.90	18,389.79	10,215.29
WEXFORD	29,114.56	20,727.39	29,379.23	20,099.46
WICKLOW	25,649.27	8,047.08	26,100.29	8,363.04
TOTAL	626,216.24	418,848.77	630,164.26	419,559.24

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

552. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will list in tabular form the disadvantaged area scheme payments made on a county basis for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. [13113/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The data sought by the Deputy is set out in the tables.

Table 1

Payments under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme

County Name	Net Amount
Carlow	€1,447,162.32
Cavan	€9,916,121.36
Clare	€13,871,261.29
Cork	€15,231,294.03
Donegal	€17,421,595.26
Dublin	€247,016.28
Galway	€23,883,077.09
Kerry	€17,496,204.20
Kildare	€820,916.23
Kilkenny	€3,471,688.59
Laois	€3,168,473.23
Leitrim	€7,151,434.59
Limerick	€5,344,532.90
Longford	€4,957,667.42
Louth	€1,134,320.80
Mayo	€22,580,308.10
Meath	€2,290,167.01
Monaghan	€7,628,109.20
Offaly	€4,460,518.75
Roscommon	€11,840,792.34
Sligo	€8,017,168.92
Tipperary	€8,974,475.92
Waterford	€2,699,416.18
Westmeath	€5,033,067.18
Wexford	€2,338,061.74

County Name	Net Amount
Wicklow	€3,865,788.64

Table 2

Payments under the 2011 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme

County Name	Net Amount
Carlow	€1,635,191.24
Cavan	€10,279,604.74
Clare	€14,545,337.31
Cork	€16,679,768.94
Donegal	€19,296,783.22
Dublin	€289,283.80
Galway	€25,971,767.23
Kerry	€18,755,079.94
Kildare	€983,569.32
Kilkenny	€3,929,837.12
Laois	€3,529,075.80
Leitrim	€7,688,253.54
Limerick	€5,969,534.96
Longford	€5,157,189.81
Louth	€1,294,359.20
Mayo	€24,584,500.48
Meath	€2,521,204.54
Monaghan	€7,981,280.13
Offaly	€4,867,596.85
Roscommon	€12,367,572.41
Sligo	€8,633,227.04
Tipperary	€9,925,801.81
Waterford	€3,199,150.26
Westmeath	€5,401,438.86
Wexford	€2,755,646.70
Wicklow	€4,254,934.29

Table 3

Payments under the 2010 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme

County Name	Net Amount
Carlow	€1,629,820.60
Cavan	€10,298,662.95
Clare	€14,546,087.69
Cork	€16,702,743.56
Donegal	€19,088,055.70
Dublin	€280,997.91

County Name	Net Amount
Galway	€25,988,942.31
Kerry	€18,734,236.42
Kildare	€995,520.87
Kilkenny	€3,935,858.59
Laois	€3,535,752.39
Leitrim	€7,619,949.45
Limerick	€5,961,662.63
Longford	€5,139,259.97
Louth	€1,292,690.90
Mayo	€24,413,531.40
Meath	€2,496,096.49
Monaghan	€7,987,685.32
Offaly	€4,878,658.93
Roscommon	€12,395,621.24
Sligo	€8,643,591.20
Tipperary	€9,935,861.08
Waterford	€3,206,670.74
Westmeath	€5,379,865.73
Wexford	€2,781,923.44
Wicklow	€4,253,970.64

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

553. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will be made on a derogation appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay in deciding this appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13120/13]

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 are impacted by the requirement of a minimum stocking density 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 submitted additional information to my Department which showed that this requirement had been satisfied, thereby allowing processing to be recently finalised. Payment will shortly issue to the nominated bank account.

Child Care Services Inquiry

554. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide in a tabular form the number of child minders advisory officers posts that she has withdrawn here by 28 February 2013 broken down by city and county; and the measures she will take to provide the necessary training and supports lost to providers of child minding services. [12796/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): In 2002, the Health Service Executive (HSE) agreed to fund a Childminding Advisory Officer post in each county, who would work with the 33 City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) funded

under the Childcare Programme, implemented by the then Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. While Childminding Advisory Officers were established in most county areas they were not always located with the local CCC.

In recent years, HSE funding for the Childminding Advisory Officer posts has gradually decreased, and is no longer in place in some areas. I asked officials in my Department to engage with the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) on this issue and to establish the position in relation to these posts in each city and county childcare committee area. A table which outlines the position as indicated by the CCCs is being collated and will issued directly to the Deputy in the coming days.

The responses received do reflect the reduction in support for these post which I understand is due to pressure on HSE resource and the need to prioritise funding to other areas of front-line services. While this is not a welcome development, I would point to the fact that the CCCs are now well-established and effective bodies at local level, and that supporting the childminding sector is an integral part of their work. I am satisfied that childminders continue to have access to support, training and advice.

My Department provides annual funding to each CCC to enable them to support and advise all childcare providers at local level. In 2012, the total amount allocated to the CCCs was €11.3m. In addition, in 2012 my Department provided €220,000 to the CCCs for Childminding Development Grants. My Department also provides annual funding, totalling €2.85m in 2012, to seven National Voluntary Childcare Organisations to provide support at a local level to their members. This included €358,000 for Childminding Ireland, the representative body for childminders.

My Department has commenced work on Ireland's first Early Years Strategy. I have received Government approval for the approach I am taking in developing this Strategy as an innovative and dynamic blueprint for the future development of our Early Years sector, aimed at providing a coherent approach to seeking to improve the lives of children from birth to the age of six. One of the policy issues which I have identified for consideration in the preparation of the Early Years Strategy is the development of the child minding sector as a fully-integrated component of early childhood care and education, in particular for the under-one age group.

Child Protection Issues

555. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide in a tabular form the cuts she has imposed to the Empowerment Plus child protection services since she took office in 2011; and the areas affected; and the measures she has taken to support or replace the lost services for vulnerable at risk children. [12797/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have requested the information from the HSE and I will revert to the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Departmental Expenditure

556. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the costs of providing hardware and software to her home and the home of Ministers of State in her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12362/13]

557. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the costs of

providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12380/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 556 and 557 together.

My Department does not incur any costs in relation to the provision of landline telephony services to my home. Equally there are no specific hardware or software costs associated with IT services as there are no personal computers, printers, faxes or broadband services provided in my home by the Department.

Departmental Expenditure

558. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly telephone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in her Department since March 2011; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12399/13]

559. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly telephone bills are being paid to constituency office by her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12417/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 558 and 559 together.

A total of €1,926 has been paid by my Department in respect of landline telephone services to my constituency office in Clondalkin, Dublin 22 since my Department was established in June 2011. There are no other direct costs incurred by my Department associated with the running of this office.

Departmental Expenditure

560. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of mobile telephones in use by her, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile telephones since March 2011; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12435/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The information sought by the Deputy is currently being collated and will issue to the Deputy in the coming days.

Departmental Expenditure

561. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to her and Ministers of State in her Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12453/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): In line with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines on ministerial appointments, I em-

ploy two civilian drivers on a week on/week off basis to drive my private car on official business. Each driver receives €631.75 per week in respect of these duties and are not entitled to claim overtime. A total of €118,800 has been paid in civilian driver salaries since 2011. Civilian drivers are entitled to claim subsistence payments in respect of certified official travel at the appropriate Civil Service rates and under the regulations applying to such subsistence. A total of €9,271 has been paid since 2011 in this regard.

In addition, mileage claims totalling €26,956 in respect of the use of my personal car have been paid since 2 June 2011. As my Department was only established in June 2011, figures relating to the cost of Ministerial transport in 2010 are not available.

Departmental Expenditure

562. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in her Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12472/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): There are two corporate credit cards currently in use in my Department for official business purposes only. A Bank of Ireland Visa credit card is issued to my Private Secretary and a second card is issued to a designated officer in my Department's Finance Unit. These cards are typically used to cover a range of costs such as that relating to official entertainment, accommodation, seminar and conference fees, annual membership fees, publications and software purchases.

The total cost of the cards since the establishment of the Department is currently being collated and will issue directly to the Deputy

Aftercare Services

563. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to provide for after school care funded or part funded from the Exchequer; if she is considering sub-letting, or some arrangement, school facilities to private operators to accommodate this care; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12598/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As part of Budget 2013, together with my colleague, the Minister for Social Protection, I was pleased to announce a new After-School Childcare initiative, to be managed jointly by both Departments, which will be targeted at low-income families and supporting parents availing of employment opportunities.

Lack of access to affordable, quality childcare can be a barrier to low income and disadvantaged families when seeking to avail of work and training or educational opportunities. This new initiative, which is expected to receive full year funding of €14 million, will support parents to take up employment by providing over 6,000 quality after-school places for children attending primary school. This initiative is in line with the Government's overall strategy to support parents of low income families to take up employment and demonstrates how Departments are working together to deliver the Government's agenda on promoting employment and supporting children's development.

The after-school places, as with those funded under the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes, are expected

to be available in both commercial and community providers.

Officials in both my own Department and the Department of Social Protection are currently working to finalise the details of the after-school scheme and its operational arrangements including such matters as accountability and eligibility, and responsibility for same. As soon as this work has been completed, further information will be made available.

It is intended to encourage the provision of after school services in primary school settings. I understand that it is the policy of the Department of Education and Skills, who have responsibility for primary school education, to encourage schools to share their facilities with community groups and organisations. My Department also favours the location of pre-school facilities and after-school facilities on or adjacent to primary school grounds where possible.

However, the vast majority of national schools are not owned by the State and while I understand that the Trustees and Boards of Management of these schools have been encouraged to respond positively to requests for school facilities to be shared, their right to prioritise the interests of the principal school users must be recognised. Therefore any decision in relation to the use of school premises for an after-school or pre-school programme ultimately lies with the relevant Board or Trustees and my Department would not have a role in this matter.

Child Protection Issues

564. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on the role of child art psychotherapy in Child Welfare and Protection Services; if she intends to make such psychotherapeutic services available to children who are involved with child protection social workers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12670/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have requested the information from the HSE and I will revert to the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Youth Services Provision

565. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide details of the funding allocation made to the CDYSB for each of the past five years with details of the element of this which was for the running of the CDYSM itself in each year; and if she will outline the steps that are being taken to ameliorate the most negative impacts on youth services of the significant funding allocation for the current year. [12733/13]

566. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will explain the circumstance surrounding the recent downward revision of the 2013 budget allocation agreed last December with the CDYSB; and if she will outline the way it is proposed to achieve a further €600,000 in cuts in a manner that does do significant damage to existing services and where the burden is equitably shared. [12734/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 565 and 566 together.

Some €53.173m is being provided in 2013 by my Department to support the delivery of a range of youth work programmes and youth services for all young people, including those from disadvantaged communities, by the voluntary youth work sector. Youth work programmes and youth services are delivered to some 400,000 young people by over 1,400 youth work personnel, who in turn support a large volunteer base of some 40,000.

Having regard to the savings requirements identified in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) my Department has tried to ensure that, in the determination process for the funding allocations, the front line youth services, particularly those for the most vulnerable young people are protected as far as is possible from the impact of any necessary reductions in funding. The savings required under the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure in respect of this year amount to €5.393m which equates to almost a 10% reduction on 2012 funding.

The reduced allocation in the youth budget in recent years has required much tighter budget management and prioritisation. In the course of recent months I, along with officials of my Department have met with representatives of the youth sector on an ongoing basis with a view to determining how best to minimise the impact of the reduction in the 2013 budget on youth services in the challenging budgetary situation that we face at this time.

The funding is administered on behalf of my Department by some 33 bodies including Vocational Education Committees (VECs), Local Authorities, HSE and some sporting bodies. These administering bodies were notified of the 2013 funding allocation to projects in their respective areas in recent weeks.

In order to try and maximise the use of the funding available for youth services and programmes, my Department has afforded flexibility to the bodies administering funding on behalf of my Department to propose the reconfiguration of the allocations provided having regard to the knowledge available to these bodies about the needs of young people at local level. Any proposals or recommendations made by a body administering funding on behalf of my Department, in relation to the distribution of funding in its locality, requires the approval of my Department before they are implemented.

In this context the City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB), as the local grant administering body in the Dublin City area, submitted proposals last week to my Department requesting that percentage reductions, different to those outlined in the CRE, would be applied to the projects in the Dublin City area. CDYSB's proposed rationale is to seek to minimise disruption to frontline youth provision and to protect smaller projects.

It should be noted that under the CDYSB proposals the majority of projects would receive a significantly lower reduction than 10 per cent. However, as a consequence of that, CDYSB have proposed that some larger projects would receive greater reductions.

The CDYSB proposals and the final allocations which will be made to each project, are currently being considered by my Department and at my request officials of my Department met with CDYSB on Friday 1st March to discuss the proposals. My Department will advise CDYSB of the outcome very shortly.

Details of the overall funding allocations to CDYSB for the years 2008 to 2012 for the projects administered by that body under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2, the Local Drugs Task Force scheme together with the operational central administration costs in respect of CDYSB for the years 2008 to 2012 are outlined hereunder in tabular form.

Funding Schemes

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
14,891,663	15,266,221	14,733,827	14,053,650	13,107,529

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
226,126	173,099	179,990	212,037	153,180

Central administrative costs of the City of Dublin Youth Service Board provide for the following:

- IT and computer maintenance

- Wages for 1 cleaner

- Utilities, light and heat

- Equipment

- Maintenance of premises

- Staff travel

- Telecommunications

- Office expenses

It should be noted that under the CRE there has been no cut to the funding being provided to support local voluntary youth clubs. This modest funding (in excess of a million euro) plays an important role in supporting volunteer-led youth groups and in promoting and leveraging valuable voluntary activity in youth work.

In addition to the current funding provided by my Department, €1.5 million in capital funding is also being provided in 2013 for youth cafés and youth projects. My Department will be announcing further details regarding the application process for the 2013 funding programmes very shortly. This follows on from funding of €500,000 which was provided in 2012 for the development of a number of youth cafés which had applied for previous youth café funding schemes

With respect to future funding provision, my Department has commenced a comprehensive Value for Money Review of youth funding and this is expected to report later this year.

My Department has also prioritised the improvement of quality provision in youth work through publication and ongoing implementation of a National Quality Standards Framework for youth work. The Department has also developed National Quality Standards for Volunteer-led youth groups which were launched on Monday of last week.

Child Care Services Inquiry

567. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide a list of all private residential child care centres including the names of the providers and the owners of the centres; the number of staff in each of the centres and the level of training and qualifications attained by each member of staff in such centres. [13031/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have requested the information from the HSE and I will revert to the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Children in Care

568. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide, in tabular form, the number of children in the care of the State placed in private

residential child care centres at present; the cost of each placement; the reasons for the selection of private providers for each placement; the duration of each placement with private providers; the level of inspection carried out by the Health Service Executive or the Health Information and Quality Authority of such services; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13032/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have requested the information from the HSE and I will revert to the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Prescription Charges

569. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow, who is in receipt of the disability allowance is exempt from paying the increased prescription charges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12524/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): 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.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

570. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health further to a report in a Sunday newspaper which suggested that generic drugs and medicines here cost as much as 24 times more than the same medicines in Britain, the research undertaken by his Department or by the Competition Authority in this area and the steps he will take to ensure that drugs and medicines are sold at reasonable prices here. [12634/13]

612. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health further to a report in a Sunday newspaper which suggested that generic drugs and medicines here cost as much as 24 times more than the same medicines in Britain, the research he had undertaken in this area and the steps he will take to ensure that drugs and medicines are acquired at reasonable prices here. [12633/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 570 and 612 together.

The prices of drugs vary between countries for a number of reasons, including different prices set by manufacturers, different wholesale and pharmacy mark-ups, different dispensing fees and different rates of VAT. In recent years, a number of changes to the pricing and reimbursement system have been successfully introduced in Ireland. These have resulted in reductions in the prices of thousands of medicines.

The Department and the HSE have successfully finalised discussions with the Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers in Ireland (APMI), which represents the generic industry, on a new agreement to deliver further savings in the cost of generic drugs. Under this Agreement, from 1 November 2012, the HSE will only reimburse generic products which have been priced at 50% or less of the initial price of an originator medicine. In the event that an originator medicine is priced at less than 50% of its initial price the HSE will require a generic price to be priced below the originator price. This represents a significant structural change in generic drug pricing and should lead to an increase in the generic prescribing rate.

In addition, the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012, which is currently before the House, provides for the introduction of a system of generic substitution and reference pricing for prescribed drugs and medicines. These reforms will promote price competition among suppliers and ensure that lower prices are paid for these medicines resulting in further savings for taxpayers and patients.

Water Fluoridation

571. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health his views on acceptable levels of fluoride in water; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12852/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Forum on Fluoridation, which reported in 2002, advised that the fluoridation of piped public water supplies should continue as a public health measure. One of the recommendations of the Forum was to amend the Regulations regarding fluoridation of public water supplies to redefine the optimal level of fluoride in drinking water from 0.8 to 1.0 parts per million (ppm) to between 0.6 and 0.8 ppm. Regulations were introduced in 2007 to give legal effect to this change. The Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health, established in 2004, advises that the balance of scientific evidence worldwide confirms that water fluoridation, at the optimal level, does not cause any ill effects and continues to be safe and effective in protecting the oral health of all age groups.

Medical Card Eligibility

572. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health on reaching the age of 23 years a full time dependant student (details supplied) in County Sligo with medical needs was automatically removed from the family drug payment card, they cannot apply for a medical card in their own right until they are 25 years; the action being taken to overcome this anomaly and the reason a full-time dependant student cannot remain on the family DPS after 23 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12901/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Under the Medical Card Scheme, a person between the ages of 16 and 25 years, who is a dependant of a person who does not have a medical card, will only be provided with a medical card if the HSE assesses that it should be provided to avoid undue hardship to that person. This is set out in the Health Services (No 3) Regulations 1983 (S.I. No. 381 of 1983).

Under the Drugs Payment Scheme (DPS), an individual or family only has to pay €144 each month for approved prescribed drugs, medicines and certain appliances for use by that person or his or her family in that month. The definition of a family for this Scheme is an adult, their spouse, and any children under 18 years. Dependants over 18 years and under 23 years who are in full time education may also be included.

There are no plans to review the DPS age limit.

Thalidomide Victims Compensation

573. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will support the Irish Thalidomide Association in 2013 and not to take an adversarial approach to their plight (details supplied). [13312/13]

642. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the proposals, if any, he has to address the concerns of the Irish Thalidomide Association (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12902/13]

646. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he will honour the programme for Government commitment in terms of a revised compensation scheme for thalidomide survivors in view of the additional entitlements recently awarded to citizens in Germany, Australia and the United Kingdom who are thalidomide survivors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12920/13]

647. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the further action he is planning to take to resolve all outstanding financial, medical and legal issues for survivors of Thalidomide and the Irish Thalidomide Association in view of the alleged earlier flawed report from the State Claims Agency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12921/13]

651. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health if he will address the concerns raised in correspondence (details supplied) regarding thalidomide victims; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13007/13]

660. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the way he intends to honour the commitment in the programme for Government to continue to engage in discussions with the Irish Thalidomide Survivors Society; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13112/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 573, 642, 646, 647, 651 and 660 together.

Given the challenges that persist for each individual, this Government's aim is to address the health and personal social care needs of thalidomide survivors living in Ireland. I have stated that I am willing to enter into discussions about a health care package on a non-statutory basis; an ex-gratia payment having regard to current financial circumstances; and a statement to the Dáil recognising the challenges faced by survivors.

There are two thalidomide representative organisations. The largest group, the Irish Thalidomide Association announced publicly in 2012 that it had ceased talks with the Government and their legal advisors have initiated personal injuries claims against the State.

The second organisation, the Irish Thalidomide Survivors Society, has sought an independent agency and a statutory health care package including other aspects of their needs such as housing, heating, transport and clothing, which are outside the remit of the health sector. My position remains unchanged from that outlined in my letter to the Irish Thalidomide Survivors Society in June last year in which I requested that the Society consider, in good faith, proceeding with a Health Care Protocol which envisaged appointing and training a multi-disciplinary team, arranging a multi-disciplinary health evaluation, identifying and documenting their healthcare needs/issues and developing plans to address those needs.

On the matter of the timing of the withdrawal of the Thalidomide drug, I have been advised that no negligence or breach of duty could be established against the State on the basis of actions undertaken by the Department at the time. With regard to the fact that the payments made by the State to the survivors of Thalidomide and their families in 1975 were not referred to the High Court, I understand that the relevant rules of Court simply did not apply to the circumstances pertaining to the ex-gratia payment made on behalf of the Government. The payments made by the State in 1975 to the survivors of Thalidomide and their families were not made in settlement of any legal proceedings, either existing or threatened. The payment was not made in a legal context because the State had no liability. It was made because the State believed

then that it was appropriate to make some provision for the survivors. The payments made were substantial and were designed to augment payments made to the survivors by the German Foundation.

There are currently 32 Irish Thalidomide survivors. Each survivor received lump sum payments from a German Foundation and the Irish Government in the early 1970s. In 1975 the lump-sums paid by the Irish Government ranged from €6,400 to €21,000. In addition, each survivor receives on-going monthly payments from both the German Foundation and the Irish Government. Combining the Irish and German payments, most individuals received €30,386 per annum or €2,572 per month, tax free. The German and Irish monthly allowance is not reckonable for State benefits and each individual is automatically entitled to a medical card.

In November 2012, officials in my Department forwarded to the Secretaries of both Thalidomide organisations, details regarding a scheme of support currently being provided to survivors of thalidomide worldwide, by the Contergan Foundation.

Health Services Staff Issues

574. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason two senior clinical leaders in nursing and medicine in north Galway mental health services have been relocated to west Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12295/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Health Services Staff Issues

575. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if he will prioritise funding for old age psychiatry services in County Kerry in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12298/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Budget 2013 provided an additional €35m for the continued development of mental health services across a range of headings including the further ongoing development of community mental health teams for adults, children, older persons and mental health intellectual disability and to the recruitment of over 470 additional staff to implement these measures. In relation to old age psychiatry services in County Kerry, as this is a service matter the question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Medical Card Applications

576. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12307/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Staff Issues

577. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will identify, by name, hospitals in which management have implemented elements of the deal agreed between health service management and hospital consultants at the Labour Relations Commission in autumn 2012; the nature of the elements of the agreement that have been put in place in each acute hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12309/13]

578. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will identify, by name, the hospitals in which management has introduced the rostering of hospital consultants on any five out of seven days under the terms of the agreement reached at the Labour Relations Commission in September 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12310/13]

579. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will identify, by name, the hospitals in which management has put in place roster arrangements to have consultants on duty on a 24 hour basis in specialties such as emergency medicine, neonatology, intensive care and obstetrics as provided in the agreement on work practice reforms brokered at the Labour Relations Commission in September 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12311/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 577 to 579, inclusive, together.

In September 2012, following intensive engagement between health service management and the consultant representative bodies at the Labour Relations Commission, a comprehensive set of measures was agreed. The agreement encompasses a range of flexibilities to enhance productivity and efficiency and to maximise the availability of consultants, as key clinical decision-makers. In particular it provides for:

- Consultant availability for rostering for any five days out of seven as opposed to weekdays;

- Rostering of consultants on a 16/7 (8 a.m. to midnight) or 24/7 basis in services where this is required;

- Clinical Directors having a much strengthened management role in respect of consultants, with reporting relationship for all consultants to the Clinical Director;

- Consultant cooperation with a range of measures to support improved Community and Mental Health services;

- Consultant compliance with the contractual requirements regarding private practice;

- Expeditious processing and signing of claims by consultants for submission to private health insurers.

The HSE is responsible for ensuring that the measures agreed at the LRC are implemented in all hospitals in the public health service. In this regard I have asked the Executive to collate the data requested by the Deputy and to reply to him directly.

Mobility Allowance Decision

580. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health the way an alternative scheme to the mobility allowance and motorised transport grant will be administered; if he will ensure that current funding levels will be maintained; the organisations he has met with in order to develop an alternative scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12317/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): A special review group, which will be independently chaired, has been established to seek an alternative method to provide for the needs of people in a manner that does not run counter to the Equal Status Acts. Following the initial phase of the group's work, which will concentrate on issues around Mobility Allowance and the Motorised Transport Grant, a key concentration of the group will be to look at opportunities for the enhancement of the transport options provided to the relevant persons in need. As part of the review, the Health Service Executive (HSE) will examine the circumstances of all those currently benefiting from the schemes to ensure the identified solutions will encompass their priority mobility needs. In addition, the Minister for Health has instructed the HSE to contact each individual in receipt of the payments to notify them of this decision.

It is important to note that, although the Government's decision ends both schemes to new applicants with immediate effect, the payment of mobility allowance to those currently in receipt of it, will continue for another four months. It is also important to note that the decision is in no way intended to save costs and the funding involved in the two schemes (€10.6 million) remains committed to meeting the priority transport needs of people with a disability.

In advance of the establishment of the Project Group, Department of Health officials met with representatives of the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, the Disability Federation of Ireland and the Irish Wheelchair Association at my request. In addition, membership of the Project Group, which is independently chaired, is drawn from both the statutory and non-statutory sectors. The work of the Project Group is being supported by the National Disability Authority and includes representatives from the Irish Wheelchair Association, the Disability Federation of Ireland, an independent service user and advocate for people with disabilities and a retired County Council Manager with relevant experience. Both Minister Reilly and myself have instructed the Project Group to seek solutions across the whole of Government, so that alongside representatives from the Department of Health and the HSE, membership also includes representatives from Pobal and from the Departments of Transport, Tourism & Sport, Environment, Community and Local Government, Social Protection and Finance.

The Project Group has already met twice and their next meeting is scheduled for 25th March. The Government decision includes a requirement that the results of the review will be presented to the Government before any final decisions are made on future arrangements.

Vaccination Programme

581. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether there is a potential health risk to residents in Connemara, County Galway in view of the recent outbreak of tuberculosis on Inis Oirr, Aran Islands; his plans to change the BCG vaccination programme in the west of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12318/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE has been investigating cases of TB linked to the island of Inis Oirr since November 2012. Cases of active TB have been identified and are being treated. They no longer pose an infectious risk to others.

Surveillance and Control measures have been implemented in accordance with national guidelines. Contacts of the active cases both on Inis Oirr and the mainland have been screened. As there is a lot of social contact in a small island community, screening was offered to the entire resident population of the island. A large majority of people accepted this offer. People who have evidence of exposure to TB but no active infection are also being treated and monitored as appropriate.

The incidence of TB in the west of Ireland has been lower than in other parts of the country for the last number of years. The risk to people in Connemara should not be any higher than in the west generally.

BCG in the West of Ireland has historically been offered to primary school leaving age children as the incidence of TB peaked in the teenage years in the west in the past. Childhood TB has not been a feature of the outbreak linked to Inis Oirr.

WHO describes countries with an incidence of less than 10 cases per 100,000 population as a low incidence country. The annual notification rate of TB has declined in Ireland since 2007 when the rate was 11.3 per 100,000 (480 cases). In 2010 and 2011, the annual TB notification rates were 9.2 per 100,000 (420 cases in 2010 and 424 cases in 2011) which is the lowest rate recorded since surveillance of TB began in the 1950s and now categorise Ireland as a low incidence country. TB cases notified in 2013 to date, correspond to a provisional crude incidence rate of 8.1 per 100,000 population.

The BCG vaccination programme in Ireland is under review which will inform future policy.

Departmental Expenditure

582. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the homes of Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12369/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department has not supplied IT hardware or software either to my home or the homes of the Ministers of State in my Department.

Departmental Expenditure

583. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the costs of providing telephone in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12387/13]

585. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices including monthly telephone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12406/13]

586. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly telephone bills are being paid to constituency office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12424/13]

587. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the number of mobile phones in use by him and Junior Minister and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile phones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12442/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 583, 585, 586 and 587 together.

The information requested by the Deputy is outlined below.

No telephones were provided in my home or the homes of the Ministers of State in my De-

partment.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service offers a managed IT support service for the constituency-based offices of Ministers and Ministers of State whereby ICT equipment is supplied to Ministers and the assets so supplied are retained by the Oireachtas.

In addition to this, two of my constituency staff were supplied with laptops by my Department to a total value of €1850.15. These devices are retained on my Department's asset register.

A Constituency function operates as an adjunct to Minister of State White's Office, as it has done for a number of his predecessors. As the office is in Hawkins House, my Department equips it. Since March 2011, two PCs were provided to the office, as part of the normal departmental upgrade of its infrastructure, at a total cost of €852.40. These assets are retained on my Department's asset register.

Additional software licences, to a total value of €640 approximately, were supplied by my Department to Minister of State Shortall's Constituency staff, while she was in office.

The information requested by the Deputy regarding the cost of telephones bills in constituency offices is set out in tabular statement.

Name	Date (from March, 2011)	Amount
Minister James Reilly	Bills from March, 2011 to December, 2011 paid directly by Constituency Office. This amount was refunded by Department.	€1680.46
	January 2012	€167.42
	February, 2012	€163.12
	March, 2012	€221.16
	April, 2012	€108.77
	May, 2012	€208.51
	June, 2012	€47.15
	July, 2012	€108.33
	August, 2012	€52.26
	September, 2012	€51.51
	October, 2012	€108.33
	November, 2012	€47.17
	December, 2012	€52.34
	January, 2013	€51.51
	February, 2013	€51.47
	March, 2013	€51.94
TOTAL		€3243.45

Name	Date (from March 2011)	Amount
Minister Kathleen Lynch	July, 2011 (inclusive of service connection charge of €545.61)	€1154.86
	August, 2011	€439.99
	September, 2011	€267.80

Name	Date (from March 2011)	Amount
	October, 2011	€371.82
	November, 2011	€436.27
	December, 2011	€425.73
	January, 2012	€317.54
	February, 2012	€435.62
	March, 2012	€405.53
	April, 2012	€349.09
	May, 2012	€367.67
	June, 2012	€343.55
	July, 2012	€337.88
	August, 2012	€308.07
	September, 2012	€283.46
	October, 2012	€322.26
	November, 2012	€332.05
	December, 2012	€345.99
	January, 2013	€267.06
	February, 2013	€347.49
	March, 2013	€276.43
TOTAL		€8181.16

	October, 2012	€75.39
Minister Alex White	Date (from March 2011)	Amount
	November, 2012	€73.02
	December, 2012	€73.35
	January, 2013	€67.01
	February, 2013	€73.35
	March, 2013	€82.41
TOTAL		€371.18

The total number of mobile phones in use by myself, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff is nine. The total cost of mobile phone bills since March, 2011 is €19,381.44.

Health Services Staff Issues

584. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the difficulty faced by the Health Service Executive in recruiting consultant radiologists; the way he proposes to address this shortage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12394/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The recruitment of staff in the health sector is primarily a matter for the Health Service Executive. I have asked the Executive to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to the recruitment of consultant radiologists. Consultant posts in certain specialties have traditionally been difficult to fill, most notably in areas such as radiology, paediatric intensive care and histopathology. There are also geographical locations to

which it is difficult to attract candidates. These are generally locations outside the major urban centres. Where necessary, locum arrangements are put in place to ensure service delivery.

Questions Nos. 585 to 587, inclusive, answered with Question No. 583.

Departmental Expenditure

588. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12460/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Minister for Health and the Ministers of State are all required to use their own cars and the salary costs for drivers and mileage expenses since March 2011 are broken down as follows:

Minister	Driver pay & Subsistence	Mileage & Other Costs
James Reilly, T.D.	€186,268	€27,861
Roisin Shorthall T.D.	Did not have driver	€8,149 (includes taxis)
Kathleen Lynch T.D.	€169,081	€28,977
Alex White T.D.	€27,321	€3,339
TOTAL	€382,670	€68,326

In addition a total sum of €6805 was paid in respect of tolls for all Ministers.

My Department was not responsible for paying the cost of Garda drivers and State Cars etc. under previous arrangements in place in 2010. However, on 25th April 2012 my colleague, Mr Noonan, T.D., Minister for Finance, in response to a Parliamentary Question, indicated that the average cost of transport for Ministers under that previous arrangement was €280,000 per annum per Minister. This appears to be significantly more expensive than current arrangements.

Departmental Expenditure

589. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12479/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): There are two corporate credit cards for official business purposes currently in use in my Department. A Bank of Ireland Visa credit card is issued to my Private Secretary and a second card is issued to a nominated officer in my Department's Finance Unit. This card is used to cover a range of costs such as publications, seminar and conference fees, annual membership fees, transport costs and software purchases where payment by credit card is required. The total amount of the transactions on each card since March 2011 are €16,321 and €13,054 respectively.

Public Sector Staff Data

590. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the measures he has taken to ad-

dress the deficit of 137 staff as identified in the current public health nursing services published by the Health Service Executive in May 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12487/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government has decided that the numbers employed across the public service must be reduced in order to meet its fiscal and budgetary targets. The health sector must make its contribution to that reduction. However, the HSE can make staff appointments once it remains within its overall employment ceiling and has the financial resources to do so. I have asked the Executive to reply directly to the deputy in relation to current Public Health Nursing staffing.

Public Sector Staff Training

591. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if training for DPHN will take place in 2013; the number of places that will be available; if he will he provide detail of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12488/13]

592. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason training numbers for DPHN were reduced from 120 to 40 places in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12489/13]

593. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the ratio of DPHN to population his Department recommends; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12490/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 591 to 593, inclusive, together.

The Public Health Nursing service within the HSE generally consists of a Director of Public Health Nursing, Assistant Directors of Public Health Nursing, Public Health Nurses and Registered General Nurses/Midwives. A small percentage of specialist posts are filled by Clinical Nurse Specialists and Advanced Nurse Practitioners. The Public Health Nurse is responsible for the delivery of the public health nursing service for specific geographic areas. The scope and range of public health nursing services are aligned to the health service demand that emerges from the population demographics and epidemiology. This demand varies depending on the complexity of health service requirements in geographic areas such as deprivation, cohort of frail older adults, extent of child health interventions, prevalence of chronic diseases etc. A specific ratio of PHNs per population has not been set nationally. I have asked the Health Service Executive to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to the specific questions about the number of training places in 2012 and 2013.

Animal Welfare Issues

594. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the number of times his Department authorised concussion and or percussive blow to the head as a permitted method of euthanasia for new-born puppies, kitten, fox cubs and or ferret kits, between 2002 and 1 January 2013; if it occurred without explicit authorisation, the number of young animals that were killed by this method. [12491/13]

595. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his position in relation to concussion and or percussive blow to the head as a humane method of killing new-born puppies, kitten, fox cubs and or ferret kits; his policy and or that of the Irish Medicines Board on the use of this kill-

ing method under SI 543 European Union (Protection of Animals used for Scinetific Purposes) Regulations 2012. [12492/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 594 and 595 together.

The Deputy's first question relates to the European Communities (Amendment of Cruelty to Animals Act 1876) Regulations 2002 which were revoked by the European Union (Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes) Regulations 2012. These revised Regulations, which transposed Directive 2010/63/EU on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes, came into operation on 1 January 2013 and considerably strengthened the protection of animals still needed for research and safety testing. They also play a significant role in terms of minimising the number of animals used and require that alternatives to animal testing be utilised whenever possible.

The 2002 Regulations transposed Directive 86/609/EEC into Irish law. Under these Regulations, it was a requirement that where an animal was killed, it was done by a humane method. In this context "humane method" is defined as "the killing of the animal with the minimum of physical and mental suffering, depending on the species". From 2007 onwards account was taken of Commission Recommendation (2007/526/EU) on guidelines for the accommodation and care of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes. This Recommendation set out requirements in relation to humane killing in respect of all species and, where appropriate, more specific requirements were outlined in relation to certain species.

Individual statistical information in relation to the specific humane methods of killing for individual projects was not a requirement under Directive 86/609/EEC and was not, therefore, included in the consequential transposing Regulations. My Department is not aware of any method of killing done as part of a scientific experiment which was conducted without explicit authorisation. If the Deputy is in possession of information that might indicate that this is the case, I would urge you to provide such information to the IMB, which is the Competent Authority in this area.

The new legislation, now in force, sets out a comprehensive range of measures that must be complied with in relation to methods of killing. It requires that where an animal (used or intended to be used in a procedure, or bred specifically so that their organs or tissues may be used for scientific purposes) is killed, the person responsible for the killing shall ensure that the method of killing with the minimum pain, suffering and distress is used, and the animal is killed by a competent person in the establishment of the breeder, supplier or user, as appropriate. Additionally it requires that in the case of the killing of an animal covered by Annex IV to the Directive, the breeder, supplier or user, or other person responsible, shall ensure that the appropriate method of killing as set out in that Annex is used.

The IMB believes that it would be unlikely that newborn puppies or kittens would have been euthanised by way of the methods outlined in the Deputy's question. Any such euthanasia would more likely have been carried out by injection of a lethal dose of barbiturate (i.e. anaesthetic overdose). The IMB policy in relation to the euthanasia of animals used for scientific purposes in establishments that have been authorised in accordance with EU Directive 2010/63/EU is that only those methods that are set out in the Directive should be used. In accordance with Regulation 8(1) of SI No 543 of 2012, which came into effect on 1 January 2013, the method for euthanasia of animals that is used shall be the method where the minimum pain, suffering and distress is experienced.

Motorised Transport Grant

596. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the processing of the motorised transport grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; in view of the fact that this application is currently under an appeal the impact the recent Government decision will have on the processing of this appeal. [12498/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The position regarding appeals processes for applications for Motorised Transport Grant which were underway prior to 26th February 2013, is that they will continue to be processed. If the appeal is upheld, payment will be made. I have referred the specific case mentioned by the Deputy to the Health Service Executive, for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Licensing

597. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Health if his Department will allow the drug sativex to be distributed to multiple sclerosis sufferers here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12499/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): My Department has been informed by the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) that it is in receipt of a market authorisation request from a manufacturer under the EU Mutual Recognition Procedure for a medicinal product containing Cannabis extract. This product is indicated for the relief of symptoms of spasticity for people with multiple sclerosis. Under the Misuse of Drugs Act, 1977, the manufacture, production, preparation, sale, supply, distribution and possession of cannabis or cannabis-based medicinal products are unlawful except for the purposes of research.

My Department is currently examining how authorised cannabis-based medicinal products for patients suffering from Multiple Sclerosis may be legally prescribed by medical practitioners and used by patients for the treatment of MS in Ireland. In that respect, Department officials have been engaging with experts to identify how best to legally describe authorised cannabis-based medicinal products while maintaining existing controls on cannabis and cannabis substances. While the legislative amendments required can be made by means of statutory instrument, the legal issues are complex. The matter is being progressed as quickly as possible in my Department and it is hoped to bring forward legislative proposals in mid-2013.

Hospital Services

598. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that any proposals for hospital groupings in the Midlands will not adversely impact services currently provided at Midlands Regional Hospitals including Mullingar and that patient care and provision of adequate services will not be compromised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12504/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In preparing the Report on the Establishment of Hospital Groups as a Transition to dependent Hospital Trusts, consideration was given to a wide breadth of international and national academic literature and reviews on relevant issues such as hospital reform, quality health care provision, financial management of health care, academic health linkages and organisational reform. As part of this work, cognisance was taken of the findings of the comparative review carried out by the Health Research Board (HRB) of

independent hospital trusts in a number of countries and the factors identified as contributing most to successful trusts. These considerations, and the comprehensive consultation process undertaken with stakeholders, have informed the development of recommendations on the formation of specific groups and arrangements for the management and governance of all groups. These recommendations have been considered and endorsed by a Strategic Board composed of representatives with national and international expertise in health service delivery, governance and linkages with academic institutions.

The formation of hospital groups is fundamentally an organisational change that of itself will not trigger immediate changes in service provision. It will provide a platform for much better strategically planned and more effective changes in service provision to ensure that patient care is improved and certainly not compromised or less adequate in relation to any area in the Country. Lessons learnt from other jurisdictions as well as the learning gained from the operation of the hospital groups will be taken on board in creating the legislative framework for hospital trusts here. The intention is, of course, that the trusts and the reformed health system within which hospital trusts will operate will be designed in a way that best suits Irish requirements and this will be done in a way that seeks to avoid difficulties encountered in other jurisdictions.

Water Fluoridation

599. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether there is a need to implement a fully independent toxicological and epidemiological study into the public health effects of adding fluoride to all public water schemes here in view of the mounting scientific evidence against the practice of water fluoridation (details supplied), and the increasing abandonment of the policy of public water fluoridation in most EU member states, as well as numerous cities in the United States; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12505/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Water fluoridation and the use of appropriate fluorides is a major plank of public health policy in Ireland in the prevention and management of tooth decay. In 2002 the Forum on Fluoridation, which was established to review this policy, concluded that the fluoridation of public piped water supplies should continue as a public health measure. The effects of fluoridation on health and related matters are kept under constant review. The Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health, established in 2004, monitors new and emerging issues on fluoride and its effects . It advises that the balance of scientific evidence worldwide confirms that water fluoridation, at the optimal level, does not cause any ill effects and is the safest and most cost effective method of protecting the oral health of the population. The opinion of the Expert Body is supported by the World Health Organisation; the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, the Public Health Service and the Surgeon General of the United States; the World Dental Federation; the International Association for Dental Research; the Royal College of Physicians of England and by major international scientifically validated reviews in many countries.

The Harvard study referred to by the Deputy was a review of studies mainly from China. These studies were assessed by the Expert Body in 2011 and were found to be of no relevance to Ireland given our regulated fluoridation levels. The view is that the overall design of the studies is poor and they do not provide evidence of any effect on children's IQ from either high or low fluoride levels. The EU Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER) in its 2011 Report shared this view of the studies. Some European countries choose salt fluoridation or milk fluoridation as an alternative to water fluoridation in their public health programmes while others use fluoride mouth-rinses and/or tooth-brushing or painting of teeth with fluorides.

Additionally, all European countries promote the widespread use of fluoride toothpastes. The USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Israel, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Argentina, Chile, and Columbia actively fluoridate water supplies. Fluoridation coverage in the USA has increased by around 24 million people between 2002 and 2012.

Medical Card Applications

600. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12523/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Legislative Programme

601. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Health when he expects the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012 to pass all stages; and when he expects the savings proposed in it to be passed on to the Exchequer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12532/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012, which is currently before the House, provides for the introduction of a system of generic substitution and reference pricing. e timeframe for the passage of the Bill is a matter for the Oireachtas.

Symphysiotomy Report

602. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a date for the publication of the Walsh report into the practice of symphysiotomy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12537/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy is aware, my Department has commissioned an independent research report in relation to the practice of symphysiotomy in Ireland. The Research included a consultation process involving patient groups, health professionals and in particular the women who have experienced symphysiotomy. 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.

My first priority is to ensure that the women who have had this procedure have their health needs comprehensively and professionally met. In this regard, the HSE provides a range of services to women who continue to suffer the effects of having had this procedure. These services include the provision of medical cards, the availability of independent clinical advice and the organisation of individual pathways of care and the arrangement of appropriate follow-up.

Prescription Charges

603. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a date for the

publication of the Walsh report into the practice of symphysiotomy; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I understand this question refers to prescription charges. 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.

Optical Services

604. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will introduce a scheme to improve eyecare for 12 to 16 years olds in view of the fact that at present there is no specific scheme for the majority of this age group and many of these children receive no eyecare at all; if he will take into consideration that approximately 10% of children up to the age of 12 years require glasses or contact lenses, while more than 20% do by the age of 16 years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12551/13]

608. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views on a submission (details supplied) regarding eye care facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12602/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 604 and 608 together.

All children of primary school age are provided with an optical screening service by the HSE. Any refractive errors are treated and spectacles or other appropriate care is provided where necessary. Children between 12 and 16 years, whose parents are in receipt of a medical card or Long Term Illness card, are eligible for HSE eye-care services when they are named on their parents' cards. Other children between 12 and 16 years are eligible to be seen by a HSE eye doctor when there is a medical reason for the eye condition, rather than a refractive error. Such patients may be referred for treatment after being examined by an optometrist.

National Newborn Screening Programme

605. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the 1.6 million newborn screening card blood samples; his views on whether the destruction of the blood sample bank may have negative implications for future preventative health research initiatives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12559/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In late 2009, the Data Protection Commissioner received a complaint from a member of the public regarding the retention of newborn screening cards. The basis of the complaint, which was upheld by the DPC was that newborn screening cards should not be retained indefinitely without consent as this breached the Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003. As the Commissioner said ..."it is important to make clear that the position that developed was unlawful and could not be allowed to continue".

Following meetings between the Deputy Data Protection Commissioner, officials from my Department, the HSE and the Children's University Hospital, Temple Street a number of changes to the National Newborn Screening Programme were agreed including obtaining written

consent from the mother to have her new born child screened, retention of the newborn screening card for ten years and the retention of information on those cards for twenty five years. It was also agreed to destroy existing cards that are older than ten years. It must be remembered that there is no written consent from parents for the retention or use of these newborn screening cards taken between 1984 and 2002 for research or other purposes.

Following representations from a number of people and organisations, who pointed out the potential value of the cards for research, I requested the HSE to conduct a review of the decision to destroy these cards. The review examined both the legal and ethical basis for retention of newborn screening cards including the potential use of the cards for research purposes. The Review Group supported the decision to destroy the cards and following careful consideration I accepted the Group's recommendation. I must emphasise that this decision was taken to ensure that the HSE and the Children's University Hospital meet their ethical and legal obligations under the Data Protection Acts. However, the Review Group also explored how the cards could be made available to the research community in a way which is compatible with legal and ethical obligations.

In line with its recommendations, the HSE has been running an information campaign offering people the opportunity to have their screening card returned to them, prior to any cards being destroyed. This campaign is due to end on 31 March 2013, after which any remaining unclaimed cards are scheduled to be destroyed. This will ensure that anyone who wishes to donate newborn screening cards for research will be afforded the opportunity to do so. I am seeking information from the HSE as to the effectiveness of their campaign to ensure people have been adequately informed about their rights.

Medical Card Applications

606. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12564/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mobility Allowance Eligibility

607. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a mobility scooter in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12592/13]

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.

Question No. 608 answered with Question No. 604.

Medical Card Applications

609. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry [12603/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

HSE Expenditure

610. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent by the Health Service Executive Dublin North East on hiring taxis for the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12618/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy.

General Practitioner Services

611. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health if he will increase the number of vehicles allocated to the D-Doc Service; the cost of repairs to the vehicles, fuel and so on for the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12619/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): 90% of the population have access to GP out-of-hours services in 14 centres nationally, in all HSE regions, in at least part of every county. Over 2,000 GPs provide services in the co-ops.

In relation to the specific issue raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on the issue.

Question No. 612 answered with Question No. 570.

Medical Card Applications

613. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health If he will expedite a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12638/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Misuse of Drugs

614. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Health the progress being made in drafting legislation that will enable the Garda to prosecute those found in the illegal possession of prescription drugs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12640/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The problem of the misuse of prescription drugs has been recognised at national, European and international levels. Through the framework of the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016, the Department of Health is working in collaboration with the relevant statutory agencies to monitor the availability of controlled drugs, including prescription medicines, through illicit channels.

The enforcement of the law relating to the sale of drugs, including prescription drugs, con-

tinues to be a priority in the Government's commitment to tackling the issue of drug misuse in this jurisdiction.

The supply of prescription medicines is controlled in a number of ways. Medicines which have a high potential to be misused are controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Acts. The Misuse of Drugs Acts and Regulations impose restrictions on the production, supply, importation and exportation of controlled drugs, such as morphine, methadone and amphetamines. A person who has in his possession a prescription medicine containing a controlled drug under the Misuse of Drugs legislation for the purpose of selling or supplying it, is guilty of an offence under that legislation.

Under the Medicinal Products (Prescription and Control of Supply) Regulations, it is prohibited for a person to supply a prescription medicine except in accordance with a prescription, and the supply must be made from a registered pharmacy by or under the personal supervision of a registered pharmacist. A person who contravenes these Regulations is guilty of an offence.

As a result of consultations with key stakeholders, draft Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Regulations are currently being prepared to introduce additional controls on certain prescription drugs being traded illicitly, including benzodiazepine medicines. These will be published on the Department's website shortly and comments will be invited to be made in the subsequent two-week period.

Following this, it will be necessary to seek Government approval to notify the proposed regulations to the EU Commission and other Member States under the Technical Standards Directives because of the implications of the proposed regulatory changes on trade in pharmaceutical products.

Subject to successful completion of the EU notification period, which may take up to 3 months, it is anticipated that the new regulations will be introduced in mid-2013.

Health Services Issues

615. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of current valid general practitioner visit cards and current valid medical cards today or latest available date and for preceding years of 2009, 2010, and 2011 for the Dublin Central area by DED, access to basic health care is a right and with the increase numbers of persons reported to be giving up health insurance the progress to date on plans for introduction of universal health insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12653/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medical Card Applications

616. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will issue an emergency discretionary medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12654/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Nursing Home Services

617. **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** asked the Minister for Health the proposals in place to deal with fire safety issues at a nursing home (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12656/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The registration of St. Anne's Nursing Home, Woodford, County Galway was cancelled by the Chief Inspector of Social Services on Friday, 10 February 2012 under section 51 of the Health Act, 2007, as amended. The then registered provider consented to this cancellation. The grounds for the cancellation related to the lack of fitness shown by the then registered provider in addressing significant fire safety concerns in the centre. The HSE took charge of the centre in accordance with section 64 of the Act and made alternative arrangements for the residents. The centre closed on 13 February 2012.

As the centre is now closed, it cannot operate again as a nursing home unless a new application for registration is made to the Chief Inspector. Should such an application be made, evidence of compliance with fire safety requirements would have to be submitted by any applicant. This is a requirement under the relevant Registration Regulations. To date, no application for a new registration of this centre has been received by the Authority.

Alcohol Pricing

618. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on proposals for minimum pricing of alcohol; if restrictions on advertising alcohol promotions will be put in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12657/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that real and tangible proposals are currently being finalised on foot of the recommendations in the National Substance Misuse Strategy report. These proposals cover all of the areas mentioned in the report, including legislation on minimum unit pricing and the advertising of alcohol. My Department is also working closely with the Department of Justice and Equality, which is responsible for section 16 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008; this, among other things, deals with the issue of alcohol promotions.

The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy has considered these proposals and I intend to bring forward specific proposals for consideration by Government as soon as possible. In the meantime, work on developing a framework for the necessary Department of Health legislation is continuing. For example, in conjunction with Northern Ireland, a health impact assessment is being commissioned as part of the process of developing a legislative basis for minimum unit pricing. (Scotland commissioned the same sort of assessment before it drafted its legislation on minimum unit pricing.) The health impact assessment will study the impact of different minimum prices on a range of areas such as health, crime and likely economic impact.

Hospital Staff Issues

619. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the number of consultant neurologists currently employed in the health service; the current out-patient waiting times in each case; the way in which this ratio of neurologists to population compares with European norms; and his plans, if any, to address the current long waiting times where over

5,000 people are waiting more than a year to see a neurologist. [12666/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Improving access to outpatient services is a key priority for the Government. Building on work already undertaken by the HSE, the National Treatment Purchase Fund has now taken over the reporting of outpatient waiting time data.

For the first time, clear and comprehensive data is available on www.ntpf.ie. The collation and analysis of outpatient waiting time data in a standardised format will reveal the distribution of long waiters across all hospitals. In the first instance, this will allow resources to be targeted towards those patients who are waiting longest and ensure that they are seen and assessed. For 2013, a maximum waiting time target has now been set of 12 months for a first time outpatient appointment.

In parallel with reducing the numbers of longest waiters, the SDU will also work with the HSE Clinical Programmes to reform the structure, organisation and delivery of outpatient services to ensure that the right patient is seen and assessed by the right health professional at the right time.

In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

620. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he will investigate the priority of works proposed for St. Patrick's Hospital, Carrick-on-Shannon, County Leitrim, in view of the fact that the hospital does not have a call bell system and under the current phased programme or works to the hospital it is scheduled for the fourth phase; if he will reconsider this schedule and ask that call bells be given a higher priority and brought up to an earlier phase of the programme as communication between the patients and staff is vital to the well-being of the patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12667/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the delivery of healthcare infrastructure is a service matter your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Departmental Expenditure

621. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the savings that will accrue to his Department, the Health Service Executive and any other organisation under his remit as a result of the recent public service agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12672/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am not in a position to provide the requested information as yet. However, the Deputy may wish to note that the Revised Estimates Volume for 2013, which will be published shortly by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, will set out the revised allocations for Votes arising from the proposals made by the LRC.

Services for People with Disabilities

622. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline the effects the public service recruitment plan is having on the provision of services (details supplied) in re-

spect of adult intellectual disability services; the likely impact this may have on school leavers transferring into adult services at the end of the school year in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12714/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): This Government currently provides funding of over €1.5 billion to the Disability Services Programme through the HSE's National Service Plan for 2013, and is committed to protecting frontline services for people with disabilities to the greatest possible extent. An additional €4 million demographic funding has been allocated to the HSE in 2013 to address the needs of young people with disabilities who are due to leave school this year.

In 2013 the HSE is seeking to maximise the provision of services within available resources and to maintaining a consistent level to that provided in 2012, by providing the following specialist disability services:

- residential services to over 9,000 people with a disability;

- day services to over 22,000 people with intellectual and physical disabilities;

- respite residential support for over 7,500 people with intellectual and physical disabilities;

- 1.68m hours of Personal Assistant / Home Support Hours.

In order to mitigate the impact on frontline services of the reduction in employment numbers which must be achieved this year, the priority is to reform how health services are delivered in order to ensure a more productive and cost effective health system. Therefore, the HSE is using the provisions of the Public Service Agreement to bring about greater flexibilities in work practices and rosters, redeployment and other changes to achieve more efficient delivery of services. Staff reductions will be pursued throughout 2013 through natural turnover (retirements and resignations) and such other targeted measures or initiatives as may be determined by Government in relation to the health sector or the wider public service.

In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service issues they have been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Medical Card Eligibility

623. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he wil provide clarification regarding the qualifying income limit for medical card applicants over the age of 70 (details supplied) in Dublin 13; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12727/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The new eligibility rules for medical cards for persons aged over 70 years,announced in the Budget 2013, will take effect following the enactment of primary legislation. The implementation date will be announced and publicised in advance by the Department and HSE.As is the current situation, the revised thresholds will apply to gross income. It is intended that:-

- persons aged 70 years and over, whose gross weekly income is not more than €600 (€31,200 per annum) in the case of single persons and €1,200 (€62,400 per annum) in the case of couples, will qualify for full eligibility (medical cards).

- persons aged 70 years and over, whose gross weekly income is more than €600 (€31,200 per annum) but less than €700 (€36,400 per annum) in the case of single persons and more than €1,200 (€62,400 per annum) but less than €1,400 (72,800 per annum) in the case of couples,

will qualify for GP Visit Cards.

People who lose the medical card will be entitled to make use of the Drugs Payment Scheme (DPS) which reimburses the cost of medication that exceeds a monthly threshold. There is provision for discretion by the HSE to grant a medical card in cases of "undue hardship" where income guidelines are exceeded and this provision will not be effected. In the case of all reviews and renewals of medical cards, the HSE offer assistances to individuals in assessing their situation underincome limit thresholds, as some may be unsure about their gross income or have concerns or difficulties in relation to self-assessment. This will continue to be case after the legislation is enacted and will be further bolstered by staff in local health offices who provide information, support and assistance to individuals in relation to their eligibility on an ongoing basis. They can also provide information on the current status of a review, being in a position to track the application on the centralised Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) office in Finglas.

The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this particular matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

624. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding cataract surgery in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12739/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The management of inpatient and daycase waiting lists for patients awaiting public health care is based on the principle that after urgent and cancer patients are treated, then clinically assessed routine patients should be seen in chronological order (i.e. longest waiter first).

Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and hospital involved.

In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

HSE Reports

625. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Health if his office has received a report (details supplied); if not when does he expect to receive same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12745/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I have not received the report referred to by the Deputy. The Health Service Executive's Investigation Team continues to work diligently to complete the report as soon as possible recognising the need to balance expedience with thoroughness.

Hospital Waiting Lists

626. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Health when a child (details supplied)

in County Galway may expect to be called for reimplantation surgery. [12746/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Immediately following his appointment, the Minister for Health established the Special Delivery Unit, as set out in the Programme for Government. The aim of the SDU is to unblock access to acute services by improving the flow of patients through the system. A target was set for 2012 that no child should be waiting longer than 20 weeks for an elective procedure (either inpatient or daycase) and by the end of December 2012 the number of children waiting longer than 20 weeks had fallen to just 89 compared with 1.759 children waiting longer than 20 weeks in December 2011. The target remains in place for 2013, as set out in the HSE's National Service Plan.

In regard to the particular query raised by the Deputy, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him on this matter.

HSE Properties

627. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health the reason a former Health Service Executive facility (details supplied) in Dublin 15 is being sold; if consideration will be given to the building being retained for community use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12751/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Management of healthcare property is a service matter. Therefore your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

628. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if the Health Service Executive has indemnified suppliers of replacement hips, namely DePuy Ltd. or Johnson and Johnson Ltd.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12753/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): HSE Procurement is responsible for the strategic sourcing, purchasing, storage and distribution of HSE goods and services. As this matter is a service issue your question has been referred to the Executive for direct reply.

Water Fluoridation

629. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the current policy of fluoridating our water supply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12754/13]

653. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to concerns regrading the presence of fluoride in water; his plans to remove fluoride from the water supply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13015/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 629 and 653 together.

Water fluoridation and the use of appropriate fluorides is a major plank of public health policy in Ireland in the prevention and management of tooth decay. In 2002 the Forum on Fluo-

ridation, which was established to review this policy, concluded that the fluoridation of public piped water supplies should continue as a public health measure. The effects of fluoridation on health and related matters are kept under constant review. The Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health, established in 2004, monitors new and emerging issues on fluoride and its effects. It advises that the balance of scientific evidence worldwide confirms that water fluoridation, at the optimal level, does not cause any ill effects and is the safest and most cost effective method of protecting the oral health of the population. The opinion of the Expert Body is supported by the World Health Organisation; the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, the Public Health Service and the Surgeon General of the United States; the World Dental Federation; the International Association for Dental Research; the Royal College of Physicians of England and by major international scientifically validated reviews in many countries.

Health Services Provision

630. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the Health Service Executive to expedite a decision on an application for occupational therapy assessment in respect of a child (details supplied) in Dublin 11, particularly in view of the fact that the closing date for applying for support hours at second level is imminent and without the required assessment it will be very difficult for the secondary school to make an application for support hours. [12760/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Help Service Eligibility

631. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if home help hours will be continued in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [12772/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Drugs Payment Scheme Administration

632. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if the cost of medication will be refunded to a person (details supplied) in County Carlow. [12773/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Ambulance Service Provision

633. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when the successful bidder for ambulance training (details supplied) will commence its contract with the Health Service Executive; the reason for the delay in proceeding with this new contract which was due to commence on the 31 of December 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12793/13]

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.

Respite Care Services

634. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health the funding sources available to a charity hoping to build a respite centre for sick children and their families; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12799/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I understand the Deputy is referring to respite services for children with life-limiting conditions. My Department administers a National Lottery Discretionary Fund from which small once-off grants are paid to community and voluntary organisations, providing a range of health related services. If an organisation wishes to make an application for National Lottery Funding they should send in a formal application. Detailed procedures, along with the application form are set out on the Department's website, *www.doh.ie*. The HSE receives an annual capital allocation for the building, equipping and furnishing of health facilities. There are always more construction projects than can be funded from the Exchequer's capital health care allocation. The HSE is required to prioritise infrastructure projects within its overall capital envelope taking into account the existing capital commitments and costs of completion over the period. The method and timescale for the delivery of health care infrastructure is dependent on a number of factors; it is a dynamic process constantly evolving to take account of changing circumstances, including the feasibility of implementation.

The Deputy may wish to note that in 2010 the Department of Health published Palliative Care for Children with Life-limiting Conditions in Ireland – a National Policy (DoH 2010) which provides the foundation and sets out clear direction for the development of an integrated palliative care service for children and their families, across all care settings. Following on from the publication of the policy, the National Development Committee for Children's Palliative Care (NDC) was established by the HSE. The NDC is co-chaired by the HSE and the Irish Hospice Foundation. It includes a representative from my Department. The Committee has overall responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the national policy recommendations. The committee's emphasis on partnership is reflected in its membership comprising statutory, voluntary, professional, and parent involvement.

On 4 March 2013, the Irish Hospice Foundation and LauraLynn, Ireland's Children's Hospice, in partnership with the HSE published a report titled "Respite Services for Children with Life-limiting Conditions and their Families in Ireland – A Needs Assessment". The report provides a national overview of service provision and future respite requirements as part of a palliative care service for children in Ireland. The report identifies some of the challenges involved in planning for respite care such as difficulties with definitions and terminology; determining the numbers of children who require respite care and the numbers currently availing of services; the extent and location of current service provision; the perhaps at times unnecessary distinction between disability services and palliative care. The report provides an indication of what is currently available and what is required at a national level to provide for the respite needs of children and families. The report acknowledges that a significant level of respite support is already being provided but access is inconsistent around the country and can be dependent on diagnosis and/or geographic location. The report will assist the Department of Health and the National Development Committee for Children's Palliative Care in planning for the respite needs of children with life-limiting conditions, and is a useful contribution to filling in the gaps

in the understanding and knowledge of the way respite services for children are organised. A number of the recommendations in the report are already under consideration by the National Development Committee and the Committee has undertaken to examine all of the recommendations through its on-going programme of work.

Autism Awareness Month

635. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he has considered the proposal to mark 2 April 2013, the start of autism awareness month, by lighting landmark buildings in blue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12845/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Last year my Department made efforts to mark Autism Awareness 2012 by lighting up Hawkins House in blue. Due to the old lighting system in operation in Hawkins House this proved to be ineffective. My Department had an electrician recently install a test lamp on the roof of the building to see if it were possible to improve the lighting. Unfortunately the cost of carrying out this project effectively is prohibitive.

Animal Experimentation

636. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the mechanisms and procedures his Department and or the IMB have in place to ensure enforcement of Regulation 9 of SI. No. 870 of 2004 (European Communities (Cosmetic Products) Regulations 2004) which prohibits the sale of all animal-tested cosmetics here and the rest of the EU from 11 March 2013. [12847/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Regulation 9 of S.I. No. 870 of 2004 which prohibits the marketing of cosmetic products and ingredients that have been tested in animals has been in force for four years, since 11 March 2009, except for a derogation relating to three toxicity checks. On 11 March 2013, this derogation ends, and no further testing on animals of cosmetics or ingredients can take place. It has been the policy of the Department of Health not to licence the use of live animals for testing of cosmetics in Ireland and this is confirmed by the statistical information provided by the Department to the European Commission under Article 13 of Directive 86/609/EEC, as amended. Furthermore, there have been no incidences of breaches of this ban detected in ongoing European cosmetic surveillance programmes brought to the attention of the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) or my Department to date. The relevant Regulations require the manufacturer of the product, the manufacturer's agent, the person to whose order the cosmetic product is manufactured for, or the person who first supplies the cosmetic product in the European Union, to ensure that cosmetics imported, distributed or retailed in Ireland or the EU comply with the legislation. Enforcement of the legislation is provided for in Regulation 12 of S.I. No. 870 of 2004 and the IMB is the Competent Authority responsible for ensuring that the legislation is complied with. On 11 March 2013 the EU Commission published a Communication on the animal testing ban. This Communication concluded that the marketing ban should enter into force, be coherently implemented throughout the EU and that the research and development of alternative testing methods for toxicity of cosmetics should be prioritised as part of the EU's trade and international cooperation agenda.

Departmental Bodies Board Remuneration

637. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the board fees and or remunera-

tion, broken down by chairman and individual board member, that were paid to directors of the Health Service Executive and Irish Blood Transfusion Service in 2012 and until 28 February 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12848/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As all members of the Board of the Health Service Executive are public servants, they are precluded from claiming fees under the "one person one salary" principle. This precludes public servants acting as chairpersons or directors of State-sponsored bodies from receiving additional remuneration for undertaking such duties. In relation to the Irish Blood Transfusion Service Board, the following table shows the fees paid.

Board Member	Year ended 31st December 2012	2 Months to 28th February 2013
	€	€
Ms Katherine Bulbulia (Chairperson)	8,603	*N/A
Ms Ann Horan	5,018	*N/A
Mr David Keenan	5,018	*N/A
Ms Jane O'Brien	11,970	1,842
Mr Sean Wyse	5,018	*N/A
Mr David Lowe	5,018	*N/A
Ms Sinead Ni Mhaille	5,018	*N/A
Dr Paolo Rebulla	11,970	1,995
Dr Conor McGrane	6,491	1,842
Total	64,124	5,679

*No longer member of IBTS Board.

Hospital Waiting Lists

638. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a hospital appointment in respect of a person (detail supplied). [12853/13]

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, I have asked the Health Service Executive to investigate the situation and respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Hospital Internships

639. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 221 of 13 February 2013, on medical intern places, the plans there are to accommodate non-EU students attending Irish medical schools in medical intern positions here; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there will be a shortage of about 30 places; the responsibility the Health Service Executive has to resolve same; the action being taken; if his

further attention has been drawn to the fact that it is too late for non-EU students to apply for intern places in other jurisdictions and that many non-EU students were not clearly informed that they will not be able to obtain an intern position here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12858/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Under the provisions of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 it is a matter for the HSE to assess, on an annual basis, the number of intern training posts required by the health service. My Department is in regular contact with the HSE in relation to the issue of intern places with the aim, in so far as is possible, of providing a sufficient number of intern places for Irish/EU graduates from Irish medical schools. The recruitment process for interns is a national process governed by the Health Service Executive, National Recruitment Service. All medical students from the six medical schools in Ireland are entitled to apply for an intern post. In managing the recruitment process the HSE is bound by European Community Preference rules whereby preference must be given to EU nationals over non-EU nationals. It should also be noted that under EU law intern posts must be open to graduates from other EU countries and the HSE has no control over the numbers applying. The medical schools make it clear in their enrolment documentation for non-EU medical students that there is no guarantee of an intern post in Ireland upon completion of the basic medical degree. The priority of the HSE and my Department is to ensure that, at a minimum, all EU graduates from Irish schools have the ability to undertake an internship once they meet the qualifications for same. This is with a view to securing the State's investment in their medical education and to enable them achieve the status of a fully registered medical practitioner. To date there have been sufficient posts for all EU graduates from Irish medical schools and a number of available posts for some non-EU applicants. The HSE remain confident that all EU graduates from the six medical schools in Ireland who have applied for an intern post and who meet the eligibility and qualifications for same will be allocated a post within the public health service as of July 2013.

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications

640. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will be provided with a hearing aid as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12879/13]

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.

Medical Card Applications

641. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12894/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Question No. 642 answered with Question No. 573.

Tax Code

643. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will have the Department of Finance amend Section 469 (1)(f) of the Taxes Consolidation Act (1997) to delete the words, "or similar treatment prescribed by a practitioner", and to leave the word, "physiotherapy", to ensure that extra costs are not imposed on physiotherapy patients who have not been referred by their general practitioner, hospital accident and emergency or medical consultant and to ensure that the Government's commitment to the provision of health care in the primary care setting is protected and to ensure that it meets its goal of meeting 90% of health care needs through the primary care setting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12903/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Tax policy is a matter for the Department of Finance and, therefore, the Department of Health has no role in making such determinations. However, the Department has already been in contact with the Department of Finance about this issue. The Department outlined to the Department of Finance the important role that physiotherapists play in primary healthcare and indicated support of measures which would encourage patients to avail of early intervention services, such as physiotherapy in a primary care setting.

HSE Expenditure

644. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the management consultants currently employed by the Health Service Executive; and the fees paid to each [12907/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy's query relates to an operational issue, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Speech and Language Therapy

645. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine the immediate need for speech therapy in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12916/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Questions Nos. 646 and 647 answered with Question No. 573.

Parking Provision

648. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the amount in revenue his Department received from the nationwide controlled parking systems parking fees on the hospital grounds of the Mater Hospital, Beaumont Hospital, James Connolly Memorial Hospital and St. James's Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12934/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department does not receive any revenue from the controlled parking system parking fees on the hospital grounds of the Mater Hospital, Beaumont Hospital, James Connolly Hospital and St. James's Hospital.

As this is a service matter pertaining to the Health Service Executive, I have asked them to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Blind Welfare Allowance

649. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an application for blind welfare allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick. [12938/13]

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.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

650. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the reasons that mental health issues are not considered as a long-term illness for persons over 16 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12955/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Regulations were made in 1971, 1973 and 1975 specifying the conditions covered by the Long Term Illness Scheme. The Health Services (Amendment) gulations, 1971 (S.I. No. 277/1971) specified that Mental Illness in a person under 16 should be covered under the scheme.

Question No. 651 answered with Question No. 573.

Home Help Service Provision

652. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if a small amount of home help will be granted to a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13009/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Question No.653 answered with Question No. 629.

Health Insurance Prices

654. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if there are any regulations in place regarding the pricing of private health insurance (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13016/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The main legislative provisions for the regulation of the Irish private health insurance market are included in the Health Insurance Acts 1994 to 2012 and Regulations made under those Acts. The aim of this legislation is to ensure that the market is regulated appropriately.

The regulatory system is based on the key principles of community rating, open enrolment, lifetime cover and minimum benefit and aims to ensure that private health insurance does not cost more for those who need it most. Under community rating, everybody is charged the same premium for a particular health insurance plan, irrespective of age, gender and the current or

likely future state of their health.

As Minister, I have no legal power to intervene in relation to health insurance prices set by the health insurance providers. The insurance companies, operating as commercial providers with a view towards profit generation, make commercial decisions about their prices. I am not aware of any product which has increased in net premium terms by the magnitude referred to by the Deputy, but it is clear that any significant price increases will make it more difficult for customers to renew their policies. I have consistently raised the issue of costs with health insurers and am determined to address costs in the sector in the interests of consumers. I will continue to focus strongly on this issue, as part of measures to ensure the sustainability of the private health insurance market in the transition to a Universal Health Insurance system.

In the meantime, many consumers can make large savings on their health insurance premiums by shopping around for the health insurance plan that best suits their needs. For those who have been insured on the same plan for a number of years, it is important to review the level of cover to ensure that their needs are being met, without being over-insured. Consumers have a legal right to switch between or within insurers to get better value and to reduce their premium costs. The Health Insurance Authority (HIA) provides information to consumers regarding their rights and also on health insurance plans and benefits. The HIA's website www.hia.ie has a useful plan comparison tool which assists in finding suitable and competitive health insurance plans.

Health Services Provision

655. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of an occupational therapist in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13022/13]

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 Facilities

656. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health the annual cost of an ICU high dependency bed in the neurosurgical centre, Beaumont Hospital, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13039/13]

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 Insurance Cover

657. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health his views on the MRI scanning system that is in place at Letterkenny General Hospital, County Donegal, for which Voluntary Health Insurance does not have a reimbursement scheme, whereas there is a reimbursement scheme for a similar service at Sligo Hospital; if he will ask the VHI to explain the reason the scheme is in place in one hospital but not in the other hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13062/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I do not have a role in the day to day operations of any private health insurance company. The inclusion of MRfacilities in the VHI's Directory of Hospitals (and Treatment Centres) is a matter for the VHI. If a VHI customer requires an MRI scan during the course of a medically necessary stay in a participating hospital listed in the VHI's Directory of Hospitals (and Treatment Centres), and for which hospital benefit is payable, VHI will provide such benefit for eligible MRI scans, in accordance with the customer's terms of contract for their policy. MRI scans must be carried out in an Approved MRI Centre which is covered by the person's plan.

Maternity Services

658. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health if he will implement without delay the provision of an anomaly scan at 20 weeks' duration of pregnancy for all pregnant women as part of the routine ante-natal screening process in accordance with best international practice; if he will make this provision available in public maternity hospitals throughout the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13063/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE's National Clinical Care Programmes provide a national, strategic and co-ordinated approach to a wide range of clinical services. They include the Clinical Care Programme in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, the overall aim of which is to improve choices in women's healthcare. The key objectives of the programme, as with all the HSE's National Clinical Care Programmes, are based on the key metrics of quality, financial value, access and compliance. They include the development and implementation of national clinical guidelines, with the aim of ensuring consistency in clinical practice nationally. To date the Programme has published 20 guidelines, four are in process and a further 20 have been commissioned including clinical guidelines on ultrasound. These guidelines, when developed, will address the way in which such services should be provided.

Hospital Facilities

659. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the proposal to provide a medical assessment unit at Monaghan General Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13110/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I requested the Regional Director of Operations, Dublin North East, to establish a Group to undertake an independent assessment to establish if a Medical Assessment Unit (MAU) would be required and viable in Monaghan Hospital. The Group, which included two members of the public (Service User Panel Representatives) was established and independently chaired by a Specialist in Public Health Medicine and work commenced in October, 2011. The Group also included a Consultant General Physician in Medicine and a Monaghan General Practitioner. The Group committed to establish if there was a clinical need for a Medical Assessment Unit in Monaghan Hospital as well as to establish the projected cost of running this Unit. The Report was submitted to the Minister and was referred to the Acute Medicine Programme for review. The report concluded that there was no clinical need for a medical assessment unit in Monaghan Hospital and that patient safety must remain our priority at all times when deciding where services are provided. The extension of current non-urgent medical assessment services at Monaghan General Hospital has been considered, but the additional resourcing required is not feasible within the current budgetary allocation.

Question No. 660 answered with Question No. 573.

Road Signage

661. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will clarify the position regarding the signage along the N59; if he will explain the necessity to have large signs at the junction of all minor roads between Ballisodare and Dromad; the cost of the new signage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12743/13]

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.

Irish Coast Guard Issues

662. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address the staffing issues at Valentia Coast Guard station, County Kerry, and ensure that the best possible service is available to all concerned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12823/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Value for Money reviews into the Coast Guard and Marine Surveying functions of my Department identified a number of issues which need to be addressed in Ireland's maritime transport safety and marine emergency response regimes. One of the consultants' recommendations was that the option of a 2 centre model for rescue coordination centres should be pursued. After careful consideration of the various options available, their practicality and cost, it was concluded that the three centres should remain but that changes to the operation arrangements within and between the centres would be necessarily required. Therefore it was decided that through the utilisation of the most modern communications and IT infrastructure across a single national Coast Guard network, the 3 centres will be more closely aligned and integrated. My Department is currently finalising an action plan to address the deficiencies in the maritime safety and emergency response services identified in the Value for Money reviews. Increased efficiencies in the operation, watch arrangements and management of the Centres will be a significant part the proposed changes

Vehicle Emissions

663. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to test Dublin Bus vehicle emissions at the same level as other commercial vehicles; the existing tests Dublin Bus are subject to in relation to emissions testing, environmental testing and public safety; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13121/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The subject matter of this question is the responsibility of the Road Safety Authority and I have referred the question to them for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my Office if a reply has not been received within ten days.

Departmental Expenditure

664. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the costs of providing hardware and software to his home and the home of Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12375/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): No hardware or software has been provided to my home or the homes of the Ministers of State at my Department. We do have use of mobile equipment such as a laptop.

Departmental Expenditure

665. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the costs of providing telephones in the homes of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12393/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The costs incurred to date by my Department for the provision of telephone service in the home of Minister Varadkar amount to just over €700. This is for the provision of a secure ISDN line. The Department does not pay for the Minister's home line or broadband. No costs have been incurred in the case of Minister of State Kelly and Minister of State Ring.

Departmental Expenditure

666. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost of telephones and ICT provided to the constituency offices, including monthly telephone bills of Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department, since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12412/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The costs incurred to date, by my Department, for the provision of landline telephone services in the constituency offices of Minister Varadkar, Minister of State Alan Kelly and Minister of State Michael Ring can be found in the table. The Houses of the Oireachtas provide a managed ICT service (including DSL broadband) for Ministers' constituency offices, which my Department has availed of. The charges for this service can also be found in the table below. Figures are rounded to the nearest 100.

-	Minister Varadkar	Minister of State Kelly	Minister of State Ring
Telephone Costs	€ 2,200	€ 4,300	€ 2,900
Cost of ICT service provided by Oireachtas			
2011	€ 4,400	€ 4,400	€ 4,400
2012	€ 4,300	€ 4,300	€ 4,300

Departmental Expenditure

667. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if any additional costs other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills are being paid to constituency

office by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12430/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): No additional costs (other than telephones, ICT and monthly phone bills) are being paid in respect of consitutency offices by my Department.

Departmental Expenditure

668. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of mobile telephones in use by him, Ministers of State and politically appointed staff; the total costs of the mobile telephones since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12448/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The approximate mobile phone costs for me, the Ministers of State in my Department and our politically appointed staff from March 2011 to end January 2013 are outlined in the table.

Office	Number of phones currently in use	Cost since March 2011
Minister Leo Varadkar	7	€10500
Minister Alan Kelly	6	€4200
Minister Michael Ring	3	€2800

Mobile phones are critical to facilitate all office holders in conducting business, regardless of location.

Departmental Expenditure

669. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost of drivers of each vehicle assigned to him and Ministers of State in his Department since March 2011; the mileage and other costs claimed in respect of each since March 2011; the overall yearly costs of ministerial cars in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12466/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The information requested by the Deputy is being compiled and will be forwarded as soon as possible.

As the Deputy will be aware, prior to the current Government, Cabinet Ministers were provided with a Ministerial car and a Garda driver, the cost and provision of which was not the responsibility of the Department of Transport. For the Deputy's information I am advised that the average cost of the provision of a State Car and Garda drivers during the last government was around €280,000 per annum.

Departmental Expenditure

670. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of credit cards issued to staff and Ministers in his Department and the total costs of each card since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12485/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department

has issued 80 Low Value Purchase Credit Cards in total which includes 70 to the Irish Coast Guard and 10 to to other Departmental staff since March 2011. The total expenditure incurred using the cards from March 2011 to February 2013 was €196,689.

Low Value Purchase Credit Cards have not been issued to me, the Ministers of State in my Department, or to any politically appointed staff.

Driving Licence Issues

671. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there is to be a role for scanned photographs within the SAFE process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12526/13]

685. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will ensure that scanned photographs will be allowed as an option in the provision of new driving licences in order to protect jobs in the photo ID professional industry and avoid a monopoly situation in capturing images. [12910/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 671 and 685 together.

The Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE) was designed by the Departments of Finance and Social Protection in order to provide a system of standards and guarantees for identification of persons. The Deputy may wish to ask my colleagues the Ministers for Finance and Social Protection if he wishes to have further information on the details of SAFE.

I take it that the reference here is to the fact that SAFE standards are incorporated in the new National Driver Licensing Service under the Road Safety Authority (RSA). The RSA ran a tender competition for front office services for the new system. While I had no role in this process, I understand from the RSA that it was open to tenderers to propose how best to capture images in conformity with SAFE requirements, and that all tenderers proposed digital capture. The contract as awarded therefore includes this element, and any departure from it would mean having to compensate the winning tenderer for changing the process, as well as running a less than optimal process for the duration of the contract. In the case of photo capture for driver licensing, therefore, the question of leeway within the SAFE structure is academic.

Taxi Regulations

672. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will support a matter (details supplied) regarding the Taxi Regulation Bill [12530/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): Section 13 of the Taxi Regulation Bill provides for a prohibition on the transfer of an Small Public Service Vehicle (SPSV) licence.

I am cognisant of the fact that in the event of the death of an SPSV licence holder this prohibition could have an undue negative impact on the continuity of an SPSV business operated as a family concern. On review of this matter therefore I have introduced a new section to the Bill dealing with the death of a licence holder. The amendment introducing this new section was passed by the Seanad last week. Under the new Section 14 of the Bill a licence applicant or holder will be able to nominate their representative to the National Transport Authority. In the event of the death of the licence holder the nominated representative can within 3 months apply

to continue to operate the licence until expiry and to apply for the licence renewal thereafter.

Road Safety Statistics

673. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the increase in road deaths in the first quarter of 2013 to 37 in comparison to the 23 persons who lost their lives in the same period of 2012 and in view of the comments by the Road Safety Authority in relation to the increase in road fatalities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12558/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): While the first quarter of the year has yet to draw to a close, it is still too early to draw any firm conclusions from the collisions that have occurred to date. There are forensic examinations yet to be completed by the Gardaí and it is difficult to say that road deaths are on an upward trend based on such a short period of time. It is important to understand that we have had similar bad periods on our roads, as recently as last year in fact, but the toll for the year as a whole continued the downward trend.

The most important approach to be taken at this time is to take heed of these recent collisions and remind road users to take greater care.

Driving Licence Issues

674. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the effect of the new credit card style of driving licence on photo ID professionals; if he will put in place a system whereby those applying for a licence can obtain a scanned photo from photo ID professionals for use on their licence; the steps being taken to preserve jobs in this industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12561/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Government decided in 2011 to centralise driver licence provision, following an examination of the options for driver licensing which found that a centralised system would offer enhanced security and consistency, and be more efficient and cost-effective. The Road Safety Authority (Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness) Act 2012 provides for the RSA to become the central driver licensing authority in Ireland. This came into effect on 12 January 2013.

The new system involves three outsourced elements, a card production facility, a front office for engaging with the customer, and a back office to process applications. All three are overseen by a 'centre of excellence' based in the RSA itself. The card licence is standardised across the European Union and therefore there must be consistency in the quality and standard of information used. The photograph will be digital and will not be stuck on to the card in the way it was on the old paper licence. The capture of the photograph is included in the fee for the licence. As the system develops, the SAFE2 ID standard will be implemented, at which point the only option will be the digital photo taken at the Front Office Network.

The operation of the tender processes for the outsourced elements was a matter for the RSA, I had no power to intervene in it, and the contractors have already been procured.

Dublin Bus Services

675. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will contact the CEO of Dublin Bus requesting that additional buses be laid on at the conclusion of major sporting or concert venues (details supplied) in order to deal with the crowds leaving the events; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12621/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The provision of services is an operational matter for Dublin Bus, in conjunction with the National Transport Authority (NTA), 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.

Bus Éireann Services

676. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether the number of licences issued by the NTA for tourist day tours from Dublin to the West is excessive, in view of complaints by local businesses in the West that such trips do not result in a financial benefit to the local economy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12647/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The licensing of bus services is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Taxi Regulations

677. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will investigate alternative options to the implementation of six monthly licence renewals for limousines which are more than ten years old, which might help the limousine sector to survive in an increasingly challenging environment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12665/13]

681. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will investigate alternative options to the implementation of six monthly licence renewals for wedding limousines which are more than ten years old. which might help the limousine sector to survive in an increasingly challenging environment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12807/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 677 and 681 together.

The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including vehicle standards, is a matter for the National Transport Authority under the Public Transport Regulation Act, 2009.

In accordance with Action 10 of the Taxi Regulation Review Report 2011, the vehicle age limit at licence issue or licence renewal for taxi, wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys will be nine years for all new vehicles entering the fleet and for vehicles that have entered the fleet since 1st January 2009. For existing vehicles in the fleet prior to 1st January 2009, those vehicles will be allowed to operate up to 14 years of age, subject to passing a roadworthiness (NCT) test and an NTA Licence Renewal Assessment at six monthly intervals where the vehicle is nine years old and above. Over a period of time, vehicles over nine years will gradually transition

out of the fleet.

While limousines are exempt from the age limits they are subject to the 6-monthly testing and renewal assessment requirements if the vehicle is older than 10 years. The 6-month licence issued upon passing the tests is at half the cost of a one year licence.

This regulatory measure is intended to promote vehicle standards that improve passenger and road safety.

Rail Services

678. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will give an update on freight movement here; if there has been an increase in freight movements by rail since 2008; if he envisages increases in the coming years; if he will engage with the Northern Ireland Executive on developing common policies in this respect; if he will give details of his most recent engagements with Iarnród Éireann on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12715/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): While various factors led to a reduction in rail freight in Ireland in the decade up to 2008, volumes grew by 9% between 2009 and 2010 and by 13% in 2011. A further boost to the recovering freight business was received when an extension of the spur to Dublin Port was opened in July 2011.

There is clearly an important role for rail freight within the national freight movement context. However, it must also be acknowledged that even a substantial increase in rail based freight movements to and from the ports will still result in the vast majority of freight movements being carried by road.

I would point out that an all-island rail freight group with a wide range of participants from the public and private sector is in operation under the auspices of the Irish Exporters Association. This was one of the initiatives of the All Island Freight Forum, sponsored by my Department and the Department for Regional Development (Northern Ireland) and the group continues to meet regularly.

I am aware that the Department for Regional Development has also recently issued a consultation paper on Future Railway Investment, which indicates that no freight has been carried on the Northern Ireland rail network since 2003. It also states there has been little interest demonstrated by investors in the development of new or improved domestic or international rail freight services into or out of Northern Ireland.

I have regular engagements with the Board and senior management of Iarnród Éireann on a variety of issues but have not had discussions on this issue. I have referred the Deputy's question to Iarnród Éireann also in order to provide any further update on rail freight movements and plans for the future. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Roads Maintenance

679. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the situation in the town of Glenties, County Donegal, where in September 2010 during the annual fair, a member of An Garda Síochána diverted a lorry loaded with stone along a county road by-pass of the town which resulted in the collapse of the Mulan-

tiboyle bridge, with this being the only route to by-pass the town, his views on whether at present the town is in a very vulnerable position with regard to any accidents or emergencies which may occur in the town as there is currently no route to divert traffic; if he will agree to prioritise funding in 2014 to ensure that this bridge is reinstated as a matter of safety and security for the town on Glenties. [12802/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is a statutory function of each road authority in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. The carrying out of works on these roads is a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants. The selection and prioritisation of road works is also a matter for the local authority.

I announced the 2013 regional and local road grant allocations on 25th January this year. Over €349 million is being provided to local authorities for these grants in 2013. From this allocation Donegal County Council has been allocated over €18 million which includes an allocation of €100,000 towards Mulantiboyle Bridge under the Specific Improvement Grants Scheme.

I will announce the 2014 allocations early next year.

Road Improvement Schemes

680. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that funding allocated to the main street of Ardara Town, County Donegal, was not spent in this area; if he will agree to prioritise this town which is on the N56, national secondary route, to ensure that the obvious safety measures in the town can be resolved and ensure that this heritage town which attracts a large number of tourists each year can continue to progress on the already extremely progressive works being undertaken by the local community.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12803/13]

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.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Question No. 681 answered with Question No. 677.

Taxi Regulations

682. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of SPSV licence holders here; and the number of these licences currently active and held by drivers working in the taxi industry. [12849/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan

Kelly): I am informed by the National Transport Authority (NTA) that as of the end of February this year, the total number of active SPSV vehicle licences is 22,810 and the total number of active SPSV driver licences is 33,717.

I understand that a reliable count of inactive licences is not available, as this figure would change nearly every day due to the late renewal of some licences.

Taxi Regulations

683. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason for the new clocking in system that obtains for taxi drivers; the reason for a uniform national system; if he acknowledges the potential benefits of a system that would acknowledge regional differences within the industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12889/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): The view of the Taxi Regulation Review Group, giving rise to Action 40 of the Review Report, is that it is necessary to have a system that links SPSV licenced drivers to specific small public service vehicles (SPSVs) so that the identification of the authorised driver of an SPSV is available in real time. This is in the general interest of consumers who use taxis and for enforcement officers regulating the taxi industry.

From the end of January 2013 it became a requirement that all SPSV operators notify the National Transport Authority (NTA) about the vehicles they are operating at any time. This is a once-off notification in the case of SPSV drivers who own their own vehicle. Any changes such as with respect to rental agreements or change of vehicle will also need to be notified.

I understand that the NTA has made available free IT tools to facilitate the notification process - the "Taxi Industry Portal" smartphone application can be downloaded onto both Apple and Android smartphones. In addition, SPSV operators can use any PC or laptop to access the Taxi Portal over the Internet. A call centre also operates all-day every-day to take notifications by telephone.

Given the rationale underpinning this system it is not clear to me that there is any case for a different approach on a regional basis.

Taxi Regulations

684. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will make any allowance for persons who hold an SPSV licence who recently replaced their vehicle but are now found to be in contravention of new regulation such as those on tinted windows and are unable to pay to replace these windows at this moment in time (details supplied). [12897/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including vehicle standards, is a matter for the NTA under the Public Transport Regulation Act, 2009.

I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Question No. 685 answered with Question No. 671.

Jobs Initiative

686. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding available under the jobs initiative programme in 2013; the closing dates for receipt of applications; when decisions regarding approval of funding will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12926/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): It is unclear the funding to which the Deputy is referring. For his information, there is no additional funding being provided to my Department outside of the normal budgetary and estimates process.

Road Safety Issues

687. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is concerned at incidents involving the collision of vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians with Luas trams, in particular in Dublin city centre; if he has been briefed by Veolia on this matter; his views on whether stricter penalties may be necessary for careless behaviour while driving, cycling or walking in view of the serious negative impact such collisions may have on commuter safety and significant interruptions to Luas services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13026/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Road Traffic Acts and the regulations made under those Acts, provide for various prohibitions and restrictions in respect of the use of our roads, including those shared road spaces such as the LUAS tramways. Where a driver, cyclist or pedestrian commits an offence under the Acts or regulations, there are a number of sanctions available to the Courts to deal with such offences. Careless driving, for example, carries 5 penalty points on conviction or at the discretion of the Judge, a consequential disqualification may be applied instead. Various fines and terms of imprisonment may also apply. Enforcement of the legislation is a matter for the Garda Síochána. I do not have any plans to amend the legislation at this time and believe that the matter raised by the Deputy is best dealt with through increased road safety awareness and education rather than providing for more stringent penalties.

Public Transport Provision

688. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated level of non-payment of fares on public transport services including DART, Luas, Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann; if he will estimate the financial loss to the public transport companies of the non-payment of fares; the measures being considered to address this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13027/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is an operational matter for the companies concerned and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the companies for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive replies within ten working days.