

## Written Answers.

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

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 9, inclusive, answered orally.*

### Sports Capital Programme Expenditure

10. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has completed a review of the sports capital programme 2012; the changes that he will bring into any future capital programme; when he expects to bring forward the next call for funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15223/13]

25. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has completed a review of the sports capital programme 2012; the changes that he will bring into any future capital programme; when he expects to bring forward the next call for funding; if he will indicate the timeframe in place for the draw down of grants; and his plans if money awarded is not used. [15212/13]

72. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has completed a review of the sports capital programme 2012; the changes that he will bring into any future capital programme; when he expects to bring forward the next call for funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15200/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 10, 25 and 72 together.

The most recent round of the Sports Capital Programme was launched last March. This was the first round of the Programme since 2008. The deadline for applications was the 11th May 2012 for paper based hard copy applications and 1st June for applications made online.

The Department received 2,170 applications for funding under the 2012 Sports Capital Programme, the highest number of applications ever received. The allocations were announced last December. There were 648 allocations totalling €31m.

All successful applicants have received a letter of provisional allocation which states *inter alia* that grantees must complete a substantial amount of progress on their projects before 31 January 2015, otherwise the Department will withdraw the grant offer after that date.

An internal review of the 2012 round of the Sports Capital Programme is currently under-way. This review will examine all aspects of the operation of the 2012 round. The outcome of the review will obviously be taken into account in the design and operation of the next round of the Programme.

No decision has been taken on the timing of the next round. Any such decision will of course have to be taken in the context of the likely capital provision for the subhead in future years.

### **Tourism Promotion**

11. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way he proposes to enhance our competitiveness to British holidaymakers and leisure travellers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15249/13]

13. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way he will use the tourism marketing fund to support international marketing and advertising programmes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15259/13]

22. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the continued relative decline in overseas visitors from Britain in comparison to other locations; if there is need for a reconsideration of the overseas marketing activities of our tourism agencies to focus to a greater extent on those markets where there has been considerable growth in the past number of years instead of Britain; if he supports the development of a cross-border lighthouse tourism trail in this respect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15035/13]

45. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way he intends to respond to the official data which indicates that overseas visitors to the Republic of Ireland were flat for 2012 when compared with 2011; his plans to ensure growth as opposed to a flattening out or deterioration in the number of overseas visitors for 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15309/13]

49. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the continued relative decline in overseas visitors from Britain in comparison to other locations; if there is need for a reconsideration of the overseas marketing activities of our tourism agencies to focus to a greater extent on those markets where there has been considerable growth in the past number of years instead of Britain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15033/13]

61. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in view of the fact that Germany is the third largest source of overseas visitors to Ireland, his plans to develop this lucrative market; if he will inform Dáil Éireann of the lessons that have been learned from this success which could potentially be applied to other European markets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15315/13]

82. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way he proposes to make it easier for visitors to travel between Britain and Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15269/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 11, 13, 22, 45, 49, 61 and 82 together.

These Questions are about tourism promotion.

According to CSO figures, there were just over 6.5 million overseas visits to Ireland last year, up slightly on 2011, while spending by overseas visitors was up 4.5% to nearly €3.7 billion. Visits from the higher spending Mainland Europe, North America and long haul markets all registered growth, while visits from Britain were down 3.6%. However, our next most important European market, Germany, produced over 448,000 visits, an increase of 6% on 2011,

while North America, our second most important market overall, grew 3% to over a million visits while spend grew 9% to €742 million.

Tourism Ireland's Business Plan for 2013 targets a further 5.2% growth in visits, from all of our significant markets including Great Britain and Germany, and highlights the potential impact of the Gathering Ireland 2013. It is important to focus on markets with best prospects for growth but it is necessary to balance this and not ignore opportunities in other markets, particularly one as significant as Britain. To help achieve the targets, I have allocated over €37 million this year for overseas tourism marketing which allows Tourism Ireland to implement its Plan, as well as funding Fáilte Ireland's enterprise supports and product development. These actions, along with continued implementation of other measures such as the lower VAT rate for tourism services, provide a platform on which the tourism industry, in partnership with the agencies, can deliver growth.

With regard to Britain, I welcomed the report of the Tourism Recovery Taskforce, entitled "GB Path to Growth", and its recommendations for restoring growth from Britain which are reflected in the 2013 plans of the tourism agencies. For example, Tourism Ireland is refining its approach to targeting potential visitors receptive to the experiences that Ireland can offer, and is conducting an extensive promotional programme this year in Britain.

More generally, the balance of marketing spend across markets is an operational matter for Tourism Ireland, acting in accordance with Business Plans and Corporate Plans approved by the North/South Ministerial Council. However, the opportunities presented by the different markets, I believe, need to be factored into not only their plans but the plans of tourism enterprises and Fáilte Ireland and I believe it is a matter that should be considered in the course of the tourism policy review which my Department is to commence this year.

### **Tourism Industry Issues**

12. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether accurate data are essential to the planning and growth of the tourism industry on the island of Ireland, and that while hotels on the island experienced significant growth in room occupancy for 2012, it is still not possible to break out overseas bookings from domestic business; his plans to engage with his counterpart in Northern Ireland to address this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15303/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** This Question relates to tourism statistics.

Reliable tourism statistics are essential for measuring performance and informing both agency operations and overarching Government policies and actions.

Clearly, however, neither I nor Fáilte Ireland nor any other agency of this State has direct responsibility for the overall development of the tourism industry for the island of Ireland as a whole. Northern Ireland remains another jurisdiction. Although there is cross-border cooperation on tourism within the framework of the North/South Ministerial Council, this focuses primarily on the role of Tourism Ireland as a North/South body marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a tourism destination, with other matters being discussed where appropriate and agreed. Where appropriate and beneficial to both jurisdictions, matters relating to tourism statistics are discussed and cooperation takes place in the framework of the North/South Ministerial Council - and indeed through other arrangements under the aegis of the statutory statistics agencies of both jurisdictions.

The collection of statistics for this State, including tourism statistics, is primarily a matter for the Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ireland's independent national statistical agency. In addition to the official CSO statistics, the tourism agencies also conduct their own analyses of tourism performance and further research to provide supplementary insights.

With specific regard to statistics on hotels, the Deputy appears to be misinformed. It is possible to distinguish domestic from overseas business in data published by both the CSO and Fáilte Ireland. The CSO provides information on the type of accommodation (including hotels) used by travellers - publishing overseas data in its *Tourism and Travel* release and domestic data in the *Household Travel Survey*. Fáilte Ireland publishes data on hotel guest nights broken down by market area – both domestic and overseas – in its annual Hotel Survey publication.

My officials and I have regular and constructive engagement with the CSO and with the tourism agencies regarding data on tourism performance relating to this State.

*Question No. 13 answered with Question No. 11.*

### **Air Services Provision**

14. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will publish the consultation paper on the proposed aviation policy; if he will outline the main themes that this policy will cover; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15202/13]

16. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will bring forward a new aviation strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15244/13]

71. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will publish the consultation paper on the proposed aviation policy; the main themes that this policy will cover; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15273/13]

74. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will publish the consultation paper on the proposed aviation policy; the main themes that this policy will cover; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15216/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 14, 16, 71 and 74 together.

These questions relate to the development of a new aviation policy.

The aviation industry is a key enabler of economic growth so it is important that there is a clear policy framework in place to facilitate its continued development and to optimise the contribution that this important sector can make to the Irish economy.

To this end, I have launched a process of engagement on the development of a new national aviation policy. As a first step, my Department and the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) hosted a conference on 3 December 2012 in the Convention Centre Dublin to hear from an array of stakeholders on how we might set about developing a new national policy and to start the debate on what that policy should contain.

Taking account of the issues that were raised at the conference, along with topics raised with myself and my Department, I published an Issues paper for consultation on my Department's website on 1 March 2013. The Issues paper covers eight broad areas: Airports, Air Services, Regulation and Governance, Aircraft Leasing and Finance, Aerospace, Education and Training, General Aviation and Sustainability. The closing date for receipt of submission is 30 June 2013.

Following receipt of submissions, a draft National Aviation Policy Statement will be issued in the second half of 2013. That will provide further opportunity for stakeholder input before the adoption of the policy in early 2014.

### **Bus Éireann Services**

15. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will confirm that last summer the National Transport Authority carried out a public consultation and that, during the autumn, it submitted its report to him; the recommendations of same; if he has decided to follow through on any of these recommendations; if he will give an indication as to what is likely to happen with public service obligation routes in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15029/13]

313. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will confirm that last summer the National Transport Authority carried out a public consultation and that during the autumn they submitted their report to him; the recommendations of same; if he has decided to follow through on any of these recommendations; if he will give an indication as to what is likely to happen with Public Service Obligation routes in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15777/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to answer Question Nos. 15 and 313 together.

These questions relate to the structure of the public service obligation (PSO) bus market.

I refer the Deputy to my reply to Priority Question No. 4 which I answered earlier. I am aware that the Competition Authority made a submission to the NTA's public consultation process. This report clearly highlighted that the international experience of tendering for PSO type services has been favourable. Furthermore, the report indicated that tendering for PSO services showed benefits accruing to the State and to the commuting public in terms of (i) improved service quality, (ii) a more integrated transport system and (iii) greater value for taxpayer's money.

*Question No. 16 answered with Question No. 14.*

### **Marine Accidents**

17. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the Marine Casualty Investigation Board will take up an invitation to attend an inquest in Northern Ireland into the drownings of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15046/13]

23. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the policy of the Marine Casualty Investigation Board regarding requests for attendance at inquests in Northern Ireland to discuss findings from MCIB reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15047/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 17 and 23 together.

These Questions relate to the Marine Casualty Investigation Board.

Under Section 8 of the Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act 2000,

the Marine Casualty Investigation Board is established as being independent of the Minister in the performance of its functions and, in general, is independent of any other person or body whose interests could conflict with the functions of the Board.

Consequently, the issue raised by the Deputies regarding the Board attending an inquest in relation to a casualty investigation is a matter for the Board itself and it would be wholly inappropriate for me to comment on the matter.

### **Road Maintenance**

18. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures he is taking to ensure that funds for regional and local roads are targeted at essential work to the greatest extent possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15224/13]

30. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on the recent allocation of funding for repair works on local and regional roads; his views on whether a particular percentage of funding should be ring-fenced by each local authority for annual road maintenance and upkeep in view of the state of many roads; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15041/13]

53. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he has received communications from the various local authorities throughout the country with reference to the ongoing need to meet road repair requirements following the winter weather damage to main and county road networks; if he is satisfied regarding the adequacy of the funding provisions to date to meet such requirements; the extent to which allocations made by his Department to date are in line with requirements; the extent to which specific improvement works including the elimination of potholes has so far taken place in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15198/13]

57. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way he will help to provide assistance for emergency road repairs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15268/13]

66. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he will take to aid local authorities to tackle serious road maintenance issues and to penalise and hold to account local authorities which do not work adequately to address these problems. [15057/13]

315. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures he is taking to ensure that funds for regional and local roads are being targeted at essential maintenance work to the greatest extent possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15399/13]

328. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he has received communication from the various local authorities in respect of road improvement requirements; if he has been able to respond positively to such requests; the extent of the response; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15554/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 18, 30, 53, 57, 66, 315 and 328 together.

These Questions relate to roads maintenance.

Firstly, under section 13 of the Roads Act 1993, statutory responsibility for the improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads rests very clearly with local authorities. It is also the case that any works on these roads are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources with supplementary funding provided through State road grants.

As the House will be aware, the amount of these State grants has been reducing in recent years. This reduction reflects the general cutbacks in other areas of economic activity where State funding is provided. This is a harsh economic reality. Conscious of this, my Department and the NRA, who administer the dispersal of funds on my behalf, have made every effort to ensure that grant aid is spent in a cost-effective and efficient way. This is being done in order to mitigate the effects of these reductions insofar as is possible.

Indeed in 2013, conscious of the effect the reductions were having on individual local authorities, I am allowing greater flexibility between grant headings to facilitate local authorities to address the more critical road repairs aggravated by severe weather over the last few years. I have made the point in this House that the emphasis should be to focus the available funding, be it local authority or State grants, on the upkeep and repair of the existing road network.

In determining the annual non-national road grant allocations, the overall objective is to resource each local authority in as fair and equitable a manner as is possible within the resources available and using the established methodology which is applied to all local authority areas.

I recently announced additional funding of €2.7 million under a road maintenance initiative for road drainage schemes. These additional grants, over and above the amounts announced by me in January last, were provided to assist local authorities with preventative drainage work. My decision to provide this exceptional assistance recognises the engineering imperative of good drainage to lessen the impact both of flooding and standing water on our road network. The launch of a pilot Community Involvement Scheme is another initiative designed to assist local authorities to get the best value from their grants, whilst allowing my Department to ensure value-for-money.

To assist Deputies I have placed the annual allocations for the past number of years for each local authority in the Dáil Library. These booklets break down the allocation of funds from my Department's Exchequer allocation for roads grants to individual authorities and projects within each local authority's administrative areas. I trust Deputies will consult these booklets, and see for themselves, the funding levels that are available to local authorities.

### **Harbour Authorities Appointments**

19. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the person who appointed the acting chairperson of Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company; if it is possible to take up the issues of remuneration to the CEO with this acting chairperson in the absence of the new chairperson being appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15302/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I am in the process of appointing a new Chairperson to the Board of Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company. Before the appointment is made, the Chairperson designate will be required to appear before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications. In the interim, the Board has chosen one of its Directors to act as Chairperson.

As the Deputy will be aware, I have previously given an undertaking that I would ask the new Chairperson to review the relevant issues once appointed.

## **Driving Licence Issues**

20. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is satisfied with the proposed process of obtaining photographic ID for the new credit card sized driving licences; the reason a paper photograph is sufficient for a renewal but not for an original; the reason Garda approved and certified photographs are not sufficient proof of ID; the reason professional photographers have not been afforded an opportunity to provide the photographs to a specified criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15237/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** EU Directive 2006/126EC requires the introduction by Member States of a plastic card driver licence with effect from 19th January 2013. For this country, this involved a change of the procedures and practices associated with the old paper style licences. With the introduction of the new style licence, the Government decided to centralise the driver licence service under the Road Safety Authority (RSA). On 12th January this year, the RSA became the driver licensing authority for the country and decided to operate the service mainly through three outsourced contracts related to licence production, back-office processing and front-office customer interface.

The RSA had full responsibility for all aspects of the conditions of these contracts and for the tendering and procurement processes leading to their award.

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 is digital and is not 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.

I understand that the procurement process for each of the contracts has now been completed. The issue of photo ID associated with driver licence applications is included in the front-office customer interface contract that, I understand, has been awarded to SGS. Specific queries related to the operation of this contract should be directed to the RSA.

## **Road Network**

21. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is satisfied that the planned N25 New Ross bypass represents value for money; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15271/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** This question relates to the proposed N25 New Ross Bypass project which is included in the Government's Financial Stimulus package. I understand that the cost benefit analysis to date on this scheme indicates a minimum benefit exceed costs by a ratio of over 3 to 1. This scheme will provide significant economic benefits in terms of journey time savings, emissions savings and road safety improvements. The Deputy will be aware that that there are significant delays to traffic crossing the River Barrow at New Ross on a daily basis and in alleviating this bottleneck the project will support industrial and commercial development in the Southeast region - an area that has been badly hit by unemployment.

*Question No. 22 answered with Question No. 11.*

*Question No. 23 answered with Question No. 17.*

## Driving Licence Issues

24. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has met with representatives of the photo ID industry to address their concerns over a threat to their livelihood by changes to the driver licence format; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15049/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** EU Directive 2006/126EC requires the introduction by Member States of a plastic card driver licence with effect from 19th January 2013. For this country, this involved a change of the procedures and practices associated with the old paper style licences. With the introduction of the new style licence, the Government decided to centralise the driver licence service under the Road Safety Authority (RSA). On 12th January this year, the RSA became the driver licensing authority for the country and decided to operate the service mainly through three outsourced contracts related to licence production, back-office processing and front-office customer interface.

The RSA had full responsibility for all aspects of the conditions of these contracts and for the tendering and procurement processes leading to their award.

I understand that the procurement process for each of the contracts has now been completed. The issue of photo ID associated with driver licence applications is included in the front-office customer interface contract that, I understand, has been awarded to SGS. Queries related to the operation of this contract should be directed to the RSA.

*Question No. 25 answered with Question No. 10.*

## Sporting Events

26. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on a potential bid for the rugby world cup by the Irish Rugby Football Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15026/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I am fully supportive of the bid to host the Rugby World Cup in Ireland. It is a matter for the IRFU to prepare and submit a bid. A feasibility study commissioned by the IRFU on the potential for hosting the tournament is being finalised and will be presented to me by the IRFU shortly. I looked forward to receiving it and considering the findings. The support of other sporting organisations would be an important element in the bid process and I am pleased to note that delegates at last weekend's GAA Congress approved a motion which would allow the inclusion of Croke Park and other GAA grounds in the list of venues that would be used for matches if Ireland was selected as the host country for the tournament.

The Programme for Government includes a commitment that event tourism will be prioritised in order to continue to bring major events to Ireland. As well as bringing spectators to our shores, the hosting of sports events can provide a great showcase for Ireland. Fáilte Ireland continues to support the holding of sports and other events that can boost tourism and, where appropriate, will provide advice and assistance to the sporting body which is seeking to secure an international event. I understand that Fáilte Ireland has engaged with the IRFU in this regard. The bid has also been discussed with the Northern Ireland Minister for Tourism, Arlene Foster MLA, and Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, and they have met with the IRFU and have also indicated their support for a bid.

## **Sports Capital Programme Expenditure**

27. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the capital investment in public tourism product and infrastructure he is targeting under the capital budget of €19 million available to Fáilte Ireland in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15263/13]

33. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the new tourism products/activities he proposes to develop in order that Ireland can gain comparative advantage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15257/13]

59. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a breakdown of the way the €19 million available to Fáilte Ireland in funds for 2013 will be spent on the public tourism product and infrastructure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15308/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 27, 33 and 59 together.

My Department's role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national policy. It is not involved in the administration of tourism-related funding programmes or in support to specific tourism sectors, which are the responsibility of Fáilte Ireland. Fáilte Ireland administer the Tourism Capital Investment Programme, which provides support for investment in certain categories of visitor attraction, visitor activities and tourism infrastructure. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputies' questions to Fáilte Ireland for further information and direct reply.

## **Public Transport Provision**

28. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for reviewing public transport regulation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15252/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Public Transport Regulation Act 2009 establishes the National Transport Authority (NTA), incorporating responsibility for transport investment and service delivery in the greater Dublin area, formerly under the remit of the Dublin Transport Authority, with additional nation-wide responsibilities for certain transport services. Specifically the NTA has national responsibility in the areas of passenger bus route licensing, bus and rail services provided under public service contract and the regulation of taxi services. In November, 2010 the NTA published guidelines for the licensing of public bus services which set out the basis for a reformed licensing system for commercial bus passenger services in the State. I also refer the Deputy to my reply to a priority question answered earlier. This sets out the position in relation to the Public Service Contracts awarded by the NTA for the provision of bus services.

The regulation of rail services is predominantly based on legislation of the European Union. In January this year, the European Commission adopted a further set of proposals for reform of rail regulation - the "Fourth Rail Package"- which envisages, among other things, the liberalisation of domestic rail passenger services and mandatory tendering for public service contracts for rail passenger services from 2019. These proposals are being considered by my Department. Finally, with regard to small public service vehicle services, the regulatory framework was reviewed by the Taxi Regulation Review Group, the report of which was published in January last year. The recommendations are being followed up, partly through initiatives being

taken by the NTA within the existing legislative framework and through the proposed reform of that framework as provided for in the Taxi Regulation Bill 2012 which is before the Seanad.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

29. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the work he has done with Dublin Bus to help tackle anti-social behaviour on or around bus services. [15048/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** This is an operational matter for Dublin Bus 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.

*Question No. 30 answered with Question No. 18.*

### **Ports Development**

31. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he expects to complete the review of ports policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15262/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I launched the new National Ports Policy yesterday and a copy of the document is now available on my Department's website. The policy was approved by the Government recently. I am confident that this new policy establishes a policy framework which will allow all our ports, large and small, to develop in a sustainable manner which will facilitate imports and exports, employment and tourism. It also provides for the restructuring of the ports sector to suit the varying circumstances of our ports. I look forward to working with all stakeholders in implementing the policy.

### **Public Transport Subsidies**

32. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the Luas cross-city project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15030/13]

64. **Deputy Eamonn Maloney** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the link up between the red and green lines of the Luas tram system will happen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15239/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 32 and 64 together.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including the proposed Luas Cross City Line.

Luas Cross City Line has been prioritised in the Government's 5-year capital plan - *Infrastructure & Capital Investment Programme 2012-2016 - Medium Term Exchequer Framework* and following consideration by Government of the project's updated business plan last November, I asked the NTA and the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) to proceed with the

procurement and contractual arrangements so that the enabling works for the project would commence mid - 2013 at the latest.

I understand that work has already commenced on building condition surveys which will establish a baseline record of the condition of properties along the Luas Cross City Line. The procurement process for the advance works i.e. Heritage Works, Cellar Investigation and Utility Diversions is also well advanced. The first of these contracts - the Heritage Works contract - will be awarded very shortly.

The main construction works for the project are expected to commence in 2015. Construction is expected to take 4 years and the overall programme for the project envisages the commencement of operational services on the line in 2017.

*Question No. 33 answered with Question No. 27.*

### **Transport Strategy**

34. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way he proposes to develop a land transport, road and rail, strategic investment framework to facilitate easy access to markets and the mobility of the workforce; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15253/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Whilst current funding constraints clearly limit the potential for significant capital investment in transport, it is essential that we remain conscious that the efficient movement of people and goods is central to the functioning of our economy. A transport system that supports and enhances both domestic and export driven growth will be vital in supporting our agenda of renewed and sustainable economic growth. With this in mind my Department have commenced work on a Strategic Framework for Investment in Land Transport.

This work is aimed at supporting medium term considerations by Government around the appropriate levels of public expenditure on land transport, and priorities for future investment. This will serve to inform the preparation of the Government's Capital programme for 2017-2021 as well as longer term priorities for land transport in Ireland.

The issues that need to be addressed in such a framework are extremely complex, for example, the difficulty of projecting the scale of future transport demand, the importance of land use and planning policy for transport, the specific importance of freight and commercial movements to our economy, and the need to embed environmental sustainability in any such plan.

The work will comprise four broad work areas (i) analysing the evidence base for economic and socio-economic impacts of transport investment (ii) considering the scale of necessary future investment in transport (iii) considering delivery models and (iv) identifying strategic priorities. A steering group has been put in place to guide this work. It is likely the framework will take at least 18 months to complete. A public consultation will take place when sufficient progress is made to ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are fully taken into account.

### **Harbour Authorities Expenditure**

35. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 110 of 19 February 2013, if the legal proceedings referred to have been completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15297/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** They relate to a payment to a former board member of Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company.

As I stated previously on 19 February, the payment of expenses to directors is a matter for the Company in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance for State Bodies.

I am advised that the legal proceedings referred to are ongoing. As the Deputy will appreciate, I am not in a position to comment any further.

*Question No. 36 answered with Question No. 9.*

### **The Gathering Initiatives**

37. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the progress that has been made on The Gathering; the numbers of events by county that are due to take place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15043/13]

62. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update in the progress of The Gathering 2013; the early indicators of its success at reaching out to the worldwide Irish diaspora; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15045/13]

68. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on The Gathering; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15220/13]

80. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update in The Gathering 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15040/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 37, 62, 68 and 80 together.

I am pleased that the positive start to The Gathering Ireland 2013 has continued and I am confident that the momentum will be maintained as we approach the peak tourism season. The overall target is to attract at least 325,000 extra overseas visits in 2013 which would generate some €170 million in revenue, based on historic spending patterns. The 2013 Estimates allocations to Failte Ireland include a special provision of €7 million, specifically provided to fund the promotion, development and legacy of the Gathering.

As of the end of last week, there were 3,300 individual Gatherings confirmed on the Gathering website. These include clan gatherings, festivals, special sporting events and concerts taking place all across the country throughout the year. A county breakdown can be viewed on this website. Along with well-established events and festivals, we are also supporting a specially targeted set of events for the Gathering, such as the very successful New Year's Eve Event in Dublin. The People's Parade was the Gathering element of the recent St. Patrick's Festival and was a great success with almost 6,000 overseas visitors joining the parade.

The ambitious targets for overseas visits and associated revenue can only be achieved if people in our main source tourism markets are aware of the initiative. Tourism Ireland continues to mount a major consumer campaign to promote The Gathering to people across the world linked by family, friends or otherwise with Ireland. The agency is undertaking coopera-

tive activity with major airlines and ferry operators to highlight the value fares on offer. Print, online and TV advertising is being used to promote the initiative while the recent programme of overseas Ministerial visits during the St. Patrick's Day period highlighted this special year for Irish tourism. I understand that the feedback from the diaspora in the markets has been extremely positive. Tourism Ireland has announced 2013 as Ireland's Family History Year and are encouraging people throughout the world to research their family history and connections with Ireland.

While progress to date has been encouraging, I have previously stated that all tourism stakeholders must continue to work hard to ensure that our targets are achieved. If we do so, I have no doubt that the benefits of participation in the event will have longer term positive consequences in terms of additional annual events as well as the strengthened connections being established as a result of the initiative.

### **Tourism Promotion**

38. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he acknowledges the unique and rich history of Cobh, County Cork and the town's potential to become one of the main tourist destinations outside of Dublin; the reason thus far no plans have been put in place by his Department to develop it as an significant tourist destination; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15313/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if a reply is not received within ten working days.

### **Proposed Legislation**

39. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he has taken to ensure that all legislation produced by his Department is in line with the spirit of international agreements signed up to by this State including the Good Friday Agreement. [15051/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Legislation is developed in accordance with set procedures which take account of all legal and constitutional issues that may arise. Issues contained in international agreements where relevant are considered as part of this process.

The procedures for the development and enactment of legislation provide the opportunity for both Senators and Deputies in the Houses of the Oireachtas to raise any issues in relation to the draft legislation, including issues in relation to international agreements such as the Good Friday Agreement, for consideration and agreement by both Houses.

### **Taxi Regulations**

40. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way taxi drivers who own perfectly safe and roadworthy vehicles designed to accommodate wheelchairs, are to be compensated; the way those who have lost the mobility allowance are going to travel with less wheelchair accessible taxis on the road, following the decision that such vehicles have

to be taken off the road when they are 15 years old. [15038/13]

47. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will reverse the decision requiring taxi drivers to take wheelchair taxis off the road once they are 15 years old. [15037/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 40 and 47 together.

The regulation of the taxi industry, including issues pertaining to vehicle age limit, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the Public Transport Regulation Act, 2009. The NTA is the lead agency with responsibility for implementation of the recommendations of the Taxi Regulation Review Report 2011.

The NTA carried out a consultation on vehicle standards as part of the Taxi Regulation Review which gave rise to recommendations for strengthening vehicle standards. Action 10 of the Review Report recommends retention of the 9 year vehicle age limit that applies at licence issue or renewal for all new vehicles entering the fleet. For existing vehicles in the fleet licensed prior to 1 January 2009, these can operate up to the 15th anniversary of each vehicle's first registration subject to 6-monthly NCT testing and NTA licence renewal assessment. It is envisaged therefore that, over time, all vehicles older than nine years will gradually transition from the taxi and hackney fleet.

A number of other recommendations of the Taxi Review aim to address the transport requirements in SPSVs for people with disability and reduced mobility. In particular, Action 20 of the Taxi Regulation Review Report recommended the review of existing specifications for WAVs with view to assisting in the increase in availability of accessible SPSVs. Action 18 proposes a single contact centre for ordering wheelchair accessible taxi services, which is to be introduced on a pilot basis. These actions are being developed by the NTA with a view to implementation later this year.

### **Rural Transport Services Provision**

41. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will confirm that some services provided by Louth Linx who are funded by his Department under the National Development Plan 2007 - 2013 are to be suspended, specifically the Carlingford to Dundalk bus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15240/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** Since 1st April 2012 responsibility for managing the Rural Transport Programme has been assigned to the National Transport Authority (NTA) as part of new arrangements for integrated local and rural transport approved by Government in January 2012. Currently, the Programme is administered by Pobal in conjunction with the NTA as part of the Programme transition. Thirty-five groups covering thirty-six geographical areas nationwide are currently being funded under the Programme. Louth Linx (Louth Leader) is one of these groups.

An overall budget of €9.133 million has been allocated by the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport to the Programme for 2013. This represents a small decrease on the 2012 allocation of €9.77 million, at a very difficult time financially. €78,670.50 of the 2013 RTP budget has been allocated to Louth Linx from January to June 2013, with a further proposed allocation of €78,670.00 from July to December. Additionally, €16,213.00 of Free Travel Pass (FTP) funding has been allocated to Louth Linx from January to June, 2013, with a further proposed allocation of €16,213.00 from July to December. This represents a total 2013 allocation

of combined RTP and FTP funding of €189,766.50, for the provision of the RTP service across County Louth. This funding allocation covers the planned 2013 RTP service level, which anticipates over 26,000 passenger trips, or 1,185 service trips, by means of two daily services, 18 weekly services and one fortnightly and monthly service.

I have been advised that Louth Linx RTP bus services 502 and 701, Carlingford to Dundalk and Dundalk to Omeath respectively, are currently operational and it is planned that they will remain in operation during 2013. The temporary suspension of the 701 Sunday service to the Cooley peninsula was lifted on the 3rd of March, with the exception of St Patrick's weekend due to road closures.

### **State Airports**

42. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on meetings he has held with interest groups relating to Knock Airport and its future and any commitments made to secure its continued operation. [15055/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** While I have not had meetings with interest groups regarding Ireland West - Knock Airport, since coming to office, senior officials of my Department and I have had meetings and engagements with Knock Airport itself on a number of occasions. Most recently, I met the Board of the Airport, along with the Taoiseach in Mayo on 28 January 2013. At that meeting, it was agreed that a Study Group would be established, with participation at a senior level from my Department, focussed on securing the future of the airport. The intention was that the Group, to be chaired by Deputy John O'Mahony, would report in a short time frame and following the Group's report, the Government would engage further with the Airport on how best to progress matters.

Since then, the Board of Knock Airport and my officials have been putting arrangements in place for the Study Group, including nominations and the terms of reference for the Group to enable the Study Group's work to commence in the coming weeks.

The Taoiseach and I have made it clear that the Government is keen to work with Knock Airport to secure its future but that such co-operation would have to be on a realistic basis within State aid rules and recognising exchequer constraints and the need to treat other regional airports similarly.

I am hopeful that the outcome of the Study Group's work, which is taking place in parallel with the development of a future Aviation Policy for Ireland launched by me last December at a major Aviation Conference in Dublin, can form a useful input into that Policy and assist in identifying the future role of the airport along with other regional airports in Ireland. The Government believe that the airport should continue to perform the important role of providing air connectivity to its hinterland in the years to come.

### **Ports Development**

43. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in view of the fact that Bantry Bay Harbour, County Cork, is the only regional harbour operating under the Harbours Act 1946 and that the intention is to merge the harbour with the Port of Cork Company, his plans to promote and develop Bantry Bay Harbour with the aim of maximising Bantry's potential as a tourist hub for west Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15304/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As the Deputy points out, Bantry Harbour is the last remaining harbour operating under the Harbours Act, 1946. The core business of Bantry Bay harbour is the oil storage and transshipment terminal on Whiddy Island. Provision was included in the Harbours (Amendment) Act, 2009 to allow the transfer of Bantry Harbour to the Port of Cork to take place. The Act provides that a public consultation must be completed before any transfer takes place and it outlines how that consultation should take place.

I launched a public consultation on 7th March in relation to a proposal to transfer Bantry harbour to the Port of Cork. The deadline for receipt of submissions is Friday 5th April 2013. A decision on the proposed transfer will be made when all the submissions duly made under that process have been considered. In terms of the promotion and development of Bantry Bay Harbour and maximising Bantry's potential as a tourist hub for west Cork, Fáilte Ireland have responsibility for regional tourism development. I have referred the question of the development of the region to them for further information and direct reply.

### Road Network

44. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has, based on the expectations, taken into account the reasoned opinion of the Advocate General, of a negative decision from the European Court of Justice of the European Union in the case concerning the Galway city outer bypass, commenced preparation on a new IROPI or imperative reasons for overriding public interest application to progress the bypass. [15217/13]

**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.

Once the outcome of the legal proceedings, including the Supreme Court's decision on the judicial review, is known I would expect that all the stakeholders involved will review how to move forward with this project. The Government is committed to overcoming any legal and planning difficulties so that this important project can commence.

*Question No. 45 answered with Question No. 11.*

### Harbour Authorities Appointments

46. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 115 of 19 February 2013, if he has appointed a new chairperson to the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company, Dublin; if this vacancy has been filled; if he has taken up the outstanding issues of remuneration to the CEO with the new chairperson; if the position has not been filled, when he expects to fill it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15295/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I informed the Deputy in response to Questions on 19 February 2013 that at present I am actively recruiting a Chairperson, and I hope to be in a position to make an appointment shortly. I have undertaken previously that I would ask the new Chairperson to review certain matters relating to the CEO remuneration raised by the Deputy. The Chairperson designate will as usual appear before the

Joint Committee before being appointed. When appointed I would like to see the new Chairperson and Board deal with these issues quickly in order that the company can focus on the immediate and long term future direction and success of the harbour company.

*Question No. 47 answered with Question No. 40.*

*Question No. 48 withdrawn.*

*Question No. 49 answered with Question No. 11.*

### **Road Safety Issues**

50. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is satisfied with the implementation of mandatory breath-testing of all drivers involved in a serious or fatal road collision; if he regularly reviews the breath-testing figures with An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11423/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I have been in consultation with my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality and the Garda Commissioner in relation to the testing of drivers for alcohol following a road traffic collision where injury or death have been caused, as provided for under road traffic legislation.

While the enforcement of the legislation in respect of the mandatory testing of drivers is primarily a matter for the Garda Commissioner, I have been assured by the Minister for Justice and Equality that the Garda authorities are making every effort to ensure that the relevant legislative provisions are fully complied with.

### **Taxi Regulations**

51. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on the recent meeting he had with taxi driver representative and any commitment he made regarding changes to the Taxi Regulation Bill. [15054/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** Earlier this month I met with the Irish Taxi Forum, representing taxi driver's interests, concerning the Taxi Regulation Bill 2012.

At the meeting the Taxi Forum raised a number of matters including an appeals process regarding decisions of the National Transport Authority, representation by the industry on the Taxi Advisory Committee, vehicle licence transfer, and the demerit scheme and penalties system - all of which I addressed and provided clarification on in the context of the Taxi Bill.

At that meeting I indicated that I would be giving consideration to a matter raised by the Taxi Advisory Committee regarding the application of the demerit scheme under the Bill to offences involving appointed stands in light of the limited number of available taxi ranks in comparison to the supply of taxis.

I am currently reviewing this aspect of the Bill and I hope to make an amendment in this regard at Seanad Report Stage.

### **Air Services Provision**

52. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way he will support initiatives that aim to improve air access to west coast USA and other locations of high strategic importance for tourism; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15248/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Developing more air services from Ireland to global destinations and bringing more tourists from overseas are two of the key policies set out in the Government's 2013 Action Plan for Jobs.

From a regulatory perspective my Department aims to ensure that there are no legal or regulatory impediments to the introduction of air services by negotiating bilateral air services agreements with third countries where necessary. In relation to the US, the market for air services between the EU and the US was liberalised under the EU-US Open Skies agreement in 2007. This means that EU and US airlines are free to provide whatever services they wish in these markets based on their own commercial judgments. The market for air services in and out of Ireland is highly competitive with a very significant number of airlines operating.

Tourism Ireland continues to invest in co-operative marketing activity with airlines. Additional capacity has been secured between Ireland and the US for the summer 2013 season with up to 133 departures, providing just over 31,000 seats in each direction per week. This represents a 26.6% increase in capacity, or just over 6,500 additional seats per week, compared to summer 2012. Furthermore additional connectivity direct to/from Dublin has been achieved through Emirates and Etihad's services from Dubai and Abu Dhabi respectively which provide greater ease of access to Ireland from Australia as well as the emerging tourism markets in the Middle East and Asia. These long-haul markets are particularly important for Irish tourism as tourists from these destinations tend to stay longer and spend more. In addition to this, Irish airports offer discounted charges to airlines providing new routes.

Negotiations are ongoing with a number of carriers for additional capacity linked both to general traffic demand and the increased traffic expected over the course of The Gathering Ireland 2013.

*Question No. 53 answered with Question No. 18.*

### **Rural Transport Services Provision**

54. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for reform of the rural transport system; if a cost benefit analysis has been carried out on the way savings will be achieved; the rationale behind perceived savings and any equality impact assessment carried out. [15059/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** Since 1 April 2012, responsibility for managing the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) has been assigned to the National Transport Authority (NTA) as part of new arrangements for integrated local and rural transport approved by the Government in January 2012. The Programme is managed by Pobal in conjunction with the NTA as part of the Programme transition. Thirty-five groups covering thirty-six geographical areas nationwide are currently being funded under the Programme.

Since becoming Minister for Public and Commuter Transport, my aim has been to strengthen the RTP by ensuring a more efficient delivery structure by maximising integration with other state transport services and by making the Programme a sustainable part of the public transport system. This is in line with the Programme for Government commitment to maintain and extend the RTP with other local transport services.

Given that resources are limited and that the Value for Money and Policy Review of the RTP, published last year, recommended organisational restructuring to achieve efficiencies and the better alignment of the 35 RTP groups with local authorities, it is necessary that the current delivery mechanisms and structures are examined and revised. The current structures of the RTP are not sustainable if the required efficiencies and savings are to be achieved. If these are not achieved then with the limited resources available services will decline. I am not prepared to allow that to happen.

Work is under way to determine the optimal structure for the delivery of rural transport from an efficiency and service perspective. Discussions are taking place with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, the County and City Managers Association and the Rural Transport Network in the context of aligning the new structure with the local authority structure. Evaluation of this structure will include consideration of various criteria, such as, cost benefit analysis as well as measures to achieve greater efficiencies and the potential impact and consequences of the new structure. Central to any new structure will be an acknowledgement of the significant role that the Programme currently plays in combating rural isolation and enhancing mobility, accessibility and community participation of local people, particularly those at risk of social exclusion.

I would emphasize that no decision has been taken but I am hopeful that I will be in a position to recommend a new structure later this year which will allow for the maximising of spend on services and the reduction of administration costs.

*Question No. 55 answered with Question No. 9.*

### **Road Safety Strategy**

56. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will outline some of the measures contained within the road safety strategy that is due to be launched later this week; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15027/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I will be launching the new Road Safety Strategy at the EU Presidency Road Transport Safety Conference on Serious Injuries on 28 March 2013 in Dublin Castle.

The aim of the Strategy, like all previous, is to save lives and prevent injuries by reducing the number and severity of road collisions. The Strategy, while not deflecting attention from road fatalities, will concentrate to a significant extent on serious injuries caused by road collisions.

The Strategy, which covers an 8 year period from 2013 to 2020 contain 144 actions to be implemented over its lifetime. The body responsible for each action together with a timeframe for implementation will be identified.

These actions reflect the priorities at EU level and the views put forward during the consultation process on the Strategy. These include work related vehicle safety, medical fitness to drive, drug driving, fatigue, using mobile phones while driving, vulnerable road users, road works, emergency response and care, data analysis and evaluation and post - collision investigation.

*Question No. 57 answered with Question No. 18.*

## Economic Growth Initiatives

58. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he and his Department continue to monitor the various bodies, groups or authorities under the aegis of his Department with a view to ascertaining the degree to which they contribute to economic recovery; the extent to which any economic assessment continues to be made in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15199/13]

324. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he and his Department and/or group/bodies under his aegis have effected a co-ordinated approach towards maximisation of contribution to national economic recovery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15550/13]

331. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he continues to monitor job creation prospects throughout the tourism and transport sectors under his aegis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15557/13]

332. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he has had any discussions with his EU colleagues with a view to ensuring that transport costs in this jurisdiction are competitive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15558/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 58, 324, 331 and 332 together.

The Programme for Government sets out the measures which the Government is taking to achieve economic recovery. As part of this Programme, the Government recently approved an Action Plan for Jobs 2013, which contains 333 actions to be implemented in 2013 by 16 Government Departments and 46 agencies. The Plan will build on the progress made under the 2012 Action Plan and continue to improve supports for job-creating businesses and remove the barriers to employment-creation across the economy.

The further development of the tourism sector has been an important element of the Government's economic policy, supported by measures such as the 9% reduced VAT rate, the cut in employers' PRSI and the fuel rebate for coach operators. The Action Plan for Jobs enhances my Department's strong focus on pro-tourism and pro-job policies. The Plan also includes a range of other transport and tourism related measures.

My Department and our agencies will continue to play a central part in the delivery of the above initiatives not just under the Action Plan but also under the Programme for Government and the Department's Statement of Strategy, all of which are designed to contribute to economic recovery. My Department is in constant liaison with our agencies about the delivery of their commitments under these various programmes and plans.

In relation to transport costs and arising from an EU initiative to reduce administrative costs to business, I announced in January 2013 that more than 300,000 Irish businesses and sole traders will see the cost of compliance with transport regulation cut as new Departmental and Road Safety Authority computer systems go live later this year. The total projected annual savings to business will be €32 million.

*Question No. 59 answered with Question No. 27.*

## Rail Services

60. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to maintain State control of the railway network and Iarnród Éireann and improve the system and increase access across the country. [15050/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** This question is about State control of Iarnród Éireann and planned improvements to the rail network. Both CIE and its subsidiary, Iarnród Éireann will remain in State ownership.

My Department and the National Transport Authority are working with Iarnród Éireann to increase the efficiency and attractiveness of existing rail services.

The Government continues to provide substantial Exchequer investment in the rail network despite the significant financial challenges. In the past two years a total of almost €385 million has been invested in Iarnród Éireann and further investment of over €130 million will take place this year. The overall investment in railway safety is in excess of €1.5 billion since 1999 when the Railway Safety Programme commenced. There has also been significant investment in rolling stock, on upgrading the Kildare Route and opening new routes such as the Cork Commuter Route, Navan Phase 1 and Phase 1 of the Western Rail Corridor.

The investment regime for Iarnród Éireann for 2014 is currently being reviewed having regard to the anticipated completion of the Railway Safety Programme by the end of 2013 and new EU mandated infrastructure management contract requirements, allied to the need to ensure value for money in the spending of constrained Exchequer funding. It is envisaged that, from 2014 onwards, investment in Iarnród Éireann will concentrate on maintaining and renewing a fit for purpose rail network, augmented by some targeted investment enhancements which will be limited due to the overall level of resources available for transport investment up to 2016.

On 24 July last, the Government decided to provide additional PSO funding of €36 million to the CIE companies. This brought the total subvention paid to CIE in 2012 to €278 million, of which €166.4 million was paid to Iarnród Éireann. CIE is progressing a 5-year Business Plan to address the underlying financial challenges facing CIE so that the CIE's rail and bus services can be provided efficiently and cost effectively over the Plan period.

*Question No. 61 answered with Question No. 11.*

*Question No. 62 answered with Question No. 37.*

### **Job Creation Numbers**

63. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide detailed figures of the numbers and types of jobs created as a result of the Government's 2012 Action Plan for Jobs which identified targeting capital investment in public tourism product and infrastructure as a key priority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15305/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The 2012 Action Plan for Jobs provided that the Government would target capital investment in tourism product under the €21m capital budget available to Fáilte Ireland in 2012. Key projects completed with the assistance of this funding, and opened in 2012, include the upgrade to Fota House and Gardens, the Tralee Bay Wetlands Centre, and the revamped Malahide Castle and Gardens. A number of major new projects were also announced, such as the development of the Medieval Mile in Kilkenny, the Dublinne and the Wild Atlantic Way.

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All of these projects provide direct jobs during their development as well as providing on-going employment through their own operations and in related tourism enterprises. In addition the completed projects enhance the tourism offering that Ireland provides and help sustain the estimated 185,000 jobs in the tourism and hospitality industry.

*Question No. 64 answered with Question No. 32.*

### **Ministerial Travel**

65. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will outline any benefit to his Department he has taken from his recent trip to Japan. [15052/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** My trip to Japan and South Korea was part of the Government's St Patrick's Day "Promote Ireland" programme and included a schedule covering the Irish community abroad, the Gathering 2013 and the promoting of investment in Ireland.

St. Patrick's Day is a unique opportunity to promote Ireland abroad. Few, if any, other countries have a national day which is so widely known and celebrated across the entire globe. As a country we should maximise the value we get from such global attention and goodwill. The purpose of these visits is threefold:

Firstly, to promote Irish economic and cultural links overseas.

Secondly, to use the opportunity of St Patrick's Day to strengthen our bi-lateral relationship with other states.

Thirdly, to connect with our diaspora overseas as well as those individuals with a strong connection or affinity with Ireland.

With regard to bi-lateral relations, I met with Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport and the Minister for Patriots and Veterans Affairs in Korea. While in Japan, I met with the Minister for Land, Infrastructure and Transport and the Minister for Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. I also had the privilege in Japan of attending a meeting of the Japan Ireland Parliamentary Friendship League in their parliament. These meetings gave me an opportunity to discuss matters relating to matters of mutual interest between our two countries and also to promote key Irish interests in Korea and Japan.

In relation to the promotion of Irish economic and cultural interests, I undertook a number of events with the Enterprise Ireland and the IDA offices in Korea and Japan, meeting with IDA client companies with investments in Ireland or those considering an investment. I also met with Enterprise Ireland clients exporting into these economies, as well as meeting with a variety of tourism trade interests in Japan.

With regard to Korea, I was pleased to be able to attend our National Day event in Seoul, as well as to meet separately with members of the Irish community in Korea and members of the Global Irish Network. In Japan, I attended the National Day events in Tokyo and Osaka, and participated in the St Patrick's Day Parades in Yokohama and Tokyo. These events gave me an opportunity to express my Government's support for our links with the diaspora, as well as to learn as to how we can better improve our relationship with Japan and Korea. In relation to matters specifically under my Department's remit, I used the opportunity of engagements with our diaspora and those with a connection to Ireland to promote Irish tourism, particularly in this, the year of the Gathering, as well as holding a briefing for the tourism trade and media

in Japan. Furthermore, I held meetings with Ministerial colleagues who cover areas relating to transport, tourism and sport in order to develop co-operation in a variety of areas of mutual interest. Finally, as part of my promotion of Irish economic interests, I also had meetings with companies that produce rolling stock for Irish Rail and arrange finance for transport companies.

*Question No. 66 answered with Question No. 18.*

## **EU Regulations**

67. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the danger posed to the wheelchair accessible SPV fleet by new noise requirements being brought forward by the EU resulting from the Ouzky report; the steps he will take to argue for exemptions which will allow Irish wheelchair accessible SPV's to continue to operate. [15056/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Ouzky Report concerns proposals for more stringent limit values on noise emissions by road vehicles, requiring an upgrading of the 1970 European regulation which establishes the limit values of acceptable noise emissions (Regulation 70/157 EC).

I understand that the proposed new limits, if agreed by Member States, would apply in the first instance to the authorisation of new types of vehicles and would come into effect 6 years after any new European regulation coming into force in this regard.

The matter is currently the responsibility of the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and I have referred the question to the RSA for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my Office if a reply has not been received within ten days.

*Question No. 68 answered with Question No. 37.*

## **State Airports**

69. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update in the Shannon aviation services centre Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15039/13]

73. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the establishment of the international aviation services centre at Shannon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15036/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 69 and 73 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, Shannon Airport was separated from the Dublin Airport Authority on 31 December last and the assets and business of the airport were transferred from the DAA to the Shannon Airport Authority (SAA). My Department continues to work with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on the Heads of the new Bill to provide for the merger of the airport with a restructured Shannon Development in a new, commercial, State-owned entity and this legislation will be advanced during the first half of this year. When the Heads of the Bill are ready, they will be referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport for their consideration prior to drafting. It is my hope, subject to enactment of the Bill, that the new Shannon entity could be established mid-year, although I appreciate that this will

be challenging. It will then be a matter for the new entity to proceed with the development and expansion of the aviation services centre in Shannon. In January, I appointed Rose Hynes as Chairman of the SAA and in that context I expect her to take on the role of Chairman designate for the NewCo which is in the process of being established. More recently, I have made four further appointments to the board of the SAA, including two employee representatives nominated by ICTU. A process to recruit a Chief Executive for the Shannon Airport Authority and the new Shannon entity (NewCo) is also currently under way.

The Steering Group comprising representatives of the Department of Finance, Public Expenditure and Report, Environment, Community and Local Government, Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and my Department is meeting on a regular basis to oversee the implementation of the Government decision in all its elements.

### **Tourism Industry Issues**

70. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way he proposes to work with tourism businesses, particularly small and medium enterprise to improve their e-capacity to transact and sell; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15256/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** This is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland and I have referred the Deputy's Question to them for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

*Question No. 71 answered with Question No. 14.*

*Question No. 72 answered with Question No. 10.*

*Question No. 73 answered with Question No. 69.*

*Question No. 74 answered with Question No. 14.*

*Question No. 75 answered with Question No. 9.*

### **Tourism Projects Funding**

76. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason that the Programme for Government tourism is central to the Government's recovery programme, yet Fáilte Ireland recently refused funding to Cork City Council for the first phase of the development of Spike Island, when according to a master plan prepared by the Council's consultants Scott Tallon, if the island were turned into a national park it was capable of attracting up to 200,000 visitors a year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15306/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if a reply is not received within ten working days.

### **Departmental Bodies**

77. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps be-

ing taken to ensure that the situation in Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company where a director was being paid director's fees from October 2012 to June 2012, despite not attending any meetings, will not be repeated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15300/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As I stated previously on 18 October 2012, the payment of director's fees is a matter for Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

While the Code requires companies to provide details of attendance in their annual accounts and outlines a number of other requirements in relation to the payment of fees, it does not link the payment of fees to attendance at a particular number of board meetings in any given period.

The Company's annual accounts and Chairman's report for 2011 confirm that all fees were paid in accordance with Government guidelines. Furthermore, the Company's accounts also detail individual directors' attendance at board meetings for the period covered by the Accounts. This information is publicly available.

I am not yet in receipt of the Company's annual accounts in relation to 2012.

*Question No. 78 answered with Question No. 9.*

### **Motor Vehicles**

79. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of motor vehicles currently operating on the road that were registered before 2008. [15058/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** There are currently 1,751,518 mechanically propelled vehicles, registered prior to 2008, operating on the roads (licensed as at the end February 2013). Of these, 1,342,527, are private cars.

*Question No. 80 answered with Question No. 37.*

*Question No 81 answered with Question No. 9*

*Question No. 82 answered with Question No. 11.*

### **Semi-State Bodies Remuneration**

83. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15409/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** There are no State bodies operating under the aegis of my Department.

### **Gender Proofing of Policies**

84. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the results of the 57th session of the UN Commission on the Status of

Women held earlier this month; the actions and best practices outlined in the agreed conclusions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15430/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global policy-making body on issues relating to gender equality and advancement of women. The 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place in New York from 4 to 15 March 2013. The priority theme for the session was the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. The outcome aimed for in this regard was a set of Agreed Conclusions, which are negotiated by all states and, in accordance with normal practice, adopted on the basis of consensus.

Ireland's official delegation to the CSW was led by Ms Kathleen Lynch T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Health and the Department of Justice and Equality with responsibility for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People. It included officials from the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In addition, representatives from civil society organisations were part of the delegation.

The EU was represented in the negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions by the EU Delegation, supported by the Irish Presidency. Following extensive negotiations, consensus on the Agreed Conclusions was reached on 15 March 2013. Ireland, working closely with EU and other likeminded partners, contributed actively to what has been widely received as a positive outcome. Previously identified national priorities are clearly reflected in the Agreed Conclusions, including a strong condemnation all forms of violence against women and girls; recognition of the linkages with gender inequality and discrimination; a commitment to end impunity; and references to women, peace and security, women human rights defenders, and the need for coordinated, multisectoral services. New elements incorporated into the Agreed Conclusions include the role of men and boys in addressing the issue, and the role which victims and survivors can play as agents for change.

The Agreed Conclusions (currently in unedited format) are available on the website of the 57th Session of the CSW.

In addition to the negotiations on the agreed conclusions, the Minister of State chaired a number of side events. The first of these, entitled "Mobilising communities to prevent and respond to violence against women – lessons learnt from Uganda", looked at Irish Aid's work in Uganda. The second, entitled "Addressing Gender Based Violence in post conflict and fragile states – a case study of Sierra Leone", presented the results of research carried out by the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence. The Minister of State also participated in a European Union event, at which she outlined the National Strategy developed by Cosc, and a side event organised by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

Additionally, the Minister of State participated in a high-level consultation on "Accelerating Zero-Tolerance to Gender Based Violence through the HIV response" which was organised by UN Women and UNAIDS and co-sponsored by Ireland. Her programme also included a series of bilateral contacts with a number of other Ministers and officials.

Ireland also co-sponsored an event with Amnesty International and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights which focused on the risks faced by women human rights defenders and at which our Permanent Representative in New York was a panelist. We co-sponsored a further event organised by the Uganda-based NGO, Raising Voices, which looked at implementing an evidence-based approach in addressing violence against women and girls. An event supported by Australia, South Africa and Ireland explored the potential of new media in supporting survivors of violence against women. The range of side

events contributed to raising awareness around these issues among those attending CSW while also showcasing Ireland's engagement in efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls both domestically and internationally.

### Citizenship Applications

85. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if consular or other assistance will be provided to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15480/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I wish to inform the Deputy that this Department through our Consulate General in New York has been in direct contact with the named person's lawyer and the NGO Reprieve regarding this person's application for Irish citizenship via the Foreign Births Registration. Once the Irish citizenship of the person concerned has been established, we will seek to offer all consular assistance possible. However, the opportunity to provide consular assistance for dual nationals may be sometimes be limited by the laws of the host country and by international law and practice.

As the Deputy will be aware Ireland is adamantly opposed to the use of the death penalty in all circumstances and accordingly seeks its universal abolition. We continue to work in close cooperation with our EU partners in accordance with the common EU guidelines on the issue of the death penalty, to seek its universal abolition.

The EU guidelines, adopted in 1998, set out clearly the common EU position on the use of the death penalty. These guidelines seek, in the first instance, the universal abolition of the death penalty and state that where the death penalty still exists, the EU will continue to press for its use to be progressively restricted. The EU utilises every possible occasion to voice its concerns regarding the use of the death penalty and intervenes in cases which fall under the criteria set out in the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty. Ireland strongly supports these efforts.

### Passport Application Numbers

86. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of Irish passport applications that have been processed in Northern Ireland in the past three years; and if he will provide a breakdown by Post Office and District Council Area. [15489/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The Passport Service offers an express service through over 70 post office branches in Northern Ireland. Customers applying through passport express are given a commitment by the Passport Service that, where the application was properly completed, a passport will be returned to them within ten working days. The total number of passport applications processed for through these post offices in the period 2010 to 2013 is detailed as follows:

Year	Applications
2010	42,475
2011	38,416
2012	45,798

The information breakdown as requested by the Deputy by post office and district council area is not available.

### Nuclear Proliferation

87. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade noting on the tenth anniversary of the war and occupation of Iraq based on false claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, that unsubstantiated claims are currently being made by the US and Israel that Iran is developing nuclear weapons together with assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists and threats by Israel and the US to launch a military attack on Iranian nuclear facilities, if he will, in line with Ireland's commitment to the settlement of political disputes by peaceful means, make a public statement opposing the threats to bomb Iranian nuclear facilities. [15663/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I have repeatedly stated in public, including in reply to Questions from the Deputy and others, that the issue of Iran's nuclear programme and the serious concerns which surround it can only be resolved by diplomatic means. I have made clear my view that military action would be very destabilising and harmful to regional stability and should be avoided. The nature of Iran's nuclear programme, as well as the secrecy attaching to it, have given rise to widespread international concerns about the aims of the programme. It is difficult to understand many aspects of the programme and of the Iranian authorities' actions in relation to it other than as an effort to achieve a covert nuclear weapons capability. Concerns about Iran's intentions have been voiced not only by the United States and Israel but by a very wide group of countries including the member States of the European Union, Russia, China, and Iran's Arab neighbours.

### Ministerial Transport

88. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the full cost of Ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15674/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The following table provides the cost of Ministerial drivers and ground transport for Ministers of State at my Department in 2012. My Department currently employs two Civilian Drivers.

<b>Ministerial Transport Costs 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2012</b>	<b>€</b>
Driver salaries, including PRSI	82,796
Driver subsistence	2,201
Mileage payments to Ministers of State	12,023
Total	97,020

### Northern Ireland Marching Season

89. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on whether the Parades Commission remit should be expanded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10972/13]

90. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he discussed broadening the role of the Parades Commission with Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10970/13]

91. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he discussed the Parades Commission and extending its role at his recent meetings with the First Minister and Deputy First Minister; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10969/13]

93. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has discussed with the First Minister and-or Deputy First Minister the need to bring clarity to the exact authority of the Parades Commission and its jurisdiction over non-notified parades as serious difficulties have emerged with non-notified parades recently; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9702/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 89 to 91, inclusive, and 93 together.

I have discussed the role of the Parades Commission in the context of non-notified parades and the upcoming marching season with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Theresa Villiers on a number of occasions.

I have also discussed these issues in regular ongoing contacts with the party leaders in Northern Ireland, and most recently in Washington DC with the First and Deputy First Ministers.

I think it is important to put right the view that there is a legislative vacuum around the flags protest. This is not the case, as is illustrated by the fact that over 200 people have been charged with a variety of offences since the protests began.

There is however an ongoing debate regarding the extent, if any, to which existing legislation needs to be strengthened to enhance the remit of the Commission in these matters. There is no cross community consensus on this matter. Indeed, some unionist community representatives, far from wanting the Commission's role extended, want it abolished completely.

What is important at present is that where the Parades Commission has jurisdiction all parties cooperate with it and respect its determinations. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I are fully in agreement on this issue. Furthermore, we are agreed that the police should be fully supported in their attempts to maintain public order.

My understanding is that the current debate will be further informed by the outcome of the recent judicial review proceedings which have been instituted by a resident in the nationalist Short Strand Community in Belfast – an area which has been greatly affected by the flags dispute. In the circumstances I think it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

*Question No. 91 answered with Question No. 89.*

## **Northern Ireland Issues**

92. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the progress he and his officials are making with the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [9703/13]

94. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the contacts he has had with the Northern Secretary of State Ms Theresa Villiers in relation to the implementation of outstanding aspects of the Good Friday Agreement. [9926/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 92 and 94 together.

The Government remains firmly committed to ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Good Friday and St. Andrew's Agreements.

In contacts with the British government, we continue to stress the importance of implementation of all aspects of the Agreement, including of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland which takes account of the separate and specific context of Northern Ireland. We continue to urge all the parties in the Assembly to engage in constructive discussion with a view to reaching agreement on the substance of a Bill of Rights.

A Bill of Rights drawn up by agreement between the main parties of the Assembly could set out precisely and formally the rights upon which a shared future for the people of Northern Ireland can be based.

All parties to the Good Friday Agreement recognised the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language and the languages of the various ethnic communities, as part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland.

In the St. Andrews Agreement, the British government committed to introducing an Irish Language Act reflecting on the experience of Wales and Ireland and to working with the Executive to enhance and protect the development of the Irish Language.

It also called on the incoming Northern Ireland Executive to work to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language. The British legislation giving effect to the St. Andrews Agreement included a specific requirement on the Executive to adopt a strategy setting out how it proposed to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language.

Since the restoration of the devolved Institutions on 8 May 2007, the question of an Irish Language Act for Northern Ireland is a devolved matter and is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive. In that regard, my colleagues the Minister for Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht, Mr. Jimmy Deenihan T.D. and Minister of State Dinny McGinley T.D. have had ongoing discussions on the matter with their counterpart, the Northern Ireland Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA. On 11 July 2012, Minister Ní Chuilín launched a consultation process which concluded on 27 November on strategies for the Irish language and Ulster Scots. Inputs from the consultation process are now being considered.

Last November I visited An Chultúrlann in Belfast which is a very impressive Irish language and cultural centre. I had the opportunity to meet with some of the city's leading Irish language activists and to hear their concerns regarding the promotion of the Irish language including their views on an Irish language act for Northern Ireland. Officials in my Department maintain regular and ongoing contact with the Irish language community in Northern Ireland, most recently when they attended the official opening of Gaeláras Mhic Ardghail in Newry on Monday 18 February.

The Government continues to follow developments closely in relation to the proposed Act,

as well as the overall enhancement and protection of the Irish Language in Northern Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement also provided for the establishment of a Consultative Civic Forum as a consultative mechanism in Northern Ireland on social, economic and cultural issues.

The St. Andrews Agreement provided that the Northern Ireland Executive would support the establishment of an independent North/South Consultative Forum appointed by the two administrations and representative of civil society. In September 2008 the Irish Government submitted proposals for the role, format, membership and operation of a North South Consultative Forum to the Executive for its consideration, and facilitated three consultative conferences, the most recent of which was in January 2011. The review of the Civic Forum by the Northern Ireland Executive has not yet been completed. At its meeting on 2 November 2012, the North-South Ministerial Council noted the current position on a North South Consultative Forum and agreed to review the issue at a future NSMC Plenary.

I hope that we can take this opportunity of the 15th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement to recall the vision of a shared society which inspired that Agreement and re-dedicate ourselves to the achievement of that goal. While there are undoubtedly challenges ahead, we should not lose sight of the progress that continues to be made, including, most recently though the establishment of the North South Inter Parliamentary Association.

*Question No. 93 answered with Question No. 89.*

*Question No. 94 answered with Question No. 92.*

### **Northern Ireland Issues**

95. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on recent political contacts with political leaders in Northern Ireland. [12519/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** During the St. Patrick's Day period in Washington D.C., I met with the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and with the SDLP leader, Alasdair McDonnell. I also met with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whom I had previously met in Dublin on 11 February, 2013 and again in London on 1 March 2013.

At all these meetings, I discussed the political and security situation in Northern Ireland and how the two governments will continue to work closely together in the period ahead and encourage and support the First and deputy First Minister as they address the political, economic and social challenges facing Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State and I agreed that we would seek to organise a joint meeting with the First Minister and deputy First Minister at an early date as well as a meeting with the leaders of the other Parties. Our two governments as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement are committed to assisting political leaders in Northern Ireland promote a genuinely shared society.

The Taoiseach and I also met recently in Dublin with delegations from the SDLP. Our discussions were honest, positive and constructive and we covered a range of issues across the political spectrum including the forthcoming parades season in Northern Ireland.

I am also in regular contact, as are my officials, with other political leaders and representatives from Northern Ireland.

## Official Engagements

96. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has met the new United States Secretary of State, John Kerry. [12510/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I first met with the new US Secretary of State John Kerry at a working dinner hosted by the Italian Foreign Minister for EU colleagues in Rome on 27 February last during the Secretary of State's visit to Europe and the Middle East. I subsequently met and had informal discussions with the Secretary of State in Shannon Airport on 6 March when he was en route home from that visit.

Our most recent bilateral meeting took place in Washington DC on 18 March at the US State Department during my visit to the US for St. Patrick's Day when we discussed a range of subjects including Northern Ireland, the Irish economy, international issues including the Middle East peace process, and the prospects for comprehensive immigration reform in the US.

## Mortgage Resolution Processes

97. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the reason certain banks operating in Ireland are covered by the recent announcement dealing with the restructuring of mortgages; if he intends to address this matter to ensure that the same opportunities are afforded to mortgage holders of banks not covered by the initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15382/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Deputy will be aware that on 13 March 2013 the Central Bank announced new measures to address mortgage arrears, including the publication of performance targets for the main mortgage banks. The targets are set in relation to both Principal Dwelling Homes and Buy to Let mortgages. The new approach is aimed at ensuring that banks offer and conclude sustainable solutions for their customers in arrears by setting specific performance targets and proposing revisions to provisioning standards.

Performance targets have been set for: ACC, AIB, Bank of Ireland, KBC Bank Ireland, Permanent TSB and Ulster Bank.

The Central Bank has advised that these institutions cover the vast majority of the mortgage book in Ireland, accounting for around 90% of mortgages held, and that it will examine whether it should extend the targets to other mortgage lenders in due course.

## Property Taxation Application

98. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will explain his decision in making a local authority shared ownership homeowner liable for the full cost of the property tax when they are paying a rental price on 50% of the home to local authorities and repaying a mortgage only on the other 50% to purchase that equity share in their home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15384/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) sets out how the tax is to be administered and provides that a liability for Local Property Tax (LPT) will arise where a person owns a residential property on the liability date which will be 1 May 2013 for the year 2013 and for subsequent years 1 November in the preceding year.

Section 7 of the 2012 Act provides that local authorities will be liable to pay the LPT on their properties in the same way as any other residential property owner, unless the properties in question are used to accommodate people with special housing needs such as the elderly or people with disabilities. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that residential properties purchased under the various local authority shared ownership schemes will also be subject to LPT and that the liable person in these instances will be the purchaser.

This is on the basis that under these schemes, the purchaser acquires a leasehold interest in the property for a period that exceeds 20 years. Such a purchaser is in the same position as a property owner who purchases a residential property with a mortgage from a financial institution. Accordingly, there is no reason why such an individual should not be liable for payment of the LPT on the property.

As in the case of any other liable person, the LPT is based on the “chargeable value” of the property, which is the price which the unencumbered fee simple of the property might reasonably be expected to fetch on a sale in the open market were that property to be sold on the valuation date in such manner and subject to such conditions as might reasonably be calculated to obtain for the vendor the best price for the property.

### **Property Taxation Collection**

99. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Finance the projected amount of property tax that will be collected in the Dublin City Council administrative area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15386/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** According to Budget estimates the Local Property Tax is expected to generate an overall yield of €250 million in 2013 and €500 million in 2014. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that it is not possible to provide a breakdown of these estimates on a regional or administrative basis until Local Property Tax returns are filed and payments made by liable persons.

### **Carbon Tax Implementation**

100. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance if carbon taxes will be applied to firelighters and other ignition products; if he, his Department or Revenue have held discussions with the Solid Fuel Trade Group on this matter; if carbon taxes were intended to be applied to firelighters, fire logs and ignition products, if he accepts this could put Irish made products at a competitive disadvantage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15443/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Solid fuel carbon tax will be charged on all solid fuels supplied in the State, regardless of whether the fuel products are Irish made or imported.

Solid fuel is defined under section 77 of the Finance Act 2010, as amended and means coal or peat. Coal is further defined to include coal and lignite, solid fuel manufactured from coal and lignite, and any other energy product within the meaning of Article 2.1 of Council Directive 2003/96/EC of 27 October 2003 in solid form. Peat means peat falling within CN Code 2703 of the Combined Nomenclature of the European Communities referred to in Article 1 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2658/87 of 23 July 1987, as amended by Commission Regulation (EC) No. 2031/2001 of 6 August 2001 and includes any solid fuel manufactured from peat.

As firefighters do not fall within the definition of coal or peat, they are not liable to solid fuel carbon tax. However, fire logs or other ignition products that contain ingredients that fall within the definitions of coal or peat will be liable to the tax.

The Revenue Commissioners, who are charged with administering the solid fuel carbon tax, have confirmed that they have met with the Solid Fuel Trade Group on the implementation of the tax as have officials from my Department.

### Tax Code

101. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the criteria used by Revenue to determine if a person engaged in work for one organisation is an employee of that organisation or qualifies legitimately to be a contractor. [15444/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As the Deputy may be aware, there is no single test that can be used to determine the status (employed or self-employed) of individuals. Simply because an individual is described as a “contractor” does not necessarily mean that such individual is a self-employed contractor.

Depending on the facts and circumstances of a case, an individual may be a full-time employee, a part-time employee, a temporary employee, a casual employee or, indeed, may be self-employed.

The question of whether an individual is engaged under either a contract of service (i.e. an employee) or a contract for services (i.e. self-employed) is a question of fact and of general law. Regardless of how the parties to an engagement may describe themselves, all the possible factors (including written, oral and implied details) that bear on the relationship between the parties must be examined, given their proper weight and a decision made on their overall effect. To try to provide some clarity as to whether an individual is employed or self-employed, the Employment Status Group (set up under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness) published a *Code of Practice for determining Employment or Self-employment status of Individuals* (updated in June 2010).

My officials inform me that this *Code of Practice* is not solely a Revenue document but was compiled in conjunction with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, the National Employment Rights Authority, the Department of Social Protection, the Small Firms Association, the Construction Industry Federation, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Irish Business and Employers Confederation and my Department. Of course, at the end of the day, the *Code of Practice* is for guidance only and the status (employed or self-employed) of an individual in relation to an engagement may, in some instances, have to be determined by the Courts.

The purpose of the *Code of Practice* “is to eliminate misconceptions and provide clarity”. I am of the view that it is of great assistance in the determination processes employed by the State.

### Tax Code

102. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the dates on which the increase in deposit interest retention tax became effective in respect of changes in the budget announced in December 2011 and December 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15453/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The increase in the rates of Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT) arising from Budget changes announced in December 2011 and December 2012 took effect in respect of interest paid or credited on or after 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 respectively. Accordingly, the increase in the standard DIRT rate from 27% to 30% and in the higher DIRT rate from 30% to 33%, announced in December 2011, applied to deposit interest that was paid or credited to an account on or after 1 January 2012. Similarly, the increase in the standard DIRT rate from 30% to 33% and in the higher DIRT rates from 33% to 36%, which was announced in December 2012, applied to deposit interest that was paid or credited to an account on or after 1 January 2013.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the rate of DIRT that is applicable to a payment or crediting of deposit interest is the rate in operation on the date the deposit interest is paid or credited to the account, irrespective of the fact that part of that interest may have accrued before the date the rate was changed. This means there is no apportionment of the interest between the amount accrued before the date of the rate change and the amount due after that date. The new rate is applied to all of the interest paid on or after the date of the rate change.

There are two rates of DIRT. The most common rate is the standard rate, which is applied where the interest is payable annually or more frequently than annually. In the case of interest that is payable less frequently than annually or where the amount of the interest cannot be calculated until maturity of the investment, the rate to be applied is the standard rate plus 3 per cent, as shown above.

### **Property Taxation Application**

103. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance if he will defer the introduction of the local property tax and amend it to include an ability to pay clause; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15456/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I do not propose to defer the introduction of the Local Property Tax (LPT). The introduction of a value based property tax is part of our obligation under the EU/IMF programme. Actions for the ninth Troika review, which was to be completed by the end of the 2012, included the introduction of a value based property tax for 2013.

These measures are deemed necessary in order to reduce further the deficit in the public finances and so as to ensure continued adherence to fiscal targets set as part of the EU/IMF Programme. While the Government has some scope within the Programme to use alternative methods to achieve Programme targets, the yield anticipated from the Local Property Tax could only have been achieved by other measures which would have significantly reduced overall expenditure on vital public services or increased taxation on incomes and spending. This Government did not want to add to the already necessary cuts in public expenditure or to place additional costs on job creation.

It should be noted that the arguments in favour of a property tax go beyond our obligations under the EU/IMF programme. The introduction of a property tax is part of a broader approach to the taxation of property. The aim is to replace some of the revenue from transaction based taxes, which have proven to be an unstable source of Government revenue, with an annual recurring property tax, which international experience has shown to be a stable source of funding.

The taxation of property through a recurring annual tax is less economically distortionary than the imposition of tax on either income or capital. This is supported by economic literature

and recent OECD analysis. The OECD has highlighted that annual taxes on land and buildings have a relatively small adverse impact on economic performance.

As the Deputy is aware the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended by the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Act 2013) was enacted into law, following its signature by the President on 26 December 2012 with the first liability date being the 1 May 2013. As I have previously outlined to this House, in designing the local property tax the Inter-Departmental Expert Group chaired by Dr Don Thornhill (the “Thornhill Group”) had due regard to issues such as ability to pay and considered the provision of waivers or deferrals for households unable to pay the tax or where a payment requirement would cause hardship. For individuals on low incomes, the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 provides for the possibility of deferring the charge to LPT in certain cases. To qualify for a deferral, the residential property must be occupied as a sole or main residence. The income thresholds for a full deferral will be €15,000 for a single person and €25,000 for a couple, whether married persons, civil partners or cohabitants. A person may claim a deferral if their income will not, “as can reasonably be foreseen at the liability date” exceed these thresholds in that year.

An increased income threshold applies in the case of properties occupied as a sole or main residence and subject to a mortgage. In such cases, the gross income thresholds may be increased by 80% of the mortgage interest payments. A deferral option in qualifying cases in this regard will apply until the end of 2017 and will assist individuals currently in mortgage distress.

A deferral of up to 50% of the LPT liability will be possible where the gross income of the liable person does not exceed €25,000 for a single person or €35,000 for married persons/civil partners/cohabitants. A deferral of 50% of the LPT will also be available where gross income does not exceed the above thresholds (€25,000 single, €35,000 couple) as increased by 80% of the gross mortgage interest payments that a liable person expects to make by the end of the year for which the gross income is being estimated. This type of deferral will also be available until 31 December 2017.

Where a liable person no longer satisfies the necessary conditions, amounts deferred prior to the date on which eligibility ceased may continue to be deferred. Interest of c. 4% per annum will apply to any amounts deferred. The deferred amount, including interest, will attach to the property and will have to be paid before the property is sold or transferred.

The thresholds were based on the recommendations of the Thornhill Group. The Government accepted the income thresholds for a full deferral and adapted the income thresholds for a partial deferral so that they are €10,000 rather than €5,000 above the thresholds for a full deferral. To determine whether deferral applies for 2013, a person is required to estimate on 1 May 2013 what his or her total gross income for 2013 will be. Gross income from all sources consists of total income before any deductions, allowances or reliefs that may be taken off for income tax purposes and includes income that is exempt from income tax and income from the Department of Social Protection but excludes Child Benefit.

I appreciate that some property owners may find themselves unable to pay Local Property Tax but do not qualify for a deferral under the existing legislation. For this reason, the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Act 2013 provides that a person who has entered into an insolvency arrangement under the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 may apply for deferral of the LPT that is due during the period for which the insolvency arrangement is in effect. The 2013 Act also provides that a person who suffers both an unexpected and unavoidable significant financial loss or expense, as a result of which he or she is unable to pay their LPT without causing financial hardship, may apply for full or partial deferral. Claims for this type of deferral will require full disclosure of the person’s financial circumstances, supporting documentation and

any other information required by Revenue and following an examination of the information provided, Revenue will determine whether deferral should be granted. The detail of how this type of deferral will operate and the criteria that will be used to determine eligibility will be set out in guidelines due to be published by the Revenue Commissioners shortly.

Details of the deferral arrangements are available on Revenue's website [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie), where the Commissioners have recently published a useful Guide to Local Property Tax.

### **Redundancy Payments**

104. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Finance if he intends to engage in further discussions with Irish Bank Resolution Corporation employees regarding redundancy payments. [15459/13]

112. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 99 of 20 February 2013, if, in view of confirmation from the IBOA that the liquidator has told the union he can agree a solution to the severance terms issue provided the Minister instructs him to do so under section 9 of the IBRC Act 2013, he will instruct the liquidator to restore the value of the severance terms for Irish Bank Resolution Corporation employees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15562/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 104 and 112 together.

The Special Liquidators have advised me that they are highly cognisant of the issues that the IBOA have been highlighting and that significant steps have already been taken to address those concerns, including the announcement on Tuesday 19 March by the Special Liquidators that contracts of staff would be extended out to 7 August with one month's notice thereafter. This should provide significant reassurance to IBRC staff, relative to the common position in liquidations where staff contracts are terminated on liquidation.

As a result of the termination of the employment contracts, employees are entitled to apply for a statutory redundancy payment and a statutory notice payment, subject to the limits prescribed by statute. Any action taken by the Minister which might divert assets from IBRC creditors to employees could be challenged in the Courts.

I am advised that claim forms for statutory entitlements have now been distributed to all employees entitled to such claims.

### **NAMA Staff Employment History**

105. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the total number of members of the board and management team of the National Asset Management Agency, with data separated between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland who were previously employed by or acted as consultants to Ulster Bank, Bank of Ireland, Anglo Irish Bank, Permanent TSB or Irish Nationwide within the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15474/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The employment history of each NAMA Board member is provided on NAMA's website, [www.nama.ie](http://www.nama.ie), and in the Annual Report 2011 (pp.4-5). No member of the Board was employed by Ulster Bank, Bank of Ireland, Anglo-Irish Bank, Permanent TSB or Irish Nationwide within the past 10 years. One member of the NAMA

senior management team was employed within the past ten years by Ulster Bank in Northern Ireland. No member of the NAMA senior management team has ever acted as a consultant to the financial institutions listed. The Deputy should note that members of the NAMA Board and officers of NAMA are subject to, and observe, a number of statutory and non-statutory obligations in relation to potential conflicts of interests.

### **NAMA Portfolio Issues**

106. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the practice of the National Asset Management Agency requiring the appointment of independent consultants or non-executive directors to the boards of companies with loans outstanding to NAMA; if he will outline the recruitment and selection process for such consultants or non-executive directors; if clear criteria is in place to govern their remit on appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15475/13]

107. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will list those companies to which the National Asset Management Agency has recommended the appointment of independent consultants non-executive directors; if he will provide the identity of such individuals with numbers broken down between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15476/13]

108. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the National Asset Management Agency agrees that any non-executive director appointed to the board of a company with loans outstanding to NAMA owes his or her fiduciary duty to the client company under the relevant company law of the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland as appropriate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15477/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 to 108, inclusive, together.

In a recent response to a Parliamentary Question 13079/13 on 12th March, 2013, I advised that, to provide assurance on the financial information received from debtors and to enhance control over cash flows, particularly rental income, NAMA requires the appointment by certain significant debtors of independent monitors. The remit of these independent monitors is to ensure that financial information provided by debtors is consistent with the underlying books and records, particularly in terms of accounting for all rents receivable by the debtor from property held as security by NAMA and for the proper application of all approved expenses, working capital and capital expenditure and to evaluate and report to NAMA on the achievement of milestones agreed as part of the debtor's commitment to repay amounts due to NAMA and in turn the taxpayer. These appointments are made by the debtors subject to NAMA's satisfaction with the appointees and the debtor's selection process, the level of proposed fees and the completion of a duty of care agreement with NAMA.

In a very limited number of cases, NAMA has also recommended and the debtor has agreed to the appointment of additional directors as a measure to enhance corporate governance. In such cases, NAMA may endorse a proposed board appointee by a debtor but the responsibilities of that appointee are as determined by company law.

NAMA is prohibited under Sections 99 and 202 of the NAMA Act from disclosing confidential information, which is specifically defined to include information relating to its debtors. Accordingly, the provision of information sought on debtor companies to which monitors and directors have been appointed by debtors would be in contravention of the NAMA Act.

## **Property Taxation Collection**

109. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a council tenant's daughter (details supplied) in Dublin 17 has been sent the property tax form when they are not on the tenant agreement; the reason a council tenant is being charged a property tax when they do not own the property; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15491/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) sets out how the tax is to be administered and provides that a liability for Local Property Tax (LPT) will arise where a person owns a residential property on the liability date which will be 1 May 2013 for the year 2013. Section 7 of the 2012 Act provides that local authorities will be liable to pay the LPT on their properties in the same way as any other residential property owner, unless the properties in question are used to accommodate people with special housing needs such as the elderly or people with disabilities. A key aspect of the work undertaken by Revenue was the development of a comprehensive Register of residential properties in the State. The Register was developed using data drawn from a range of sources including Revenue's own databases, the Local Government Management Agency database and data from utility companies. Data from the various sources has been cross-checked to ensure that the Register is as accurate as possible. The Register is being used to issue correspondence to property owners and work is still in progress to refine it.

I am advised that in developing the Register, Revenue collaborated with all local authorities and social housing bodies to establish details of properties owned by these organisations in order that they could be excluded, in the first instance, from the general issue of returns, so as to ensure that tenants of local authority properties did not receive an LPT return. While every effort has been made to match local authority owned properties with the LPT Register, in a certain number of cases, that matching process has not been successful and some tenants of these properties will inadvertently receive the Return from Revenue.

I am further advised that this particular possibility is covered extensively in the letter and the information booklet that accompanies the LPT Return. The correspondence advises anyone who receives an LPT Return from Revenue, but who is not the liable person in respect of a property, what steps they should take. It is important that they should not ignore the Return.

This means that a tenant who receives a Return in error should advise Revenue that they are local authority tenants and this will allow Revenue to match the details to the local authority data and correct the LPT Register. I am advised by Revenue that local authority tenants who are receiving LPT Returns in error are advising the Revenue Commissioners, who are updating the Register accordingly.

I can confirm to the Deputy that in the circumstances outlined, the tenant is not liable to pay the LPT in these cases and that the local authority in question is the liable person. I can also confirm that Revenue has corrected the LPT Register in this case on the basis of the information supplied by the Deputy. It is essential, in any other similar cases, that local authority tenants contact Revenue to ensure the Register is corrected.

## **Property Taxation Application**

110. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance if he will clarify a statement he made that the liability date for local property tax from 2014 will be 1 November in the preceding year; if that means persons who sell their property between 1 November 2013 and 31 December 2013 will be liable for the 2014 liability even though they will not own the property;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15500/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) sets out how the tax is to be administered and provides that a liability for Local Property Tax (LPT) will arise where a person owns a residential property on the liability date. For the year 2013, the liability date is 1 May 2013, and for the year 2014 the liability date is 1 November 2013. This means that the owner of a residential property on 1 May 2013, is liable for LPT on that property for 2013 and, the owner of the property on 1 November 2013 is liable for the 2014 LPT charge. Therefore Deputy, in relation to the specific circumstances posed by you in your question, a liable person who sells his or her residential property between 1 November 2013 and 31 December 2013, provided that they owned the property on 1 November 2013, will be liable to pay LPT on that property for 2014. They will have no liability for LPT on that residential property beyond 2014.

I am informed that the LPT charge must be paid by the vendor to the Revenue Commissioners at the time of the sale of the property in question. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that they are developing detailed guidelines on LPT issues that arise in the context of the transfer of residential property. These guidelines will be subject to discussions with the Law Society under the auspices of the Tax Administration Liaison Committee.

### **IBRC Account Holders**

111. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the liquidation of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation has an apparently unintended consequence for up to five personal deposit account holders (details supplied); if his further attention has been drawn to the fact that some holders of IBRC deposit accounts received a letter in 2011 stating that their deposit accounts were moving to Allied Irish Banks but the affected accounts were not transferred and may therefore be outside the scope of the eligible liabilities guarantee scheme which covers amounts over €100,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15501/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I have been informed that there are a number of customer accounts that may not be entitled to full compensation under the deposit guarantee scheme, DGS, or the eligible liabilities guarantee scheme, ELG, due to the nature of the products or deposit options in which those account holders invested. The proceeds from the disposal of IBRC's assets will be used to repay creditors in accordance with normal Companies Acts priorities and consequently, preferred creditors will be paid first and then debt purchased by NAMA from the Central Bank will be paid. If there are proceeds available after repayment in full of the NAMA debt, these proceeds will be applied to remaining unsecured creditors. This would include depositors to the extent that their deposits are unguaranteed. I am advised by the Central Bank of Ireland that certain tracker products, which were liabilities of IBRC at the time of the liquidation, have a structured deposit element which is covered by the DGS for that element of the product. As a result, the first €100,000 of any claim from these depositors is covered under the DGS. However I am advised that these products may not be eligible liabilities for the purposes of the ELG scheme. Those affected have been advised to deal with the special liquidator regarding this matter.

*Question No. 112 answered with Question No. 104.*

113. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will ensure that Revenue change its local property tax registration form to include the option for full payment in cash in order to avoid confusion amongst members of the public who wish to avail of this option rather than a weekly or monthly payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15623/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that a wide range of payment options have been made available to liable persons, which will allow them to pay their Local Property Tax (LPT) liability in full or by way of phased payments. One payment option allows persons to pay the LPT by cash through one of the three approved payment service providers, which are An Post TaxPay, Payzone and Omnivend.

I am further advised by the Commissioners that, although the LPT Return only provides the option to pay LPT by cash in weekly or monthly instalments through the payment service providers, customers are free to choose whether to make their cash payments in one lump sum or spread their payments in equal instalments between July and December 2013. Accordingly, liable persons wishing to pay their LPT liability in cash, should choose the weekly or monthly option on the LPT Return, even where they intend to make one lump sum payment in cash.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that in cases where a liable person wishes to pay their LPT in full using cash, all payment service providers have been informed to accept the lump sum payment. I am also advised that the LPT booklet accompanying the letters and LPT Returns that are currently being sent to liable persons by the Revenue Commissioners explains at page 7 that cash payments can be made in full. Indeed I understand that some property owners have already paid in full using cash.

As the general issue of LPT Returns has already commenced, it is not possible to amend the return form at this stage but I am satisfied that this should not impede a property owner who wishes to pay their LPT charge in full using cash.

### **Proposed Legislation**

114. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Finance the timeframe for the publication and the enactment of the legislation promised to establish the investment arm of the National Treasury Management Agency on a statutory basis, including the shareholder executive and reorienting the National Pensions Reserve Fund into a strategic investment fund; if he will outline the progress he has made with the proposed legislation; the areas which will be targeted for investment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15652/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The establishment of the Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) was announced by the Government in September 2011. Resources from the National Pensions Reserve Fund (NPRF) will be channelled through the SIF towards productive investment on commercial terms in the Irish economy. The SIF will seek matching commercial investment from the private sector in order to maximise the resources of the NPRF. The immediate priority for the Government is to put NewERA on a statutory footing and reorient the NPRF into a Strategic Investment Fund which will make strategic investments to support economic activity and employment in Ireland. Officials of my Department are liaising with the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), in preparing the necessary Heads of Bill to achieve this objective. I expect to bring these proposals to Government shortly.

The NPRF continues to work on assembling and developing a pipeline of additional commercial opportunities for the Strategic Investment Fund, which is taking place in parallel with the legislative amendment process. An investment strategy is being developed which will ad-

dress the sectors and range of assets to be considered for investment.

Within its existing statutory investment policy and in line with the SIF announcement, the NPRF has undertaken a number of investments and initiatives under which NPRF capital will be invested on a commercial basis in Ireland. The NPRF has committed to invest in infrastructure (€250 million), PPP projects (€118 million) and finance for the SME sector (€500 million) and has entered into a collaborative relationship with Silicon Valley Bank. In addition, the Fund has been working closely with NewERA in respect of investment opportunities relating to the commercial semi-state sector.

### **Property Taxation Exemptions**

115. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Finance the exemptions that are in place under the local property tax for people with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15664/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) includes provisions that provide exemption or relief from Local Property Tax (LPT) for certain properties which have been adapted by disabled persons, depending on the circumstances involved. Section 10B of the 2012 Act (as inserted by the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Act 2013) provides an exemption from LPT for a residential property purchased, built or adapted to make it suitable for occupation by a permanently and totally incapacitated individual as their sole or main residence, where an award has been made by the Personal Injuries Assessment Board or a court, or where a trust has been established, specifically for the benefit of such individuals. In the case of adaptations to a property, the exemption will only apply where the cost of the adaptations exceeds 25% of the market value of the property before it is adapted. The exemption ends if the property is sold and the incapacitated individual no longer occupies it as his or her sole or main residence.

Section 15A of the 2012 Act (as amended) provides for a reduction in the market value of a residential property that has been adapted for occupation by a disabled person where the adaptation has been grant-aided by a local authority. The person with the disability must occupy the property as his or her sole or main residence after the adaptation is completed. The reduction in value is limited to the lesser of the chargeable value attributable to the adaptation work carried out on the property and the maximum grant payable under the relevant local authority scheme.

The relief is dependent on local authority grant aid being paid under S.I. 607 of 2001 or S.I. 670 of 2007. The 2001 regulations cover adaptation work carried out on or after 1 March 1993 and on foot of applications received by a local authority up to 1 November 2007 at which stage S.I. 670 of 2007 came into effect. This relief ends on the sale or transfer of a property that has been adapted, unless the person with the disability continues to reside in the property.

### **Ministerial Transport**

116. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012. [15673/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** In relation to the use of my car for Ministerial travel, the total cost has been €123,955 for the period January 2012-December 2012. This cost included mileage (which is to cover car related expenses) of €19,507, the salaries paid

to two civilian drivers inclusive of Employer PRSI contributions which amounted to €77,774 and travel and subsistence paid to the drivers of €25,674. This amount is significantly below the €280,000 average annual cost under the previous domestic Ministerial transport regime for each Minister.

### **Tax Code**

117. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to introduce a duty tax on national lottery sales. [15713/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I have no plans to introduce a duty tax on lottery sales.

### **Croke Park Agreement Issues**

118. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the income implications of Croke Park 2 for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15465/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** In parallel with the proposals put forward by the Labour Relations Commission on an extension to the Croke Park Agreement, the Government has decided to legislate for a reduction in all public service pensions greater than €32,500. Pensions below that level will not be affected. For public servants who retired before the end of February 2012, the reduction will be implemented by way of an increase in the existing Public Service Pension Reduction with effect from 1 July 2013. The precise level of reduction has yet to be decided by my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, but will be in the range from 2% to 5%.

### **Third Level Fees**

119. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding college fees in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin. [15394/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The position is that higher education institutions, including universities, are autonomous bodies and the criteria governing the level of tuition fees to be charged in the case of postgraduate study is a matter for the institutions to determine. Therefore it is a matter for the institution concerned to determine the fee rate applicable to the student referred to by the Deputy, based on the criteria laid down by the institution, and accordingly I have no role in this matter. However I would like to advise that Section 473A, Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997, as amended by Section 11 of the Finance Act 2012, provides for tax relief, at the standard rate of tax, for tuition fees paid in respect of approved courses at approved colleges of higher education including approved postgraduate courses.

### **Semi-State Bodies Remuneration**

120. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all

State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15407/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** Details of remuneration paid to Chairpersons and board members of the state agencies under the remit of my Department can be downloaded from the Departments website <http://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Agencies/Details-of-Membership-of-State-Boards/>.

### **Special Educational Needs Eligibility**

121. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria in order for a pupil to qualify for a special needs assistant in secondary school, who has an SNA in national school and will be starting in secondary school in September 2013 and will need an SNA; if there have been any changes to the criteria since 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15464/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including the allocation of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools. SNAs are allocated to schools in order to provide for the care needs of children with special educational needs attending such schools. The policy of my Department in relation to the SNA scheme is set out in Circular 07/02, which also provides details regarding the role and duties of an SNA.

The NCSE operates within my Department's established criteria for the allocation of Special Education supports and the staffing resources available to my Department. I wish to advise the Deputy that SNAs are not allocated to individual pupils. The NCSE allocates a quantum of SNA support for each school annually taking into account the care needs of all of the qualifying children enrolled in the school, and on the basis of the assessed care needs of the children. It is a matter for schools to then allocate and manage these resources to assist children as their needs arise.

It is expected that, for many pupils, as they mature and develop, their care needs will also correspondingly diminish. Therefore not all pupils who have had access to SNA support in primary school will continue to need support in post primary school. However, students who have continuing care needs in secondary school may qualify for access for SNA support. Any such applications for support will be considered by the NCSE. The NCSE has asked all schools to forward applications for SNA for the 2013/14 school year to the NCSE by 15th March, 2013 and schools will be advised of their new allocations in advance of the coming school year.

### **Garda Vetting of Personnel**

122. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the need to review and clarify the legal background and advice given regarding the State Examinations Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15490/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I have been advised by the State Examinations Commission that the recruitment of superintendents for the 2013 certificate examinations is in line with both the requirements and provisions of the National Vetting Bu-

reau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 and I see no need to carry out an investigation as suggested by the Deputy.

### **Weight of Schoolbags**

123. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the efforts being undertaken to reduce the weight of school bags for Irish children which is having an adverse effect on the ability of children to walk or cycle to and from school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15493/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** My Department issued Circular M35/05 in 2005 to highlight the potential health hazard of overweight schoolbags and to outline a range of local measures that could be put in place to help alleviate the problem. The circular referred to the recommendations of the previously published report of the Working Group on the Weight of School Bags. This report acknowledged that many of the solutions belong at local school level and made various recommendations in this regard, such as optimum use of storage facilities, developing pupil organisation skills and timetabling. It is a matter for each individual school to determine which particular measures are most suited to its individual circumstances and to how the school concerned organises teaching and learning. The circular and the report of the Working Group on the Weight of School Bags are available on my Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

### **Special Educational Needs Services Provision**

124. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will accept that the current arrangements for the allocation of additional teaching hours in schools discriminate against children with Down's syndrome with an IQ in the mild range whose special educational needs are either not being met or are, invariably, seriously underprovided; if he will undertake to include this category of child on the list of categories of disabilities that do qualify for extra resource teaching hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15540/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The Deputy will be aware of this Government's ongoing commitment to ensuring that all children with special educational needs, including children with Down syndrome, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs. The policy of my Department is to secure the maximum possible level of inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, or where a special school or special class placement may be required to ensure such placements are provided for.

The position is that pupils with Down syndrome attending mainstream schools may receive additional teaching support in primary schools, either under the terms of the General Allocation Model (GAM) of teaching supports, if the pupil's educational psychological assessment places the pupil in the mild general learning disability/high incidence disability category, or through an allocation of individual additional resource teaching hours which are allocated by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), if the child is assessed as being within the low incidence category of special need, as defined by my Department's Circular Sp Ed 02/05.

I have asked the National Council for Special Education to provide me with policy advice on the issue of whether Down syndrome should be reclassified as a low incidence disability in all instances, regardless of assessed cognitive ability. This advice will be included in the NCSE's comprehensive policy advice on how the education system can best support children

with special educational needs which is currently in preparation and which is expected in the coming months.

### **Student Support Schemes Issues**

125. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff employed directly by Student Universal Support Ireland and the number of staff employed by other companies carrying out subcontracting work on its behalf; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15608/13]

126. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff Student Universal Support Ireland plan to retain by month between now and September 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15609/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions 125 and 126 together.

I understand from SUSI that in total there is now 59 staff working in Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), 34 of which are permanent and 25 are temporary. There are currently 50 temporary staff working in the outsourced company, engaged by SUSI, to support the processing of student grants.

Due to the cyclical nature of work associated with student grants the staffing levels are under continuous review by SUSI, and the staffing levels to be retained between now and September are part of this on-going review.

### **Student Grant Scheme Applications**

127. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of Departments and agencies which Student Universal Support Ireland have reached agreement with in relation to the direct provision of supporting information and documentation to SUSI on behalf of grant applicants for 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15610/13]

128. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has had any face to face meetings with Student Universal Support Ireland since Christmas to discuss SUSI plans to obtain supporting documentation for 2013 directly from certain Government agencies and Departments; if he has asked for a report on the additional staff requirements necessary at each relevant Department and agency to ensure the required information is provided on time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15611/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 127 and 128 together.

In accordance with normal protocol, it is the function of my officials to conduct business with the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Dublin VEC in relation to the operation of Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) and to report to me as appropriate. A project team comprising Department officials, the Chief Executive Officer of CD-VEC and other senior SUSI staff oversees the implementation and development of the operation. This group meets on a weekly basis.

In that context my officials have been informed by SUSI that they have agreements, with the

Revenue Commissioners and the CAO in relation to the direct provision of supporting information and documentation. Discussions are taking place with a number of other relevant State bodies with a view to putting similar arrangements in place. It is understood that the nature of the data exchange is IT based.

### **Student Grant Scheme Expenditure**

129. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the budget allocated to Student Universal Support Ireland for administering student grants for 2012 /13 academic year; if it is projected that this cost will now be higher than predicted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15612/13]

138. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department will pay more money than initially expected to Student Universal Support Ireland for the administration of 2012 /13 student grants as a result of the significant delays in processing the grants and resulting increased costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15621/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 129 and 138 together.

Funding for the administration of student grants by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) is provided on a financial year basis. It is not possible to fully disaggregate costs on a single academic year basis as operational costs span two academic years.

The funding provided by this Department to SUSI in the financial year 2012 which includes set-up and operational cost was some €6.7m. These costs were generally in line with expectations.

### **Student Support Schemes Issues**

130. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way Abtran was to be paid for its role in administering 2012-13 student grants; if there was a fee per student, per document received or per call received; the estimated value of the contract when it was awarded and the projected cost of the contract now; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15613/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The contractual arrangement that Student Universal Support Ireland has with Abtran is a framework agreement which includes attended hourly rates and attended daily rates. This approach provides flexibility in responding to resource demands within the peaks in the workloads that arise during the student grant processing period.

### **Student Grant Scheme Applications**

131. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students whose grant applications have been awarded, refused, paid, awarded and awaiting payment, and awaiting further documentation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15614/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I understand from Student Universal Support Ireland that at close of business on 24th March 2013, 37,623 applications have been awarded or provisionally awarded. 23,064 have been refused or cancelled. 790 applications are currently with SUSI for processing, the majority of which are as a result of the close out strategy.

35,589 awards have now been paid. 533 students have to submit course acceptance forms to SUSI in order for their award to be confirmed. 1,501 who have been awarded a grant and are due to be paid. SUSI is awaiting further documentation arising out of the assessment process from 2,801 students. As part of the close out strategy for the 2012/13 academic year, SUSI has contacted these students together with any other applicants who have not completed their application by submitting the required documentation. SUSI is providing these students with a final opportunity to submit the documentation so that applications for 2012/13 can be closed out.

### **Student Grant Scheme Payments**

132. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of appeals which have been decided by Student Universal Support Ireland; the percentage success rate; the average length of time of appeal process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15615/13]

133. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of appeals which are currently being considered by Student Universal Support Ireland; the average time for an appeal to be decided; the number of appeals which have been on hand for more than six weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15616/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 132 and 133 together.

I understand from Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that as of 24th March 2013, 5,769 appeals have been decided by SUSI appeals officers. 3,604 appeals were overturned of which 1,258 were overturned on foot of additional information received from the student.

Appeals received by SUSI are dealt with in date order, and the waiting time for decisions on appeals can vary depending on the complexity of the grant applicant's circumstances which are under appeal. SUSI aims to issue appeal determinations as promptly as possible and within the specified timeframe in the Student Support Act, 2011, which is thirty days.

### **Student Support Schemes Issues**

134. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department was asked for a report on the performance of Abtran in the administration of Student Universal Support Ireland grants as part of the Government tendering process for awarding the customer service contract for property tax queries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15617/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I understand that the Revenue Commissioners contacted Student Universal Support Ireland in relation to the company in question for a reference at the end of the tendering process.

### **Student Grant Scheme Design**

135. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he will publish the student grant scheme for 2013-14; if Student Universal Support Ireland has requested him to publish the scheme by a certain date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15618/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** As a matter of routine, my Department reviews the student grant scheme each year to prepare policy proposals and to include changes announced under the relevant Budget. My Department is currently preparing the necessary regulations for the student grant scheme for 2013/14 with a view to publishing them as early as possible this year.

### **Student Grant Scheme Reform**

136. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the review carried out by Student Universal Support Ireland into the administration of student grants this year; the person who carried out the review; the cost of this review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15619/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** An external review of Student Universal Support Ireland's business processes is currently being undertaken to inform improvements in the system for the 2013/14 academic year. The review is at an advanced stage and is currently being finalised by Accenture the company carrying out the review. As the review is still on-going the final cost of the review is not yet available.

### **Student Grant Scheme Design**

137. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the way the decision to award the administration of student grants to Student Universal Support Ireland was made in 2012; if any outside consultancy firm was asked to review the systems proposed for administering grants in each tender; if any independent agency gave a value for money review of each tender received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15620/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** In January 2011, my Department issued an Expression of Interest invitation to the VECs, local authorities or other public bodies who might be interested in taking on administrative responsibility for the centralised student grants awarding and payments function. A total of 10 proposals were received. These proposals were examined by an independent selection panel against the evaluation criteria which were an integral part of the Expression of Interest procedure.

On the basis of the review carried out by the panel at the initial stage of the process, four proposals were short-listed for oral presentation. Following oral presentation these proposals were assigned a ranking depending on their relative strengths under each of the evaluation criteria leading to the preferred proposal.

The selection panel evaluated the proposals under each of the following criteria:

- Organisational capacity to perform the function

- Experience in dealing with comparable schemes/services
- Existing core management, expertise and resources available to be deployed to the function.
- Capacity to deliver strong cost and efficiency benefits
- Overall quality of the proposal for delivery of a central student grants function.

Following this process, the selection panel made a recommendation to the Minister for Education and Skills on the preferred proposal which was the City of Dublin VEC proposal to establish Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) as a unit of that VEC. While indicative delivery costs were provided by each of the bodies, they were not as such tender prices, as this was an expression of interest process. These indicative costs were considered under the evaluation criteria which examined the capacity of the bodies to deliver strong cost and efficiency benefits. Each of the short - listed proposals was marked under all of the evaluation criteria heading. An external review of Student Universal Support Ireland's business processes is currently being undertaken to inform improvements in the system for the 2013/14 academic year. The proposed timeline for completion of the review is the end of this month.

*Question No. 138 answered with Question No. 129.*

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

139. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will confirm the date for the appointment of a design for a new school building (details supplied). [15637/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The school project referred to by the Deputy is included in the 5 year capital programme and is scheduled to progress to construction in 2014/15.

The OPW had agreed to deliver a number of schools including the school referred to by the Deputy and the process of consultation with the relevant stakeholders on the timeframe for the delivery of these schools will commence shortly.

### **Departmental Reports**

140. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the value for money report on two teacher schools will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15645/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The report of the value for money review of small primary school provision is in the final stages of preparation. I expect to publish the report and I look forward to debating its findings at that stage.

### **Ministerial Transport**

141. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [15671/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The tabular statement gives details of the costs associated with the provision of ministerial transport in 2012 at my Department.

A review of ministerial transport was initiated by the current Government and it was decided that state cars would only be provided for An Taoiseach, An Tánaiste and the Minister for Justice & Defence. The other members of cabinet now use their own car similar to the practice that applies to Ministers of State.

I understand from the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform that the new arrangements will save the exchequer in the region of €4m per annum when contrasted with the former practice whereby each cabinet minister was provided with a state car and 2 drivers from An Garda Síochána.

**The following is a tabular statement of costs associated with the provision of Ministerial Transport for the 31st Dáil in 2012.**

**Mr. Ruairí Quinn, T.D. - Minister for Education & Skills**

Payment Type	Amount
Drivers Remuneration (including Employer's PRSI) 2012	€77,681.00
Drivers Subsistence Expenses 2012	€1,978.00
Ministerial Mileage/Travel Expenses 2012	€12,125.00
TOTAL	€91,784.00

**Mr. Ciaran Cannon, T.D. - Minister of State, Department of Education & Skills**

Payment Type	Amount
Drivers Remuneration (including Employer's PRSI) 2012	€77,384.00
Drivers Subsistence Expenses 2012	€11,223.00
Ministerial Mileage/Travel Expenses 2012	€18,209.00
TOTAL	€106,816.00

**School Staffing**

142. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will sanction an application for a second teacher by board of management at a school (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15683/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** Teacher allocations are approved annually in accordance with established rules based on recorded pupil enrolment. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September. The allocation process for the 2013/14 school year is currently underway in my Department and the staffing arrangements, including the appeals process, for primary schools have been published on the Department website. The final staffing position for all schools will not be known until later in the year when the allocation process will be fully completed and all

appeals to the Staffing Appeals Board will have been considered.

As part of the Budget 2012 decisions, the number of pupils required to gain and retain a classroom teaching post in small primary schools is being gradually increased between September 2012 and September 2014. During this period the pupil threshold for a 2-classroom school is being increased to 20 pupils. In these extremely challenging times, all public servants are being asked to deliver our public services on a reduced level of resources and teachers in small schools cannot be immune from this requirement. The phasing of these measures can provide the schools concerned with time to consider the potential for amalgamation with other schools where this is feasible. If amalgamations do take place, they will be voluntary and follow decisions taken by local communities and not by the Department.

The Government recognises that small schools are an important part of the social fabric of rural communities and my Department has expanded the existing appeals process so that it is accessible to the small schools that are affected by the budget measure. In this regard small schools will not lose their classroom post if they are projecting sustainable increased enrolments in September 2013 that would be sufficient to allow them to retain their existing classroom posts over the longer term.

The detailed arrangements in relation to the appeals process are set in the Department's Staffing Circular 0013/2013. The Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

### **Student Grant Scheme Delays**

143. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will provide in tabular form the shortest, longest and average waiting time yearly between 2006 and 2012 for student grant applications. [15702/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The process of assessing eligibility for student grants between 2006 and 2012 was carried out by 66 grant awarding authorities.

The process management reporting systems in the grant awarding authorities do not collate the information requested by the Deputy.

### **Student Grant Scheme Delays**

144. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of student grant applicants who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and 12 months for their claims to be processed. [15703/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) process management reporting system does not collate the information requested by the Deputy. However, the waiting time for processing a student grant application by SUSI varies depending on a number of factors including the volume of applications received at any given time, the complexity of the grant applicant's circumstances, and time taken by the applicant to submit all the required documentary evidence to enable a final decision to be made on an application. Every effort is made to ensure that students get decisions on their grant applications and are paid as soon as possible.

*Questions - Written Answers*  
**Teachers' Remuneration**

145. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide all circulars issued to primary and secondary schools in 2012 relating to the payment of allowances to teachers. [15715/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The following Circulars relating to the payment of allowances to teachers issued to primary and secondary schools in 2012:

- Circular 3/2012: Public Service-Wide Review of Allowances and Premium Payments

- Circular Letter 19/2012: Revised rates of Pay in respect of Supervision/Substitution for the 2011/2012 school year.

- Circular Letter 28/2012: Payment in respect of Substitution for the academic year 2011/2012 in Prisons

Copies of the circulars are below.

**Circular Letter 0028/2012**

**To: The Chief Executive Officer of each Vocational Education Committee**

Payment in respect of Substitution for the academic year 2011/2012 in Prisons

**1. Introduction**

**I am directed by the Minister for Education and Skills to refer to the arrangements for substitution in Prisons. This Circular Letter sets out the arrangements for payment of eligible teachers for the school year 2011/2012.**

**2. The Arrangements**

**2.1 The arrangements provide for the provision of funding for substitution duties for 16 hours substitution per annum. The arrangements for the 2012/2013 academic year will be communicated by way of a separate circular letter.**

**3. Eligibility for payment**

**3.1 Permanent, CID, fixed term whole time, temporary whole time and eligible part-time or regular part-time teachers who served in a Prison during the 2011/2012 school year are eligible to claim payment. Permanent, CID, fixed term whole time and temporary whole time teachers who have been certified as having engaged in voluntary substitution over and above timetabled hours for the full school year will qualify for a payment. The full school year payment is as follows;**

<b>2011/2012</b>	<b>€765</b>
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**3.2 Eligible part-time teachers, regular part-time and job-sharing teachers will qualify for payment on a pro-rata basis to be calculated by reference to the weekly contracted hours.**

**3.3 For new appointees (as defined in Circular 40/2011) i.e. those who were appointed between 1st January 2011 and 31st January 2012, the pro-rata payment should be calculated by reference to the full school year payment for new appointees ie. € 689.**

**4. Arrangements for teachers who become eligible for payment of the Substitution allowance on or after 1st February 2012.**

In accordance with the terms of Circular 003/2012, pending the outcome of a review by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, allowances including the Substitution payment are not payable to new beneficiaries i.e. those who became eligible for receipt of the allowance in question on or after 1 February 2012.

**5. Arrangements for Payment**

The following arrangements for payment have been agreed.

**5.1 A claim form should be completed by each teacher who wishes to apply for payment. A copy of the claim form is attached at Appendix 1 .**

**5.2 Valid claims should be certified by the Co-ordinator/Director and forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer for payment.**

**6. Circulation**

**6.1 A copy of this Circular should be made available to Prison Co-ordinators and teachers in Prisons.**

This Circular letter has been published on the web and can be accessed at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) .

**Matthew Ryan  
Principal Officer**

**31 July 2012**

**Appendix 1**

**Claim for payment for voluntary Substitution in the school year 2011/2012**

To: \_\_\_\_\_ **Principal**

From: \_\_\_\_\_ **Applicant**

( Block Capitals)

I hereby claim payment for voluntary Substitution outside timetabled hours on the basis that I have demonstrated a willingness to co-operate with and have assisted in Substitution as defined in the offer

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ **Applicant**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Certified:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Co-ordinator/**

Director

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Circular 0003/2012

To: The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Primary, Secondary,

Community and Comprehensive Schools

and

The Chief Executive Officers of Vocational Education Committees

Budget 2012 – Public Service-Wide Review of Allowances and Premium Payments

Introduction

1. The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, in his address to Dáil Éireann on the Expenditure Estimates on 5 December last, announced that public service bodies will have to achieve a reduction of 5% in the cost of allowances and premium payments in 2012.

2. In order to facilitate the required 5% reduction in 2012, it is necessary to complete a review of allowances and premium payments early this year. To this end, this Department is providing the requisite information on allowances to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and it is understood that it is intended to complete the review by the end of February 2012.

Allowances payable to Teachers, Principals and Deputy Principals

3. Pending the outcome of the review by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, allowances are not payable to new beneficiaries; ie those who became eligible for receipt of the allowance in question on or after 1 February 2012. No additions to the common basic pay scale may be paid to new beneficiaries. Examples of such additions include any form of qualification allowance or the supervision and substitution payment paid to teachers, and the secretary to Board of Management allowance paid to Principals.

4. The only exceptions to the prohibition in paragraph 3 are Principal and Deputy Principal allowances.

5. This Circular supersedes previous circulars, notices, letters, etc on these matters, including most recently Circular 70/2011 Payment of Qualification Allowances to Registered Teachers in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools.

Allowances payable to non-teaching staff:

6. Pending the outcome of the review by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, allowances or premium payments are not payable to new beneficiaries; ie those who became eligible for receipt of the allowance in question on or after 1 February 2012.

Circulation

7. Please ensure that copies of this Circular are provided to the Board of Management/Vocational Education Committee and its contents are brought to the attention of all teachers in your employment including those on leave of absence.

8. This Circular can be accessed on the Department's website under <http://www.education>.

ie .

Philip Crosby

Principal Officer

External Staff Relations

31 January 2012

Rannán Párolla, Payroll Division,

An Roinn Oideachais agus Department of Education Scileanna and Skills,

Cor na Madadh, Cornamaddy,

Baile Átha Luain, Athlone,

Co. na hIarmhí. Co. Westmeath.

090 64 83600

Circular Letter Pay 0019 /2012

To: The Management Authorities of Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and the Chief Executive Officer of each Vocational Education Committee.

Re: Revised Rates of Pay in respect of Supervision

/Substitution for the 2011/2012 school year.

1. I am directed by the Minister for Education and Skills to convey sanction for

(a) Payment for supervision/substitution duties carried out by teachers.

(b) Payment for personnel employed solely as supervisors by Boards of Management.

2. The hourly rate payable to teachers whose first appointment predates 1/1/11 for supervision in the 2011/2012 school year is €47.82. The hourly rate payable to teachers whose first appointment was later than 1/1/11 is €43.04.

3. The annual rate payable to teachers for the 2011/2012 school year in respect of 37 hours supervision is €1,769.00 for teachers whose first appointment predates 1/1/11. The annual rate payable to teachers for the 2011/2012 school year in respect of 37 hours supervision is €1,592.00 for teachers whose first appointment was later than 1/1/11.

4. The hourly rate payable to personnel employed solely for the purpose of supervision in the 2011/2012 school year is €21.31. The hourly rate payable to personnel employed solely for the purpose of supervision in the 2011/2012 school year is €19.18 for personnel appointed after 1/1/11.

5. In accordance with the terms of Circular 003/2012, pending the outcome of a review by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, allowances including the S&S payment are not payable to new beneficiaries i.e. those who became eligible for receipt of the allowance in question on or after 1 February 2012.

6. For Primary schools only

A grant payment issued to the Boards of Management, of 1, 2 and 3 teacher schools and schools where a teacher has opted not to undertake supervision duties, in March 2012. This is to facilitate the payment of supervisors for the 2011/12 school year.

7. For Post Primary schools only

The advance payment for undertaking supervision/substitution duties in the 2011/2012 school year was paid to eligible teachers in March, 2012. The rates payable are

(a) Whole-time teachers - €620.00 (subject to statutory deductions)

(b) Job-sharing and Regular Part-time teachers - on a pro-rata basis.

8. A copy of this Circular should be made available to the members of Boards of Management, teachers and supervisors.

This Circular can be accessed on this Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) under the heading Circulars.

P. Maloney,

Principal Officer,

May, 2012.

### **Nursing Education**

146. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when young student nurses are going on to their next year and seeking grant assistance from his Department, the reason for such a short period of notice for their parents to supply a full set of accounts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15735/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The means test for a grant application is normally based on income in the last full financial year. Therefore, eligibility for a student grant for the academic year 2012/13 is assessed on income from the 2011 financial year. The administrative arrangements for the submission of accounts in place by awarding authorities are the same for all students attending approved courses, including student nurses attended approved courses.

### **Proposed Legislation**

147. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he is considering including the natural environment as a category for financial support in the upcoming national lotteries Bill. [15638/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** The categories for the disbursement of National Lottery funds provided for in section 41 of the National Lottery Bill 2012 include national culture and heritage (including the Irish language) and youth, welfare and amenities. These categories are quite wide and would not prohibit the funding of community projects which have an environmental dimension. Consequently, I am of the view that a specific category called the Natural Environment is not required.

Furthermore, the inclusion of a new category would inevitably lead to demands for the in-

clusion of other specific categories, thus leading to greater demands on the amount of funding available and the dilution of the effectiveness of those funds. Accordingly, I do not propose to alter the categories of good causes specified in the Bill.

### **Semi-State Bodies Remuneration**

148. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15413/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** In response to the Deputy's question the position in respect of the agencies under the remit of my Department is that there is no cost to the taxpayer in respect of paying directors fees, salaries or any other remuneration.

### **Croke Park Agreement Issues**

149. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has finalised all negotiation with unions with regard to Croke Park 2, or if he intends re-engaging with those who removed themselves from the talks. [15439/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** The negotiations which took place on proposals to extend the current Public Service Agreement concluded last month with a Labour Relations Commission draft Agreement as the outcome.

These proposals represent a compromise between the parties, which the Government believes will achieve its core objectives of:

- securing additional savings of €1 billion in the pay and pensions bill by 2016;
- delivering sustainable increases in productivity across the public service;
- securing further important workplace reform.

Those unions who remained in the process argued strongly for and secured changes to the initial Government's proposals in relation to a number of measures, including, for example, the scale of reductions in overtime rates, Sunday and Saturday payments. Unfortunately, some unions chose to leave the negotiation process before its conclusion and, consequently, were unable to shape the outcome in the interests of their members.

Public service unions and associations are currently submitting the proposals to ballot in accordance with each union's own rules. If the Agreement is ratified then management will act to implement the measures in respect of all public servants. However, if following ratification, unions continue to remain outside the process, they will have the benefits of the process removed from them and the people that they represent.

### **Garda Stations Refurbishment**

150. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total

cost of property maintenance of Garda stations owned the Office of Public Works on a station basis for 2012. [15442/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes):** The Commissioners for Public Works are compiling the information requested and a response will issue directly to the Deputy shortly.

### Ministerial Transport

151. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15678/13]

**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 in 2012:

Type of Expenditure	Number of Staff	Amount
Minister		
Drivers Salaries	2	€65,929.42
Drivers Expenses	2	€24,171.01
Mileage Payment to Minister	1	€12,826.92
Total		€102,927.41
Minister of State		
Drivers Salaries	3	€71,663.84
Drivers Expenses	3	€6,879.28
Mileage Payment to Minister of State	1	€19,364.14
Total		€97,907.26

### National Lottery Issues

152. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the measures he will put in place to ensure an alignment of interests between good cause beneficiaries and the new operators within the new national lottery licence framework. [15714/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** Since 1986, the lottery licence has been managed by An Post National Lottery Company and has made a significant contribution to the State through making good cause contributions of approximately €4 billion. Importantly, the new licence is being designed to align interests between the new operator and the State with the objective of maximising contributions to be paid to good causes over the life of the next licence.

Therefore it is intended that good causes contributions under the new licence will be linked to a percentage of Gross Gaming Revenues (Sales less Prizes) over the period of the new licence. This will offer the new licensee greater flexibility and scope for the growth and development of lottery games and distribution channels. Growth in Good Cause Revenues will ensure contributions to Good Causes are maximised over the period of the new licence.

Our aim is to maximise the annual payment to Good Causes over the period of the new licence. This will be determined prior to the launch of the licence competition when a number of other matters in relation to the licence structure and licence competition have been determined. This development follows detailed engagement by our financial advisers Davy with the marketplace.

The Government's aim in this process is to deliver a significant upfront payment while ensuring that the annual revenues for good causes are maximised.

### **Public Sector Allowances Review**

153. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform following his Departments review of public sector allowances in 2011, if he will provide a list of the allowances currently under review; if he will provide, in tabular form, a list of the allowances to be withdrawn accompanied by the date on which he intends to withdraw each allowance. [15716/13]

154. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if any of the 88 public allowances identified in September 2012 for abolition have been withdrawn; if so, if he will provide a list of the allowances; and if the use of a dedicated fast track arbitration process has been used for all such cases. [15717/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 153 and 154 together.

Departments were notified by my Department on 28 September 2012 of details of the Government decision in relation to the outcome of the Review of Public Sector Allowances and Premium Pay. Copies of these letters, detailing allowances to be abolished for new beneficiaries and allowances to be approved for new beneficiaries but subject to review and/or modification are publicly available on my Departments website at [www.per.gov.ie](http://www.per.gov.ie). Extensive material relating to the review, including a spreadsheet summarising statistics and the outcome of each allowance reviewed are also published on the website.

Approval for payment of an allowance to a new beneficiary pending the outcome of the review was withdrawn from 31 January 2012 and was not restored in the case where the review found that there is no business case for its payment to new beneficiaries.

Following the review, sectoral management have been instructed to engage immediately with staff interests with a view to securing their early agreement to the elimination of those Departmental allowances payable to current beneficiaries, where no business case exists to pay those allowances to new beneficiaries, with a list identified for consideration among the allowances they should prioritise for early elimination. In addition, Departments have been asked to identify other allowances, including legacy allowances, for elimination from current beneficiaries. Departments are now directly engaging with staff representatives on the allowances specific to their areas. In cases where no agreement can be reached, the timebound mechanism for dispute resolution through in the existing industrial relations systems by the Public Sector Agreement 2010-2014, is available.

The Labour Relations Commission proposals in relation to the new Public Service Agreement contain a provision that there will be full co-operation from all parties with the follow-up measures to be undertaken by sectoral management related to the Review of Allowances.

## **Public Sector Staff Remuneration**

155. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 249 of 12 March 2013, if he will provide a reconciliation between the 0% change he claims will occur to the gross salary and allowances of staff earning less than €65,000, with 10.63% reduction which the 24/7 Frontline Alliance claims will occur. [15719/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** The proposals put forward by the Labour Relations Commission on 25 February last are a fair and equitable package of measures which will deliver the €1bn savings in the pay and pensions bill required by Government, while protecting those on lower incomes to the greatest extent possible.

For example, under the proposals, there is no change to the core pay of the 87% of workers in the public service who earn less than €65,000.

In contrast, those on salaries over €65,000 will have their pay reduced by between 5.5% and 10%. In the case of those with salaries greater than €100,000 salary scales will be permanently cut by the relevant percentage.

This was illustrated in the table included in Question No. 249 to which the Deputy refers.

I am not aware of the basis for the figure of 10.63% referred to by the Deputy. However, I would again reiterate that the proposals emerging from the negotiations represent a fair and balanced deal, which protects the core salaries of the vast majority (87%) of public servants.

## **Public Private Partnership Contracts**

156. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a list of public sector PPP project contracts that include a provision for payments by the State to the operator to be subject to indexation based on the CPI each year. [15734/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** For the Design Build Operate Finance (DBOF) PPP contracts the following projects are subject to partial Indexation at CPI/HICP:

Criminal Courts of Justice

Convention Centre Dublin

Schools - Pilots

Schools 1

Schools 2

Schools 3

Cork School of Music

National Maritime College

M50

All operating payments under the toll roads (First Roads PPP Programme) – are subject to CPI.

The Department of Environment Community and Local Government have provided the below list of Water Services DBO contracts which are in Operation and Maintenance phase as of now. It should be noted that the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government do not hold details on all projects, these details are held by the relevant Local Authority. The annual payment for operations made to the contractors by local authorities are subject to indexation from the date of tender. On contracts procured since 2008, this is based on CPI but on contracts procured prior to then indexation is based on other indices published by CSO.

**Contracts subject to indexation based on CPI**

<b>WSA</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Contract Signed</b>	<b>O&amp;M Phase Com-menced</b>	<b>O&amp;M Phase Ends</b>
Clare	Feakle/Scariff/Quilty WWTPs	O&M Phase	2009	2011	2031
Cork County	Kinsale WWTP	O&M Phase	2008	2010	2030
Donegal	Donegal Group A	O&M Phase	2008	2008	2028
	Letterkenny WWTP	O&M Phase	2011	2012	2032
Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown	Shanganagh WWTP	O&M Phase	2009	2012	2032
Fingal	Portrane/Donabate/Rush/Lusk WWTP	O&M Phase	2010	2012	2032
Kerry	Kilcummin/Barraduff WWTPs	O&M Phase	2009	2011	2031
	Firies WWTP	O&M Phase	2009	2011	2031
	Milltown WWTP	O&M Phase	2009	2011	2031
Kildare	Kildare Town WWTP	O&M Phase	2010	2012	2032
Kilkenny	Kilmacow WWTP	O&M Phase	2010	2010	2030
Laois	Portlaoise WWTP	O&M Phase	2009	2011	2031
Leitrim	Carrick-on-Shannon WWTP	O&M Phase	2009	2011	2031

WSA	Location	Status	Contract Signed	O&M Phase Com-menced	O&M Phase Ends
	Leitrim Vil-lages bundle DBO	O&M Phase	2009	2011	2031
Limerick City	Clareville WTP	O&M Phase	2008	2010	2030
Mayo	Kiltimagh WWTP	O&M Phase	2008	2010	2030
	Castlebar WWTP	O&M Phase	2010	2012	2032
North Tip-perary	Templemore WWTP	O&M Phase	2008	2010	2020
Offaly	Tullamore WWTP	O&M Phase	2010	2012	
Sligo	Sligo WWTP	O&M Phase	2008	2010	2030
Westmeath	Mullingar WWTP	O&M Phase	2009	2011	2031
Wexford	Bunclody WWTP	O&M Phase	2008	2010	2030
	New Ross WWTP	O&M Phase	2008	2010	2030
Wicklow	Wicklow Town WWTP	O&M Phase	2008	2010	2030

\* Note that the capital cost has been paid upfront to the DBO contractor in stages over the Design-Build Phase so the contractor has not financed any of the capital works.

### Semi-State Bodies Remuneration

157. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15411/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The payment of fees, salaries and other remuneration to directors of the semi state agencies under the aegis of my Department is a day to day matter for the agencies. I have asked each of the Agencies to respond directly to the Deputy.

### IDA Grants

158. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of grants paid by the Industrial Development Authority to companies (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15457/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Two of these companies, the first and fourth named as listed by the Deputy, have unfortunately ceased operations some years ago. The amount of grants paid by IDA Ireland to these companies before their closure is as follows:

Company	Ceased operations	Total Grants Paid
First named company	2004	€1,871,365
Fourth named company	2008	€266,208

In relation to the other two companies, the second named company has received a total of €1,732,137 from IDA Ireland in grant payments to date, and the third named company, which is an Enterprise Ireland supported company, has been paid a total of €196,817 in grant payments by that Agency to date.

### Ministerial Transport

159. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012 [15676/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Details of the Ministerial transport costs as requested by the Deputy are set out in the table below. My Department does not incur any other costs relating to Ministerial transport.

Ministerial Transport Costs 2012	Ministers Mileage Costs	Drivers Gross Salary Costs	Drivers Employer PRSI	Drivers Subsistence Costs	Total Costs
Minister Bruton	€6,387.07	€69,582.75	€7,108.42	€262.69	€83,340.93
Minister Perry	€28,721.59	€72,109.75	€7,352.87	€16,642.11	€124,826.32
Minister Sherlock	€20,710.70	€69,745.20	€7,087.68	€12,370.23	€109,913.81
Total Costs	€55,819.36	€211,437.70	€21,548.97	€29,275.03	€318,081.06

### Rent Supplement Scheme Appeals

160. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal of rent allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal and when a decision will be made on same. [15381/13]

**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 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.

### Semi-State Bodies Remuneration

161. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15414/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The statutory bodies operating under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection are the Citizens Information Board, the Pensions Board, the Pensions Ombudsman (which does not have a board) and the Social Welfare Tribunal.

Details of the total cost of fees, salaries and other remuneration paid to members of the Boards for years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 are set out in the table below:

Agency/ Board	Year	Total cost €
Citizens Information Board	2009	59,422
	2010	76,853
	2011	87,891
	2012	66,550
Pensions Board *	2009	131,306
	2010	120,341
	2011	105,525
	2012	91,079
Social Welfare Tribunal**	2009/2010	6,084
	2011	Nil
	2012	Nil

\* The operations of the Pension Board, including payment of fees to the board members, are largely financed by annual fees payable to it by occupational pension schemes and by providers of Personal Retirement Savings Accounts and trust Retirement Annuity Contracts.

\*\* Fees and expenses in respect of both 2009 and 2010 were paid during 2010. No further costs have incurred in respect of 2011 and 2012.

### Jobseeker's Allowance Payments

162. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 312 of 20 March 2013, if entitlement to arrears in respect of an application for jobseeker's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will be re-examined in view of the fact that the reason the applicant did not collect his basic supplementary welfare payments was due to only receiving a letter from her Department dated 5 February informing them that a payment was ready for collection; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15428/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The person concerned collected his first basic supplementary payment on 21 December 2012 covering the period 18 December 2012 to 2 January 2013 but he did not collect the following four payments.

Entitlement to arrears of jobseekers allowance will be re-examined when the person concerned attends the social welfare local office to explain why he did not collect the weekly basic supplementary welfare payments covering the period 3 January 2013 to 30 January 2013.

### Bereavement Grant Eligibility

163. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position in relation to a person in receipt of a disability payment from the UK who has passed away but did not qualify for the bereavement grant as they did not pay contributions here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15445/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Department of Social Protection operate a bereavement grant scheme. The payment is a once-off payment paid to the next of kin or the individual responsible for payment of the funeral bill of the deceased. Eligibility is based on social insurance contributions paid by the deceased (or his/her spouse).

For the Deputy's information, I would point out that there is a dedicated website - <https://www.gov.uk/bereavement-allowance/how-to-claim> – dealing with payments of such grants in the U.K. which may be of assistance.

*Question No. 164 withdrawn.*

### **Rural Social Scheme**

165. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 141 and 142 of 28 February 2013, the reason a person (details supplied) is not in receipt of a rural social scheme payment of €208 per week; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15484/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** My understanding is that the person concerned has made an application for a position on the rural social scheme but has not yet taken up commenced employment. Should the person be selected, the rate of payment will be calculated on the basis of their existing rate of social welfare payment plus €20 per week. The basis of calculation differs from the position prior to the 17th September 2012 under which the rate of RSS payment was calculated on the basis of a personal payment of €188 per week, adjusted for dependant circumstances and with €20 per week added.

The methodology now in place means that pay is not now calculated on the basis of a personal payment but on the basis of the value of the social welfare payment prior to joining the scheme, as with community employment and Tús. According to information held by my department, the person referred to is currently in receipt of a jobseeker's payment of €220.90 per week, including provision for dependants. On this basis, the RSS payment will be €240.90 per week.

### **Carer's Allowance Appeals**

166. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding carer's allowance in respect of persons (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15488/13]

**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 disallowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision.

Following the submission of additional evidence the Appeals Officer has agreed to set aside her original decision and has re-opened the appeal by way of granting an oral hearing. The person concerned will be notified when arrangements for the oral hearing have been made.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

### Invalidity Pension Appeals

167. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will reappraise the refusal of an appeal, made by a person (details supplied) in County Cork for invalidity pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15492/13]

**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 19th March 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. When received, the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

### Mortgage Interest Supplement Application Numbers

168. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of applications received for mortgage interest supplement on a county basis for the periods 1 July to 31 September 2012 and 1 January 2013 to date; the number of these applications approved and granted payment on a county basis; the total estimated annual cost of these payments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15494/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Mortgage interest supplement provides short-term income support to eligible people who are unable to meet their mortgage interest repayments in respect of a house which is their sole place of residence. There are approximately 14,000 mortgage interest supplement recipients for which the Government has provided €42 million for in 2013.

Information is not available on the number of mortgage interest supplement applications received during the periods specified. However, of the 14,000 mortgage interest supplement claims in payment at the end of February 2013, some 590 claims were awarded between 1 July 2012 and 30 September 2012 and 320 claims were awarded between 1 January 2013 and 28 February 2013. It is estimated that the 12 month cost for these claims would be €2.8 million.

A breakdown by county of the claims decided during the periods specified is set out in the following tabular statement.

#### Mortgage Interest Supplement Claims – By County

##### Claims Awarded from July 2012 to September 2012 & January 2013 to February 2013

COUNTY	Jul 2012 to Sep 2012	Jan 2013 to Feb 2013	Total
CARLOW	9	6	15

COUNTY	Jul 2012 to Sep 2012	Jan 2013 to Feb 2013	Total
CAVAN	5	5	10
CLARE	7	3	10
CORK	51	21	72
DONEGAL	21	6	27
DUBLIN	138	91	229
GALWAY	20	8	28
KERRY	5	3	8
KILDARE	69	29	98
KILKENNY	7	3	10
LAOIS	15	14	29
LEITRIM	8	2	10
LIMERICK	13	10	23
LONGFORD	12	3	15
LOUTH	22	13	35
MAYO	16	2	18
MEATH	39	20	59
MONAGHAN	5	1	6
OFFALY	20	7	27
ROSCOMMON	3	2	5
TIPPERARY	16	7	23
WATERFORD	19	17	36
WESTMEATH	14	11	25
WEXFORD	33	25	58
WICKLOW	22	7	29
TOTAL	589	316	905

### Rent Supplement Scheme Administration

169. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Social Protection if any precedent of civil liability has attached to her Department or the community welfare service, for loss or damages arising from tenancy contracts as a result of rent supplement issues; if any legal advice has been provided to her Department suggesting or indicating that direct payment to landlords should cease, barring very extreme and extenuating circumstances; if any legal advice was given that direct payments to landlords should not be a routine practice; if she will define what could be considered as very extreme or extenuating circumstances; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15498/13]

170. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Social Protection if circulars issued by her Department regarding payment of rent supplement direct to a landlord, where the tenant so requests, can be described as merely internal guidelines; the status of such guidelines in regard to decisions of the community welfare service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15499/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 169 and 170 together.

The purpose of rent supplement is to provide short-term support to eligible people living

in private rented accommodation, whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation costs and who do not have accommodation available to them from any other source. The overall aim is to provide short term assistance, and not to act as an alternative to the other social housing schemes operated by the Exchequer. There are currently approximately 87,000 rent supplement recipients for which the Government has provided €403 million for 2013.

Under the legislative provisions governing rent supplement, the Department's relationship is with the tenant; the tenant makes the application for rent supplement and payment is made to the tenant. Rent supplement is specifically for the benefit of tenants to assist them with their accommodation needs. There is no direct relationship between the landlord and the Department in the administration of the scheme. However, Social Welfare legislation provides for the payment of a rent supplement payment to a nominated payee such a landlord on behalf of the tenant. This arrangement is entered at the tenant's request and subject to the consent of the Department. The department official dealing with the request will take into account all the relevant circumstances of the particular case and the tenant's preference will be accommodated where possible.

Within the timeframe available, I have not been able to ascertain whether any Court decisions have imposed a civil liability on this Department for loss or damage arising from tenancy contracts as a result of rent supplement issues or whether any associated legal advice has been received. The Department will advise the Deputy further on the matter in due course.

It is open to the landlord to bring to the attention of the Department any instance where they suspect that a tenant is receiving rent supplement and is not paying their rent. Where the Department becomes aware that a person is not using rent supplement to meet the accommodation costs, payment of the supplement is suspended and the matter investigated. Where a landlord has a grievance in relation to the non-payment of rent by a tenant, s/he may apply to the Private Residential Tenancies Board to have the dispute resolved through the Board's dispute resolution process.

The Department's circulars regarding rent supplement do not place any legal obligation in relation to decisions on the payment of rent supplement but are designed to provide guidance to departmental staff in the exercise of their powers having regard to the requirements of the legislation.

### **Mortgage Interest Supplement Payments**

171. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason the mortgage supplement relief was reduced in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; if she will review this decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15563/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The minimum contribution that the person concerned must make towards their Mortgage Interest is €32 per week.

As the minimum contribution payable by the person, exceeds the current weekly amount of mortgage interest payable, I regret to advise you that the person concerned has no entitlement to the Mortgage Interest Supplement at this point in time.

### **Public Sector Staff Redeployment**

172. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an offer for

employees of FÁS to transfer to her Department was made; if so, if it is still on the table; the current situation in relation to same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15636/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** In March 2010 the Government decided that the employment and community services programmes of FÁS should transfer to the Department of Social Protection.

All staff in FÁS assigned to the transferring activities transferred to the Department. In relation to central and regional support staff, FÁS invited staff from these functional areas to express an interest in transferring to the Department. Staff who expressed an interest in transferring were considered and then selected on the basis of Seniority/geographic location/business needs.

### **Live Register Numbers**

173. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to tackle the large number of non-Irish citizens on the live register in view of the fact that nearly one in five persons on the live register are non-Irish citizens; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15641/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Non-Irish citizens made up 18% of the Live Register in February 2013 (76,829 persons). The absolute numbers of non-Irish citizens on the Live Register has declined from a peak of 81,266 in February 2010 (a fall of 5% compared to a fall of 1% of Irish citizens on the Live Register over the same period). Non-Irish citizens made up 18% of the total persons at work, according to the Census in 2011.

The Government's primary strategy with regard to tackling the numbers on the live register, regardless of nationality, is to create the environment for a strong economic recovery by promoting competitiveness and productivity. Economic recovery will underpin jobs growth.

While the main approach of Government is the alleviation of long-term unemployment through the Pathways to Work initiative (the details of which have been set out in response to previous parliamentary questions), EURES Ireland also takes an active role in the support and integration of immigrant workers and helps create relevant networks to address any labour market related issues facing non-Irish job-seekers in Ireland. For instance, the DIALOG platform hosted an event in Dublin in February for Polish job-seekers.

It should also be noted that freedom of movement is one of the fundamental rights of the EU and benefits Irish workers as well as foreign-nationals. Also, from the perspective of benefit entitlement, the majority of foreign nationals on the Live Register would have contributed to tax and social insurance systems here.

### **Invalidity Pension Appeals**

174. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 301 of 15 May 2012, if she or her Department will facilitate a late appeal in respect of the refusal of an application for invalidity pension in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15653/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Further to my response to Parliamentary Question Ref. No. 24048/12 on 15 May 2012, I am advised that the person concerned has not submitted additional or supplementary medical evidence in support of his application.

The Deciding Officer's formal decision disallowing invalidity pension to the person concerned issued in October 2011. I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that in the normal course, an appeal against the decision of a Deciding Officer must be made within 21 days of that decision being notified. Therefore, the acceptance of an appeal at this late stage is not warranted. 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.

### **Ministerial Transport**

175. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in her Department for 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15679/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** On taking office the Government reformed the transport arrangements for Ministers which has 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 claimed in 2012 amounted to €7,105.89. I have two civilian drivers, both on a remuneration rate of €631.75 per week. The total salary costs involved in 2012 were €65,828.16. 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 in 2012 was €1,362.56. The total cost incurred in all of the above amounts to €74,296.61 in 2012. There is no Minister of State assigned to the Department.

### **Family Income Supplement Application Numbers**

176. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form the shortest, longest and average waiting time yearly between 2006 and 2012 for family income support applications. [15694/13]

177. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of family income support applicants who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and 12 months for their claims to be processed. [15695/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 176 and 177 together.

A major initiative to eliminate FIS backlogs has been in progress since November 2012 and is due to complete at the end of this month. FIS claims, both new and renewal, received on or after 5 November 2012 are currently being processed on receipt. At the beginning of November 2012, there were over 15,000 new and renewal claims awaiting decision. At present, processing of renewals is up to date, except for a small number of cases which require further

information in order to make a decision. With regard to the new claims backlog which is in the process of being cleared, there are approximately 600 waiting to be examined and it is expected that these will be processed by the end of this month. All these claims date from mid-October 2012 and, therefore, are waiting between 3 and 6 months.

The total number of claims, new and renewal combined which have been processed and are awaiting additional information in order to make a decisions as outlined above is 2,230. The information required in order to finalise these cases is from the claimant or employer, a report from a Social Welfare Inspector or a report on family circumstances and income from another EU country. Of those 2,230 claims, approximately 530 are waiting less than 3 months, 1185 are waiting between 3 and 6 months, 300 are waiting between 6 and 9 months, 115 are waiting 9 to 12 months and 100 are waiting over 12 months. These figures are to be seen in the context of an average of 50,000 new and renewal claims received annually and in excess of 30,000 claims decided in the last 5 months alone.

The average waiting time in weeks for Family Income Supplement applications from 2008 to 2012 is shown in the table. There is currently no waiting time for processing renewals and new claims are processed within two weeks. Information prior to 2008 is not available nor is the shortest/longest waiting times.

<b>Year</b>	<b>New Applications</b>	<b>Renewal Applications</b>
2008	13	5
2009	8	8
2010	10	10
2011	17	18
2012	16	15
March 2013	2	0

### **Disability Allowance Application Numbers**

178. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form the shortest, longest and average waiting time yearly between 2006 and 2012 for disability allowance applications. [15696/13]

179. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of disability allowance applicants who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and 12 months for their claims to be processed. [15697/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 178 and 179 together.

The DA backlogs are currently being eliminated, following the roll-out of a new service delivery modernisation system and a business process improvement initiative. The target is to have the backlog of disability allowance applications processed by the end of Quarter 2 2013. At present, there are approximately 6,700 applications for disability allowance still awaiting decision.

Of that 6,700, approximately 1,000 have already been processed and are awaiting some further information necessary in order to make a decision. Approximately 3,170 are waiting less than 3 months, 1,780 are waiting between 3 and 6 months, 1,480 are waiting between 6 and 9 months, 188 are waiting between 9 and 12 months and 74 are waiting in excess of 12 months. These figures should be seen in the context of an average annual new claims intake of approxi-

mately 24,000 and almost 6,000 claims decided since the beginning of 2013 alone. Statistics on average waiting times from 2006 to 2012 are in the table.

### Average Waiting Times for Disability Allowance

Year	Average Weeks to Award
2006	14
2007	16
2008	15
2009	15
2010	14
2011	17
2012	17*

\*The figure for 2012 is an estimated figure as the DA scheme was transferred over to a new IT platform (SDM) as part of our modernisation project.

### Carer's Allowance Application Numbers

180. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form the shortest, longest and average waiting time yearly between 2006 and 2012 for carer's allowance applications. [15698/13]

181. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of carer's allowance applicants who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and 12 months for their claims to be processed. [15699/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 180 and 181 together.

A major initiative to eliminate carer's allowance backlogs has been in progress and is due to complete at the end of this month. Back at the beginning of September 2012, when the initiative started, there were over 10,000 carer's allowance applications awaiting decision. At present, carer's allowance applications being received are being processed without delay and none of these is waiting in excess of 3 months.

With regard to the backlog which is in the process of being cleared, there are approximately 430 applications still waiting to be examined and it is expected that these will be processed by the end of this month. All these applications date from mid-July 2012 and, therefore, are waiting between 6 and 9 months. The total number of applications which have already been processed and are awaiting additional information in order to make a decision is 1,725. The information required to finalise these cases is, generally, from the claimant or a report from a Social Welfare Inspector.

Of those 1,725 applications, approximately 310 are waiting less than 3 months, 50 are waiting between 3 and 6 months, 1,070 are waiting between 6 and 9 months, 228 are waiting 9 to 12 months and 67 are waiting over 12 months. These figures are to be seen in the context of an annual average intake of 15,000 new applications and in excess of 8,000 applications decided since the start of 2013 alone. The average waiting time in weeks for carer's allowance applications from 2008 to 2012 is contained in the table.

### Carer's Allowance Average Waiting Time Yearly

Year	Average Weeks To Award
2006	10
2007	12
2008	15
2009	9
2010	8
2011	14
2012	22

### Architectural Heritage

182. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if there is funding available for heritage-conservation grants of non-public buildings for 2013; the allocation for each county; when decisions will be made on applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15452/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** A number of State financial supports provide for the conservation and restoration of non-public heritage structures in general. As the Deputy can appreciate, however, the scope for funding for the conservation of the built heritage is currently constrained by the significant reduction in the public finances. Shortly, I will announce details of the 2013 *Structures at Risk Fund*, which has been set up to assist with urgent works to safeguard structures, in private and civic ownership, protected under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and in certain cases, works to structures within Architectural Conservation Areas. Such structures include private houses, follies and places of worship. Typical works funded include roof repairs, structural consolidation and measures to halt water ingress. This scheme, which is administered by the local authorities on behalf of my Department, has been in operation since 2011. It has encouraged regeneration and reuse of heritage properties, and helped to secure the preservation of protected structures which may otherwise have been lost. Since 2011, over 70 structures have been funded under this scheme.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, administers a number of heritage grants schemes. It is a matter for the Heritage Council to allocate its funding appropriately, given competing priorities within the heritage sector. In addition, the Heritage Council, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, also administers a grants scheme to REPS 4 participants on the conservation and repair of traditional farm buildings, known as the Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme. I am advised that grants are available under this scheme to carry out approved conservation works to the exterior of farm outbuildings, including roofs. I am also advised that the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government administers a grant scheme for the renewal or repair of thatched roofs of owner occupied houses.

### Wildlife Protection

183. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the current cut off date for the burning of scrub and gorse in the Cooley Mountains; if the same rules apply in other areas; if he has given any consideration to changing the cut-off dates for burning; if he has given any consideration to changing the cut-off dates for this year in view of the particularly wet summer in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15482/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** Under Sec-

tion 40 of the Wildlife Acts, the cutting, grubbing, burning or destruction by other means of vegetation growing on uncultivated land or in hedges or ditches, including scrub and gorse, is prohibited during the nesting and breeding season for birds and wildlife, from 1 March to 31 August subject to certain specific exceptions. These provisions are not geographically specific and apply to all areas in the State. The purpose of these provisions is to protect bird life during the nesting season, to prevent forest fires, and to protect vegetation and wildlife habitats during the months of growth and reproduction. I have no current plans to extend the period for hedge cutting.

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

### **Semi-State Bodies Remuneration**

184. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15403/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** I assume the Deputy is referring to members of boards of the bodies funded from my Department's Vote Group. The total cost of all applicable fees for the bodies funded by my Department's Vote Group for the most recent full year for which figures are available - 2012 - is approximately €468,000.

I am working to reduce this figure and, in this context, have taken a number of actions including the introduction of a significant reform to end the payment of fees for all organisations under the aegis of my Department which were comprehended by the Government's Public Service Reform Plan. Arising from the Government decision of October 31st last, fees for membership of boards, committees and advisory councils at these organisations - where they previously applied - will not apply in the future and members will serve pro bono. Whilst legislative change will be required to implement this decision in a number of cases, I have written to all organisations to ask them to implement this decision on an administrative basis pending statutory implementation. In addition, from January 2013 there has also been a reduction of 100% in fees for membership of the Irish Film Board.

The Deputy should note that the figure above does not include the cost of fees applicable to board members in two bodies, Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster Scots Agency, operating under the aegis of the North South Ministerial Council where the total cost of funding the bodies is shared with the Northern Ireland Executive. In the case of Foras na Gaeilge, 75% is paid by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and 25% is paid by the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland. In the case of the Ulster-Scots Agency, 25% is paid by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and 75% is paid by the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland.

### Ministerial Transport

185. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15667/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** The total amount spent by my Department on Ministerial transport and travel in 2012, in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidance on such matters, was €252,829, which breaks down as follows:

Ministerial Costs	Amount
Drivers' salaries	€152,130
Drivers' travel and subsistence	€38,566
Mileage	€46,004
Other travel costs	€16,129

### Arts Funding

186. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will examine the adjusfication process whereby an organisation (details supplied) in County Kerry was refused a grant by the Arts Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15686/13]

187. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the position regarding funding in respect of an organisation (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15737/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 186 and 187 together.

Primary responsibility for the promotion of the arts at all levels throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council. In 2013, the Arts Council will receive an allocation from my Department of some €60.7 million in current, capital and EU Presidency funding. I am very well aware of the important role played by the organisation to which the Deputies refer in promoting a varied arts and culture programme. Under the Arts Act 2003, however, the provision of funding is a matter in the sole remit of the Arts Council and I am precluded by statute from intervening in the Council's decisions on funding. There are, of course, other sources of funding and, in the case of venues, many arts organisations throughout the State receive funding for the administration and maintenance of their venues from their local authorities.

If the organisation in question were to seek to increase its programming expenditure, it could consider applying for funding under my Department's Philanthropy Initiative on condition that it is prepared to raise matching private sector funding. This initiative is designed to encourage philanthropic sponsorship and endowment funding of the arts from private sources and to maximise investment in the arts by unlocking many multiples of the funding put up by the taxpayer. It also provides an incentive to arts organisations to proactively seek new and multi-annual relationships with sponsors which deliver private sector financial support, thereby increasing overall funding available to the arts. Details in this regard are available on my Department's website at [www.ahg.gov.ie](http://www.ahg.gov.ie) and at the following link: <http://www.ahg.gov.ie/>

en/PressReleases/2013/February2013PressReleases/htmltext,16873,en.html. The application form is available at: <http://www.ahg.gov.ie/en/Arts/GrantsandFunding/>.

### Energy Schemes

188. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the effect the revision to the grant aid, available under the better energy home scheme, has had on the actual number of grants issued since the revisions were introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15630/13]

189. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if the number of grants indicating jobs carried out in relation to retrofit external wall insulation measures are increasing or decreasing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15631/13]

190. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the level of grant support expected to be spent and the number of upgrade measures expected, in the period 2013 to 2016 under the better energy home scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15632/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 188 to 190, inclusive, together.

The Better Energy Homes scheme is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) as part of the Better Energy Programme. The scheme provides financial assistance to households who wish to improve the energy performance of their homes. Fixed grants are allocated towards the cost of a range of measures including attic insulation, wall insulation, heating systems upgrades, solar thermal panels and accompanying Building Energy Rating (BER) assessment.

Exchequer funding of €18million has been allocated to the Scheme for 2013. It is anticipated that this funding will support the delivery of energy efficiency measures to approximately 15,800 homes in 2013. Since commencement in March 2009 the scheme has disbursed over €150m in grants and supported the installation of over 355,000 such measures in 139,000 homes. Over the past 4 years the scheme has undergone a number of reviews including the most recent in December 2011 where some of the grant amounts were reduced in line with falling market prices.

The following table is a summary of the number of measures applied for by year.

Measure	2009	2010	2011	2012
Cavity	25,812	49,580	36,750	12,813
Dry-Lining Insulation	5,275	6,233	4,921	1,558
External Insulation	1,737	3,372	7,162	2,925
Heating Controls Upgrade only	3,854	5,051	3,195	1,138

Measure	2009	2010	2011	2012
High Efficiency Gas Boiler with Heating Controls Upgrade	7,382	10,472	7,647	3,802
High Efficiency Oil Boiler with Heating Controls Upgrade	9,332	10,713	6,124	2,127
Roof Insulation	32,410	57,858	44,127	15,466
Solar Heating			3,786	3,189
Total	85,802	143,279	113,712	43,018

The table indicates that there has been a similar level of reduced uptake across all measures and not just those measures that have been adjusted in line with falling market prices. While it is difficult to ascertain with any certainty the reasons for falling applications a number of contributory factors include economic constraints for householders and recent milder winters. Additionally, the majority of interested homeowners may by now have already participated in the scheme. The SEAI is working on a number of measures to increase traffic to the scheme, including customer surveys and marketing initiatives.

In relation to the post 2013 position, the Programme for Government includes a commitment to roll out a Better Energy: Financing (Pay-As-You-Save) energy retrofit scheme for domestic buildings after 2013. This would see the current suite of Exchequer funded grants for energy efficiency measures, excluding the low-income housing retrofit programme, replaced by a comprehensive national energy efficiency scheme that would be open to households. This scheme would allow consumers to secure upfront financing for energy efficiency upgrades, the repayment of which would be funded from savings on their energy bill generated from the retrofit. It is anticipated that by providing up front financing under the new Better Energy: Financing model that this would stimulate further activity in the energy retrofit industry after 2013 and in the subsequent years.

### State Agencies

191. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15405/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** I wish to advise the Deputy that there are 18 State bodies, including Regulatory Authorities under the aegis of my Department. Of these there are 15 whose boards are appointed in whole in or in part by the Minister and/or the Government. Appointments to State owned banks do not come under the remit of my Department. The majority of boards, under the aegis of my Department, are not funded directly by the taxpayer as they are either commercial semi-State companies or are funded by industry levies. Some bodies also generate their own revenue in addition to being funded by the Exchequer, I am, however, including details of all bodies, for completeness.

Details of the boards under the aegis of my Department and the remuneration applicable to members, is set out in the following tables. The Deputy will be aware that the One Person One Salary policy introduced by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform provides that serving public sector employees are not eligible to receive remuneration in relation to their membership of boards of State bodies. The Deputy will also be aware that non-public sector board members may choose to voluntarily waive their fees as a matter of personal choice in recognition of the current difficult economic circumstances. Both of these policy initiatives of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform have been brought to the attention of the bodies under the aegis of my Department. Consequently, the remuneration details in the table below refer to fees that may be payable and are not indicative of fees actually being received by board members. The payment of board members' fees and expenses is an operational matter for each State body.

### Category and Rates of Fees for Bodies Under the Aegis of DCENR

#### Commercial Bodies

Body	Classification	Category	Board fees Applicable
An Post	Commercial	Category 1 Maximum number of members 15	Chair: €31,500 Director: €15,750
Bord Gais Eireann	Commercial	Category 1 Maximum number of members 9	Chair: €31,500 Director: €15,750
Bord na Móna	Commercial	Category 2 Maximum number of members 12	Chair: €21,600 Director: €12,600
EirGrid	Commercial	Category 2 Maximum number of members 10	Chair: €21,600 Director: €12,600
Electricity Supply Board	Commercial	Category 1 Maximum number of members 12	Chair: €31,500 Director: €15,750
Raidió Teilifís Éireann	Commercial	Category 1 Maximum number of members 12	Chair: €31,500 Director: €15,750
Teilifís na Gaeilge	Commercial	Category 2 Maximum number of members 12	Chair: €21,600 Director: €12,600

#### Non-Commercial Bodies/Regulators

Body	Classification	Category	Board fees Applicable
Broadcasting Authority of Ireland	Regulatory	Category 4 Maximum number of members 9	Chair: €8,978 Director: €5,985

<b>Body</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Board fees Applicable</b>
Commission for Communications Regulation	Regulatory	No Board – 3 Commissioners	No Fees Applicable
Commission for Energy Regulation	Regulatory	No Board – 3 Commissioners	No Fees Applicable
Digital Hub Development Agency	Non-Commercial	Category 3 Maximum number of members 14	Chair: €11,970 Director: €7,695
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Non-Commercial	Category 3 Maximum number of members 10	Chair: €11,970 Director: €7,695
Irish National Petroleum Corporation	Non-Commercial	Category 2 Maximum number of members 5	Chair: €21,600 Director: €12,600
Loughs Agency	North-South Body	*Category 3 Maximum number of members 12	Chair: €11,970 Director: €7,695
The Mining Board	Non-Commercial	Fees per day/sitting- Maximum number of members 3	€587.97 per day for public and private sittings. €200.93 per full day for any necessary attendance (other than sittings) in discharge of the Boards business.
National Oil Reserves Agency	Non-Commercial	Category 4 Maximum number of members 6	Chair: €8,978 Director: €5,985
Ordnance Survey Ireland	Non-Commercial	Category 3 Maximum number of members 10	Chair: €11,970 Director: €7,695
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland	Non-Commercial	Category 3 Maximum number of members 12	Chair: €11,970 Director: €7,695

\*The Irish Exchequer pays half of the cost of Loughs Agency board fees.

### **Professional Registration**

192. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will address genuine concerns raised in correspondence (details supplied) regarding the registration of oil technicians here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15495/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** In the context of the potential dangers that may result from faulty installations, especially carbon monoxide gas, which would be dangerous to people in their homes and at their places of

work, I was pleased to launch the first Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week on the 24th September 2012. The Awareness Week saw a sustained, multimedia publicity campaign to alert people to the dangers posed by carbon monoxide and to give them advice as to what they should do to be safe. The issue was widely reported on television, on national and local radio and in both national and local press. In respect of the possibility for a mandatory registration scheme for oil technicians, similar to those in place for the gas (RGII) and electricity (RECI) industries, my officials recently met with industry representatives to discuss and consider the matter. Arising from this meeting, my officials will be making a submission to me in the matter.

### **Energy Regulation**

193. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his attention has been drawn to the difficulty associated with persons obtaining large deposits for electricity companies to get connected to an electricity supply even for people with clean/good credit history; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15542/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** Responsibility for the regulation of the electricity and gas markets is a matter for the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER), which is an independent statutory body. I have no statutory function in the setting of electricity supply contracts in the business or domestic sectors.

Ireland's electricity and gas markets, both wholesale and retail, are characterised by vigorous competition and are regulated by the CER. The setting of supply contracts is a day to day operational matter for electricity supply companies. Such contracts are governed by the CER's guidelines for suppliers' Codes of Practice, Customer Charter and Terms and Conditions of Supply for Household Customers.

Energy suppliers have always had requirements regarding the provision of deposits in advance but, due to the general economic situation, it is possible that suppliers are strictly applying these requirements as standard, whereas in the past they may have waived them. I understand from the CER that one of the main reasons that electricity and gas suppliers require deposits is that their customers consume the energy supplied in advance and pay in arrears. Therefore suppliers must always meet the cost of providing the energy in advance of payment and consequently they run the risk of non-payment from their customers. This is in contrast to suppliers of other energy products, such as heating oil or Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG), as customers are required by the suppliers to pay for these products in advance.

### **Postal Services**

194. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when will detailed postal codes be introduced here; and the reason for the delay. [15566/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Government is committed to introducing postcodes across the State. The procurement process to select a postcode management licence holder to implement a National Postcode System began in 2011 with the publication of a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire on [www.etenders.gov.ie](http://www.etenders.gov.ie). Since then intensive work has taken place on what is a complex national project. It is expected that the procurement process will conclude in the first half of 2013.

The final decision to proceed with implementation of a national postcode will be one for

Government and will be based on appropriate financial, technical and operational considerations.

### Ministerial Transport

195. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15669/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The cost of Ministerial transport in my Department for 2012 was €199,821. The breakdown is as follows:

Office Holder	Salary cost of 2 Civilian Drivers	Mileage Costs	Other Travel Costs	Total Cost 2012
Minister	€81,523	€10,192	€11,421	€103,136
Minister of State	€79,186	€15,580	€1,919	€96,685

The decision to terminate State transport for Ministers (other than An Taoiseach, An Tánaiste and the Minister for Justice and Equality) has led to savings of 65% to the Exchequer.

### Energy Schemes

196. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide an annual breakdown of the €350 million this and previous Governments have invested of Exchequer funding in energy efficiency programmes in the domestic and non-domestic sectors; if he will provide a net figure for the leveraged additional spend in the economy of more than €250 million he referred to in his address to the Construction Industry Federation presentation on 21 March 2013 setting the increase in energy prices over the same period for the domestic and non-domestic sectors. [15718/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Better Energy Programme is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The Programme has disbursed Exchequer funding in respect of the Better Energy: Homes, Better Energy: Warmer Homes, Better Energy: Workplaces and Better Energy: Communities Schemes, over the past number of years.

I should clarify that at the recent CIF conference on 21 March 2013 I mentioned that “the Government has invested €250 million in Exchequer funding in energy efficiency programmes in the domestic and non-domestic sectors over the past few years leveraging additional spend in the economy of more than €250 million”.

The table below sets out Exchequer funding for the period 2010 to date. It should be noted that the amount of additional monies leveraged by Exchequer investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy programmes is inherently difficult to estimate but the table below represents the most recent analysis by the SEAI.

#### Programme Expenditure and Funds Leveraged (2010 to date)

Programme	2010	2011	2012	2013 (To end Feb.)	Cumulative Total Grant Support (€)	Cumulative Total Funds Leveraged (€M)
Total Spend (€M)	89.72	94.58	59.26	2.38	245.94	369.45

With regard to price setting by electricity suppliers, this is a commercial and operational matter for the companies operating in the retail market, overseen by the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER). I am therefore not in the position to provide analysis regarding the impact, if any, of the rise in energy prices on the net amount leveraged under the Better Energy Programme over the last few years. My focus within my Department is on those elements of energy costs over which policy can exercise some control. I will continue to work towards long term policy responses for Ireland to combat vulnerability to high and volatile gas prices through promoting policy for increased use of renewables, better energy efficiencies and reducing the reliance on gas in the fuel mix.

### Motor Tax Collection

197. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide the total revenue generated in respect of each of the motor tax vehicle emissions bands in each year since 2009 and to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15376/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The revenue (excluding in respect of arrears) generated in respect of the motor tax vehicle emissions bands from 2009 to the end of February 2013 is set out in Table 1 below. Table 2 gives a breakdown of revenue for the newly structured A and B bands for the period from January to February 2013. A breakdown of arrears by band is not readily available, and Table 3 sets out the total amount of arrears paid in respect of the CO<sub>2</sub> bands for the period from 2009 to the end of February 2013.

**Table 1 – Private vehicles CO<sub>2</sub> bands – Revenue 2009 to 2013 (end February)**

-	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (to end February)
	€	€	€	€	€
A (0 – 120 g/km)	1,423,714	4,897,724	15,974,093	22,224,411	
B (121 -140 g/km)	10,112,160	17,277,088	22,342,738	45,762,799	22,024,799*
C (141 - 155 g/km)	11,084,832	15,548,570	17,313,701	23,380,988	5,804,228
D (156 - 170 g/km)	6,546,962	9,675,513	10,607,418	13,859,679	3,450,825
E (171 - 190g/km)	4,158,119	5,526,682	5,983,980	7,769,291	1,862,098
F (191 - 225g/km)	2,589,191	3,634,554	3,985,212	5,259,925	1,256,486
G (226 g/km & over)	515,382	1,051,688	1,187,301	1,632,750	362,256

Total	36,430,360	57,611,819	77,394,443	119,889,843	34,760,692
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**Table 2 - Private vehicle CO<sub>2</sub> emission A and B bands – January/February 2013**

Emissions Band	Revenue (€)
A0	3,165
A1 (1 - 80 g/km)	1,284
A2 (81 – 100 g/km)	412,922
A3 (101-110 g/km)	1,284,846
A4 (111-120 g/km)	6,310,850
B1 (121 – 130 g/km)	4,965,768
B2 (131-140 g/km)	9,045,964
Total	22,024,799

**Table 3 – Total arrears paid in respect of CO<sub>2</sub> bands 2009 to end February 2013**

-	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (to end February)
-	€	€	€	€	€
Total arrears paid – all CO <sub>2</sub> bands	520,286	783,221	1,084,638	1,576,789	277,822

\* Total for band A and B as per Table 2

### Property Taxation Collection

198. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if Dublin City Council will retain 80% of the property tax that will be collected in their administrative area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15386/13]

199. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government following the introduction of the local property tax, his plans for the local government fund and moneys allocated to it; his plans for the motor tax account which currently funds local government fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15387/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 198 and 199 together.

Motor tax is the principal source of revenue for the Local Government Fund in 2013. The Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011 provides that income from the household charge is paid into the Local Government Fund.

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 paid into the Central Fund during that year. The Government has recently accepted, in principle, a policy position that from 2014 80% of all Local Property Tax receipts should be retained within the local authority area where the Tax is raised. The remaining 20% of the Tax collected nationally will be re-distributed on an equalised basis to local authorities within the context of the annual allocations of General Purpose Grants.

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.

### **Local Authority Funding**

200. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the planned and previous reductions in Government contributions to ongoing funding of local authorities from 2011 to date in 2013 and up to 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15388/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I presume the Question refers to General Purpose Grants from the Local Government Fund.

General Purpose Grants amounting to €699.761 million were paid to local authorities from the Local Government Fund in 2011, €637.103 million was similarly paid in 2012. The general purpose grant allocation to the local government sector in 2013 is €640m.

General purpose grant allocations are made on the basis of the estimated level of income available to , and the other commitments to be met from , the Local Government Fund in that year. It is not possible at this stage to indicate the level of resources available to the Local Government Fund for general purpose grants in 2014 or 2015.

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.

### **Motor Tax Collection**

201. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide the estimated income which is intended to be derived from each of the new engine capacity bands as set out in section 4 (a) of the Motor Vehicles (Duties and Licences) Bill 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15375/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** There are no new engine capacity bands set out in Section 4 (a) of the Motor Vehicles (Duties and Licences) Bill 2013 and it is presumed the Question refers to the new CO<sub>2</sub> emissions bands set out in that section.

A review of carbon banding, which is the basis of taxation for post-2008 private vehicles, was carried out in 2012 for both motor tax and Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT), and a new structure was announced in Budget 2013. From 01 January 2013, CO<sub>2</sub> Band A has been broken into four separate bands and the B band has been split into two for both motor tax and VRT. For motor tax only, a new zero band has been introduced for electric vehicles with a lower annual tax of €120 applying.

The revised banding recognises that ever more fuel efficient cars are becoming available and allows for the differentiation of the environmental incentive in favour of the most environmentally friendly vehicles. It is expected there will be an increase in the coming years in the number of vehicles falling into the lower emitting A bands as vehicle technology continues to evolve – in Band A registrations for 2009, the first full year of the new CO<sub>2</sub> based system, comprise 14.8% of the total CO<sub>2</sub> fleet. For 2012, that figure is 54.4%.

The estimated additional income for 2013, derived from each of the new CO<sub>2</sub> bands and based on numbers of vehicles taxed at 28 February 2013, is set out below.

CO <sub>2</sub> band	No of vehicles taxed at 28 February 2013	Annual tax - 2012 rates	Annual tax - 2013 rates	Estimated additional income based on annual tax
A0 (0 g/km)	169	€160	€120	(€6,760)
A1 (1 - 80g/km)	11	€160	€170	€110
A2 (81 - 100g/km)	4,416	€160	€180	€88,320
A3 (101 - 110g/km)	22,883	€160	€190	€686,490
A4 (111 - 120g/km)	114,908	€160	€200	€4,596,320
B1 (121 - 130g/km)	69,958	€225	€270	€3,148,110
B2 (131 - 140g/km)	131,461	€225	€280	€7,230,355
			Total	€15,742,945

### Property Taxation Exemptions

202. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the criteria that were applied to decide if estates are eligible for a waiver for the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15385/13]

203. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason an estate (details supplied) in County Dublin was not exempt from the local property tax on the basis that it is an unfinished estate. [15390/13]

204. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason an estate (details supplied) in County Dublin was not exempted from the property tax on the basis that it is an unfinished estate. [15391/13]

208. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the criteria used to determine which unfinished housing estates will be exempt from the local property tax. [15433/13]

209. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if all houses in the unfinished estates listed are exempt from the local property tax. [15434/13]

213. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason an unfinished estate (details supplied) in County Carlow was not ex-

empted from the local property tax. [15460/13]

214. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason an unfinished estate (details supplied) in County Waterford was not exempted from the local property tax. [15461/13]

215. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason an unfinished estate (details supplied) in County Carlow was not exempted from the local property tax. [15462/13]

218. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the rationale behind the exclusion of estates (details supplied) in Dublin from the list of estates exempt from the local property tax. [15496/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 202 to 204, inclusive, 208, 209, 213 to 215, inclusive, and 218 together.

An exemption from the local property tax applies to developments listed in the schedule to the Finance (Local Property Tax) Regulations 2013.

The list of unfinished housing developments eligible for the exemption was compiled by local authorities utilising the categorisation employed for the purposes of the National Housing Survey 2012.

The Survey was carried out over the course of summer 2012 by my Department in conjunction with local authorities and the Housing Agency.

The categorisation methodology for the survey was different to that which was used in 2011 and which provided the basis for the waiver from the household charge. That earlier categorisation related largely to the level of on-site activity at the time the 2011 survey was carried out and had less to do with the physical character of a development. The 2012 survey was based purely and objectively on the actual state of completion of a development. Only developments that were deemed by local authorities to be in a “seriously problematic condition”, regardless of whether a developer was on or off site, were included.

For purposes of preparing the final list of developments to which the exemption from the local property tax would apply local authorities were asked by my Department to confirm or update the then existing list as appropriate.

### **Motor Tax Collection**

205. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide in tabular form for the years 2003 to 2012, the number of vehicles taxed for three months, six months and 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15392/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The information requested is set out in the table.

#### **Number of motor tax transactions by year and duration of vehicle licence**

Year	Annual licences	Half Year licences	Quarterly licences	Total Number of licences
2003	1,329,709	641,547	1,196,244	3,167,500
2004	1,336,867	659,011	1,315,891	3,311,769
2005	1,426,387	707,171	1,443,214	3,576,772
2006	1,507,763	762,458	1,614,107	3,884,328
2007	1,613,579	801,023	1,745,087	4,159,689
2008	1,621,159	801,150	1,962,711	4,385,020
2009	1,520,397	776,535	2,202,867	4,499,799
2010	1,464,303	742,973	2,357,600	4,564,876
2011	1,480,747	705,846	2,436,273	4,622,866
2012	1,448,517	682,496	2,481,073	4,612,086

### Property Taxation Exemptions

206. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when local authorities in County Cork will be taking possession of housing estates that were exempt from the household charge but are not exempt from the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15393/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** An exemption from the local property tax applies to those unfinished housing developments listed in the schedule to the Finance (Local Property Tax) Regulations 2013. There is no general exemption for estates that have not been taken in charge.

Section 180 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 applies to estates which have been granted planning permission and includes the construction of two or more houses (which as defined in the Act includes apartments) and the provision of new roads, open spaces, car parks, sewers, watermains or drains. In relation to estates which have been completed to the satisfaction of the planning authority in accordance with the permission, section 180 provides that the planning authority must if requested to do so by the developer or by the majority of the qualified electors who are owners of the houses involved, initiate the procedures in section 11 of the Roads Act 1993 for declaring the road(s) to be public roads, for whose maintenance the local authority will then be responsible. Section 11 of the Roads Act empowers a local authority to, by order, declare any road over which a public right of way exists to be a public road. Before making an order the local authority must be satisfied the road is of general public utility, consider the financial implications of taking the road in charge and consult with the public/consider any objections received. The consideration of the objections and the making of the order declaring the road to be a public road is a reserved function, so that the decision whether to take the road in charge is ultimately one for the discretion of the elected members. In relation to estates which have not been completed to the satisfaction of the planning authority and enforcement proceedings have not been commenced within the relevant period section 180 also provides that the planning authority must, if requested to do so by the majority of the owners, initiate the procedures in section 11 of the Roads Act. However, in this case the section provides that the provision in section 11 of the Roads Act requiring the authority to consider the financial implications of taking the road in charge is to be disregarded. Section 180 also provides that where a planning authority, in complying with section 180, makes an order under section 11 of the Roads Act, it must also take in charge any open spaces, car parks, sewers, watermains, or drains within the attendant grounds of the development. Section 180 was amended in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 to provide that a planning authority may

take in charge an unfinished estate, at the request of the owners of the housing units, at any time after the expiration of the planning permission, in situations where enforcement actions have commenced or where the planning authority consider that enforcement action will not result in the satisfactory completion of the estate by the developer. Planning authorities have also been empowered to take in charge part of an estate or some, but not all, of the facilities in an estate.

### Semi-State Bodies Remuneration

207. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15408/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The fees applicable with respect to each Board under the aegis of my Department are set out in the table below.

Agency/Body	Post	Number	Remuneration (Salary Comparator/Annual Fee/Per Diem Fees)
Building Regulations Advisory Body (BRAB)	Chairperson	1	€8,978
	Member	24	Nil
Dublin Docklands Development Authority	Chairperson	1	€20,520
	Member	7	€11,970
Housing Finance Agency	Chairperson	1	€11,970
	Member	10	€7,695
Irish Water Safety	Chairperson	1	€8,978
	Member	12	Nil
Housing & Sustainable Communities Agency	Chairperson	1	€11,970
	Member	5	€7,695
Local Government Management Agency	Chairperson	1	Nil
	Member	10	Nil
National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	Chairperson	1	€8,978
	Member	11	Nil
Private Residential Tenancies Board / Rent Tribunal			Those PRTB / Rent Tribunal members of the Board who are entitled to Board fees are paid such fees on an attendance basis only. Details regarding the scale of fees and the amounts paid are published in the annual reports of the PRTB.
Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII)	Chairperson	1	€11,970
	Member	10	€7,695

Agency/Body	Post	Number	Remuneration (Salary Comparator/Annual Fee/Per Diem Fees)
Western Development Commission	Chairperson	1	8,978
	Member	10	5,985
An Bord Pleanála	Chairperson	1	PPC Rate: €189,474 - Non PCC Rate: €180,000
	Deputy Chair	1	PPC Rate: €133,387 - Non PCC Rate: €126,718
	Member	6	PPC Rate: €116,935 - Non PCC Rate: €111,214
Environmental Protection Agency	Director General	1	PPC Rate: €164,464 - Non PPC: 156,240
	Directors	4	Salary Scales PPC Rate: €127,588 -€145,952 Non-PPC Rate: €121,208 -€138,655

Reference to remuneration for chairs and members of Boards is to the level of fee to which they are entitled. Where public servants are appointed to Boards, no fees are payable. In this regard, public servants make up over half of the combined membership of the Boards of agencies under my Department's aegis.

From 1 May 2009, fees were reduced by 10% in line with the Government decision to revise the fees for non-executive chairpersons and members of boards of state bodies.

From 1 January 2010, fees were further reduced in line with the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (No. 2) Act 2009.

In 2012, my Department contacted State Agencies under its aegis requesting that Board members be offered the option to waive fees on a discretionary basis.

The Boards of An Bord Pleanála and the Environmental Protection Agency are executive in nature and the members are full-time salaried positions.

As part of an ambitious rationalisation programme, State agencies under the aegis of my Department are being reduced from 21 to 10.

*Questions Nos. 208 and 209 answered with Question No. 202.*

### **Traveller Accommodation**

210. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the funding available for Traveller accommodation in counties Carlow and Kilkenny in 2013. [15435/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** Most of the available funding for Traveller accommodation in 2013 was allocated in respect of Traveller-specific accommodation projects which are currently under construction or approved by my Department to commence construction this year. The balance of the available funding will be used to meet outstanding balances on final

accounts for completed projects. Given that there are no on-going or new construction projects for Traveller-specific accommodation in Carlow or Kilkenny this year no allocations were made.

### Homeless Persons Supports

211. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will detail the total amount in section 10 and any other funding for homeless services made available to each local authority in the years 2010, 2011, 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15447/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** My Department recoups 90% of expenditure to housing authorities for the provision of accommodation and related services for homeless persons under Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988 which enables housing authorities to provide or arrange for the provision of accommodation for homeless persons. An additional 10% is provided by housing authorities from their own resources on homeless accommodation and related services. Information in respect of funding provided under Section 10 for the 34 City and County Council areas for the years 2010 to 2012 is set out in the table.

#### Funding provided under Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988

-	COUNTY-AT-LARGE	2010	2011	2012
		€	€	€
Dublin	DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL	37,900,371	33,633,259	32,398,290
	DUNL/RATH	1,053,061	510,759	0
	FINGAL	813,029	825,898	0
	STH.DUBLIN	754,914	762,609	0
North East	LOUTH	935,874	908,358	900,308
	CAVAN	1,323	0	1,390
	MONAGHAN	100,420	3,892	8,496
Mid East	KILDARE	392,477	319,467	477,953
	MEATH	339,458	208,588	196,941
	WICKLOW	174,907	169,610	164,252
Midlands	WESTMEATH	441,162	415,215	416,475
	LAOIS	11,628	8,276	4,448
	LONGFORD	205,584	197,100	200,179
	OFFALY	7,970	4,306	50,925
South West	CORK CITY COUNCIL	3,427,067	2,776,876	3,533,123
	CORK	131,193	130,748	130,966
	KERRY	711,883	598,125	754,878
Mid West	LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL	2,438,104	1,890,254	2,466,351
	LIMERICK	280,733	279,608	267,925

-	COUNTY-AT-LARGE	2010	2011	2012
		€	€	€
	CLARE	529,036	514,536	523,846
	TIPPERARY N.R.	187,734	221,059	257,997
West	GALWAY CITY COUNCIL	1,515,657	1,054,001	1,411,787
	GALWAY	107,760	104,128	101,267
	MAYO	66,133	69,567	62,178
	ROSCOMMON	9,738	0	6,246
North West	SLIGO	302,518	286,766	236,191
	DONEGAL	116,620	119,254	119,305
	LEITRIM	4,217	315	5,369
South East	WATERFORD CITY COUN- CIL	704,073	1,147,734	874,701
	WATERFORD	54,271	40,000	55,863
	TIPPERARY S.R.	155,965	152,676	123,108
	KILKENNY	359,049	323,837	334,462
	WEXFORD	300,830	267,967	284,525
	CARLOW	168,698	178,262	176,218

### Water and Sewerage Schemes Provision

212. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will list each project in the water service investment programme that had been given approval to go to tender; the date this happened in respect of projects that have not yet commenced construction; the estimated month for commencing construction in each of these projects; the estimated cost of the construction projects and if each project is a water or a wastewater project; if each project is under the traditional procurement method, under the design, build, operate and finance or under the design and build process or under the design, build and operate process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15450/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013, which is available in the Oireachtas Library, lists the water services schemes and contracts to be progressed under the programme. The timing of the commencement of contracts within that period is a matter for the Water Services Authorities, subject to the requirement for my Department's approval at key stages in the progression of projects through planning and on to construction. Details on the progression of individual contracts can be obtained from the local authorities concerned.

Where a scheme has a procurement/construction stage budget of less than €5 million, following approval of the Preliminary Report by my Department, contracts within the scheme may proceed up to and including the seeking of tenders without the need for further Departmental approval, subject to the cost remaining within approved budgets. In these cases approval takes the form of confirmation that funds are in place. For schemes/contracts in excess of €5m, approval to go to tender is also required.

The length of time to progress a scheme from initial design to completion varies with the scale and complexity of the scheme and the number of contracts involved. My Department's procedures are designed to ensure that projects are advanced as expeditiously as possible, and in a manner consistent with meeting its responsibilities in relation to management of Exchequer funds.

A list of contracts under the Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013 for which my Department has issued an approval to go to tender, including the procurement approach, is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

*Questions Nos. 213 to 215, inclusive, answered with Question No. 202.*

### Motor Tax Collection

216. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if statistics are available in relation to the number of cars taxed in each local authority area in 2012 that were first registered pre-2008; the number of cars taxed in each local authority area in 2012 that were first purchased pre-2008 that had engines rated between 1.6 and 2 litre; the number of cars taxed in each local authority area in 2012 that were first purchased pre-2008 that had engines rated between 2 and 3 litres; if he will provide same in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15471/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The total number of pre-2008 registrations taxed in 2012 are contained in the table below, set out as taxed by licensing authority and via the online system for payment of motor tax. The totals number in the final column includes those with engines rated between 1.6 and 2 litres and between 2 and 3 litres shown in the preceding columns.

Licensing Authority	Engine capacity 1.6 - 2 litres	Engine capacity 2 - 3 litres	Total number of vehicles - all engine sizes
Carlow	4,019	589	14,499
Cavan	4,183	641	14,044
Clare	6,181	1,088	24,987
Cork	20,645	3,700	85,648
Donegal	8,910	1,137	31,266
Galway	13,231	2,290	47,452
Kerry	6,974	1,080	27,397
Kildare	8,243	2,139	30,750
Kilkenny	4,926	900	19,002
Laois	5,502	899	17,724
Leitrim	2,187	255	6,910
Limerick County	7,487	1,228	29,745
Longford	3,029	379	9,438
Louth	5,467	1,088	22,416
Mayo	7,750	1,064	26,921
Meath	8,211	1,919	28,088
Monaghan	3,716	530	11,804
Offaly	4,593	702	16,299

Licensing Authority	Engine capacity 1.6 - 2 litres	Engine capacity 2 - 3 litres	Total number of vehicles - all engine sizes
Roscommon	4,083	567	13,923
Sligo	3,884	536	14,799
North Tipperary	4,409	716	15,028
South Tipperary	5,835	1,118	22,766
Waterford County	3,432	657	13,535
Westmeath	6,123	989	21,264
Wexford	8,134	1,414	30,086
Wicklow	6,733	1,931	25,903
Dublin City	33,408	8,815	145,107
Limerick City	2,414	409	12,107
Waterford City	1,985	321	9,962
On-line	215,480	43,150	892,705
Totals	421,174	82,251	1,681,575

### Planning Issues

217. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the steps being taken to enforce the regulation that all telecommunication lines have to have a clearance of 22 ft over the road level; the authority or authorities with responsibility for enforcing this regulation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15483/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** There is no such provision in planning legislation and I have no information about such a Regulation. This matter may come under the remit of the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport or the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

*Question No. 218 answered with Question No. 202.*

### Water and Sewerage Schemes Provision

219. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding a project (details supplied) in County Wicklow; the immediate timeframe for the stages of this project; the funding allocation available for this project; the prospective date for completion of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15502/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** A number of contracts for the Arklow Sewerage Scheme are included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013 to commence construction within the period of the Programme.

I understand that Wicklow County Council has sought tenders for the South Green and Harbour Road sewer network contract. Wicklow County Council has been advancing the planning and design for the proposed wastewater treatment plant in Arklow and a number of interceptor

sewers, prior to submitting the tender documents for this contract to my Department for approval. However, as further legal proceedings are now in train in relation to issues relevant to these contracts, it is not possible to say when these contracts will be advanced.

### **Commercial Rates Calculations**

220. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has considered any plans to revise the criteria and system on which commercial levies are based; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15503/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I have no immediate plans to amend the legislation governing commercial rates.

Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Act 2001. The Commissioner for Valuation has sole responsibility for all valuation matters, including the most appropriate method of valuation. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority.

It is important to acknowledge that commercial rates, as a local tax, and the rating system generally are deeply embedded in the local government system. A large body of case law is well established and local authorities and ratepayers are, in the main, very familiar with, and generally accepting of, the operation and practice of the rating system. Rates are also a stable source of financing for local government which is not affected unduly by short-term changes in economic circumstances.

I recognise that these are difficult economic times for many businesses and I am continuing to keep all matters relating to rates under regular consideration in my Department.

### **Remedial Works Schemes**

221. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will advise on the up-to-date position of phase 3 of the Mullagh-matt remedial scheme, Monaghan town; if all the obstacles that presented to the issuing of a green light to proceed have been overcome; when works will be under way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15541/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** My Department approved a budget cost of €1.5 million in June 2012 for Phase 3 of the Mullagh-matt Remedial Works Scheme. I recently allocated €550,000 to Monaghan County Council in respect of construction works on the scheme this year with the balance of the funding to be provided in 2014. It is now a matter for the Council to advance the scheme to construction stage.

### **Water Meters Installation**

222. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the way persons (details supplied) who are currently on the dole apply for positions under the water metering programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[15543/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The Government has decided that Irish Water, a new State-owned water company to be established as an independent subsidiary within the Bord Gáis Éireann Group, will be responsible for the domestic water metering programme.

The tender documents for regional management contracts issued by Bord Gáis require that at least 25% of the estimated 1,600 jobs that will be created directly as a result of the domestic water metering programme will be for people from small local businesses, the unemployment register, school leavers, graduates and apprentices. This will be a provision in the regional management contracts that will be awarded by Bord Gáis and it will be the responsibility of the contractors to recruit staff directly. No contracts have yet been awarded for the installation of boundary boxes and meters.

### Property Taxation Exemptions

223. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide information on the number of households in unfinished estates in County Tipperary that are exempt from the household charge in 2012; the reason for the disparity between these figures; if he will confirm if all outstanding issues in the unfinished estates that have been removed from the list have been resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15567/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** An exemption from the local property tax applies to developments listed in the schedule to the Finance (Local Property Tax) Regulations 2013. The list of developments is broken down on a county by county basis. Whereas 43 developments in County Tipperary were listed under the Local Government (Household Charge) Regulations 2012, 34 developments in the County are listed under the Finance (Local Property Tax) Regulations 2013. The specific information in relation to the number of households benefitting respectively from the waiver from the household charge and the exemption from the local property tax is not available in my Department.

The list of unfinished housing developments eligible for the exemption was compiled by local authorities utilising the categorisation employed for the purposes of the National Housing Survey 2012.

The Survey was carried out over the course of summer 2012 by my Department in conjunction with local authorities and the Housing Agency.

The categorisation methodology for the survey was different to that which was used in 2011 and which provided the basis for the waiver from the household charge. That earlier categorisation related largely to the level of on-site activity at the time the 2011 survey was carried out and had less to do with the physical character of a development. The 2012 survey was based purely and objectively on the actual state of completion of a development. Only developments that were deemed by local authorities to be in a “seriously problematic condition”, regardless of whether a developer was on or off site, were included.

For purposes of preparing the final list of developments to which the exemption from the local property tax would apply local authorities were asked by my Department to confirm or update the then existing list as appropriate.

### **Property Taxation Exemptions**

224. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason an estate (details supplied) in Dublin 11 was exempt from the household charge in 2012 but is not now exempt from the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15657/13]

225. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason an estate (details supplied) was exempt from the household charge in 2012 but is not now exempt from the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15658/13]

226. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason an estate (details supplied) was exempt from the household charge in 2012 but is not now exempt from the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15659/13]

227. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason an estate (details supplied) in Dublin 11 was exempt from the household charge in 2012 but is not now exempt from the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15660/13]

228. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason an estate (details supplied) in Dublin 11 was exempt from the household charge in 2012 but is not now exempt from the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15661/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 224 to 228, inclusive, together.

An exemption from the local property tax applies to developments listed in the schedule to the Finance (Local Property Tax) Regulations 2013.

The list of unfinished housing developments eligible for the exemption was compiled by local authorities utilising the categorisation employed for the purposes of the National Housing Survey 2012.

The Survey was carried out over the course of summer 2012 by my Department in conjunction with local authorities and the Housing Agency.

The categorisation methodology for the survey was different to that which was used in 2011 and which provided the basis for the waiver from the household charge. That earlier categorisation related largely to the level of on-site activity at the time the 2011 survey was carried out and had less to do with the physical character of a development. The 2012 survey was based purely and objectively on the actual state of completion of a development. Only developments that were deemed by local authorities to be in a “seriously problematic condition”, regardless of whether a developer was on or off site, were included.

For purposes of preparing the final list of developments to which the exemption from the local property tax would apply local authorities were asked by my Department to confirm or update the then existing list as appropriate.

### Ministerial Transport

229. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15672/13]

**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 employs two civilian drivers 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 in 2012 are set out in the following Table. The Table also sets out similar costs for the Minister of State Jan O’Sullivan for 2012.

-	Drivers Salaries €	Drivers Subsistence Costs €	Ministerial Mileage Costs €
Minister	82,235.31	14,274.54	24,359.29
Minister of State O’Sullivan	74,495.53	14,653.51	10,450.74
Totals €	156,730.84	28,928.05	34,810.03

### Role of Local Development Companies

230. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding local development companies (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15685/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** It is my intention that the expertise and experience of local development companies will be retained in the new structures outlined in Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government, for enhanced alignment between local government and local development.

In its report, the recommendations of which are incorporated in the Action Programme, the Alignment Steering Group recognised the key strengths of local development companies, in areas such as service planning and delivery. Programme funding will continue to be available to local development companies in respect of their involvement in such work.

The Alignment Steering Group identified the need for a more joined-up approach to service delivery at local level, focused on the targeting of resources at locally identified priorities and the avoidance of overlaps. The Group recommended inter alia the establishment of Socioeconomic Committees within each local authority area with responsibility for planning, oversight and management of all local and community development programming locally.

I believe these Socioeconomic Committees will bring greater strategic coherence to the broad range of local and community development supports at local level, for the benefit of our citizens and communities.

### Local Government Reform

231. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will retain the core functions and governance of town councils in any reforms of local authorities which would take into account appropriate and similar numbers of councillor members to the existing structures, retention of existing headquarters and staff and enhancement of the role and responsibilities of the town mayors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15687/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The Action Programme for Effective Local Government - Putting People First, which was published on 16 October 2012, sets out Government decisions for a range of measures in relation to local government structures, functions, funding, governance and operational matters. Chapter 6 of the Programme sets out policy decisions to replace town councils with a new comprehensive model of municipal governance based around principal towns to strengthen local government within counties and address weaknesses and anomalies in the current system. Key features of the new arrangements are also detailed, including governance, civic roles and an indicative listing of reserved functions of elected members at municipal district level.

I announced the establishment of a Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee on 15 November 2012 to review and make recommendations on local electoral boundaries having regard to the results of Census 2011 and the policy decisions announced in the Action Programme. The Committee has been asked to report no later than 31 May 2013 and its recommendations will provide the basis for the configuration and membership of the new municipal districts.

### **Rental Accommodation Scheme Criteria**

232. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide all circulars issued by his Department to local authorities regarding the operation of the rental accommodation scheme. [15692/13]

233. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide the most recent guidelines he has issued to local authorities for determining the applicable rents for rental accommodation scheme properties when entering into a contractual arrangement with the accommodation provider. [15693/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 232 and 233 together.

From the tenants' perspective, Guidance Note GN010 outlines a suggested approach to the transfer from the mechanism of rent contribution calculation under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) rent supplement scheme to that under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS). This guidance details the underlying principles of the Differential Rent model of calculation under RAS.

Guidance Note GN019 outlines the procedures to be followed by RAS officials when engaging in negotiations with landlords for properties under the RAS.

Circular letter 'Housing 13/12' reiterates earlier advice to local authorities on a number of matters relating to the administration and implementation of the Rental Accommodation Scheme including the attainment of value for money.

Following the receipt of an e-mail request from the Deputy on 19 March 2013 to forward any Circular issued by my Department to Local Authorities on the operation of the Rental Accommodation Scheme, copies of all Circulars and Guidance Notes issued to local authorities

since 2004 in respect of the scheme were e-mailed to the Deputy on 22 March.

### **Asylum Seeker Accommodation**

234. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will confirm the number of families in direct provision who have been allocated a single room. [15727/13]

257. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide in tabular form a list of all direct provision centres housing asylum seekers; the name of the private operator who runs each centre; the number of bathrooms in each centre; and the number of bedrooms in each centre. [15724/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 234 and 257 together.

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), a functional unit of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department, is responsible for the accommodation of asylum seekers in the direct provision system while their application for protection is being processed.

The following table provides information on the contractors currently providing accommodation services to asylum seekers in the direct provision system. The collation of the other information requested by the Deputy would require a detailed survey of all direct provision accommodation and such detail could not be produced without diverting scarce resources from other necessary activities.

#### **LIST OF CURRENT DIRECT PROVISION CENTRES AND CONTRACTORS 25/03/2013**

-	COUNTY		<b>DIRECT PROVISION ACCOMMODATION CENTRES [COMMERCIAL]</b>
1	CORK	Barlow Properties	Ashbourne Hse Hotel, Glounthane
2		D AND A LTD	Clonakilty Lodge, Clonakilty
3		Alan Hyde and Ted Murphy	Glen Vera, Wellington Road, Cork
4		Millstreet Equestrian Services Ltd	Millstreet Accommodation Centre
5	Donegal	Shane Timony	Cliffview, Donegal Town
6	Dublin Reception Centre	ECCI Ireland	Balseskin, St. Margarets, Co. Dublin
7	Dublin	Old George Ltd	Georgian Court, 77 - 79 Lower Gardiner St., Dublin 1

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-	COUNTY		<b>DIRECT PROVISION ACCOMMODATION CENTRES [COMMERCIAL]</b>
8		ECCI Ireland Ltd	Hatch Hall, 28A Lower Hatch St. Dublin 2
9		Mo Bhaile Ltd	The Staircase, 21 Aungier Street, Dublin 2
10		Fazyard Ltd	The Towers, Ninth Lock Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22
11	Galway	Maplestar Ltd	Eglinton Hotel, Salthill, Galway
12		Shaun Hennelly	Great Western House, Eyre Square, Galway
13	Kildare	Cherryport Ltd	Eyre Powell Hotel, Main St., Newbridge
14	Laois	Fazyard Ltd	The Montague Hotel, Emo, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
15	Limerick	Birch Rentals Ltd	Hanratty's Hotel, Glentworth St., Limerick
16		Baycaster Ltd	Mount Trenchard, Foynes
17		Westbourne Holiday Hostel Ltd	Westbourne Holiday Hostel, Dock Rd., Limerick
18	Mayo	Bridgestock Ltd	Old Convent, Abbey Street, Ballyhaunis
19	Meath	Mosney PLC	Mosney Holiday Centre,
20	Monaghan	Tattonward Ltd	St Patricks Former Agricultural College, Monaghan
21	Sligo	Bridgestock Ltd	Globe House, Chapel Hill, Sligo
22	Tipperary (South)	Millstreet Equestrian Services Ltd	Bridgewater House, Carrick-on-Suir
23	Waterford	Atlantic Blue Ltd	Atlantic House, Railway Square, Tramore
24		Oceanview Accommodation Ltd	Ocean View, The Esplanade, Tramore

-	COUNTY		DIRECT PROVISION ACCOMMODATION CENTRES [COMMERCIAL]
25		Stompool Investments Ltd	Birchwood House, Ballytruckle Road, Waterford
26		Millstreet Equestrian Services Ltd	Viking House, Coffee House Lane, Waterford
	COUNTY		DIRECT PROVISION ACCOMMODATION CENTRES [STATE OWNED]
27	Clare	Campbell Catering Ltd t/a Aramark Ireland	Knockalisheen
28	Cork	Campbell Catering Ltd t/a Aramark Ireland	Kinsale Road
29	Westmeath	Campbell Catering Ltd t/a Aramark Ireland	Lissywoolen Accommodation Centre, Athlone
30	Kerry	OFM Ltd	Atlas House, Killarney
31			Atlas House, Tralee
32			Johnston Marina, Tralee
33			Park Lodge, Park Road, Killarney

### Asylum Seeker Accommodation

235. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide, in a tabular format, the number of asylum seekers in temporary accommodation for one year, two years, three years, four years, five years and over five years. [15728/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), a functional unit of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department, is responsible for the accommodation of persons under the system of direct provision while their applications for international protection are being processed.

RIA itself has no function in determining whether someone should stay or not in its accommodation, except in the context of rare instances of serious and repeated misbehaviour. Its function is to provide accommodation and ancillary services to those who have sought international protection and who otherwise have no means of supporting themselves.

In relation to the information provided below which is collated from the RIA database, it

is important to note that it is not possible to specify exactly how long each person has resided in RIA accommodation. Protection applicants are not required to live in RIA accommodation and in many cases, may move in and out of the direct provision system as their circumstances change. The following information relates to the length of time that has elapsed since applicants for international protection who are in the direct provision system first made their application. Therefore, it does not necessarily mean that those persons have lived in RIA accommodation for all of that period.

Subject to the important clarifications as indicated above, the information sought by the Deputy is as follows: number of persons in RIA accommodation for up to one year since they lodged their application is 593, between one year and two years is 489, between two years and three years is 533, between three and four years is 622, between four and five years is 806 and in excess of five years 1,712.

I acknowledge that the length of time spent in direct provision is an issue to be addressed and I have taken a number of steps to speed up the processing of applications including re-deployment of resources and the establishment of a legal panel to assist INIS in processing a cohort of repatriation cases. I would expect to see significant dividends, in terms of cases finalised, from this initiative in the coming months. Further, I plan to republish the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2010 to create a single procedure for the processing of applications. These steps will reduce the time a person spends in direct provision while they await a final decision on their case.

Finally, it should be noted that there are significant numbers of persons living in RIA accommodation who may have exhausted the protection process but who await the outcome of court proceedings on aspects of their cases.

### **Asylum Support Services**

236. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his Department's decision to opt out of Council Directive 2003/9/EC which sets down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers ensuring the most basic of human rights are met including minimum standards of accommodation, food and clothing, family unity, medical and psychological care, and access to education and language courses for children; and if not, his reasons for not opting into the Receptions Directive. [15729/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Following the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty the legal basis for Council Directive 2003/9/EC laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers is Article 78(2)(f) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Accordingly, the provisions of the EU Treaty Protocol on the position of the United Kingdom and Ireland in respect of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice applies. The Protocol provides that Ireland may opt-in to a measure to which the Protocol applies. Ireland did not participate in the adoption and application of the 2003 Directive and there are currently no plans to exercise an opt-in in relation to it.

The principal reason for Ireland's position is the provisions of Article 11 of the 2003 Directive which deals with access to the labour market for asylum seekers. Article 11 provides that if a decision at first instance has not been taken within one year of the presentation of an application for asylum, and this delay cannot be attributed to the applicant, Member States shall decide the conditions for granting access to the labour market for the applicant.

This is contrary to the existing statutory position in Ireland which provides that an asylum

seeker shall not seek or enter employment. This prohibition in Irish law is maintained in the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, which I intend to republish.

Extending the right to work to asylum seekers would almost certainly have a profoundly negative impact on application numbers, as was experienced in the aftermath of the July 1999 decision to do so. The immediate effect of that measure was a threefold increase in the average number of applications per month leading to a figure of 1,217 applications in December 1999 compared with an average of 364 per month for the period January to July 1999.

Any change in public policy in this area would have to have regard to the very large numbers of people unemployed in this country.

### **Asylum Seeker Accommodation**

237. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of asylum seekers in direct provision who have died year on year between 2005 and 2012; and cause of death in each instance. [15731/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) is responsible for the accommodation of asylum seekers under the Government policy of direct provision and dispersal.

The collation of statistics on deaths of asylum seekers living in direct provision commenced in 2002. During the period 2005 to 2012, there have been 39 deaths of asylum seekers who were residing in direct provision accommodation prior to their deaths.

While RIA may have general knowledge of the cause of death - perhaps by way of information arising from the specified medical needs of the resident concerned prior to his or her death - it does not, indeed cannot, hold or have access to death certificates. In most cases, the deaths would have occurred outside the asylum centres themselves e.g. in hospitals. If the HSE or a Coroner were to raise an issue relating to the accommodation in which a deceased person lived prior to their death - and this has never happened - then RIA would respond accordingly. Where information is provided to centre managers by relatives or friends of the deceased, this is recorded by RIA and indicates that the causes of death ranged from cancers, heart conditions to traffic accidents and, in the case of deaths of children under the age of five, it is believed that a number were suspected cot deaths and still births. Given previous misinterpretations of statistics provided in this respect, it is important to say that only one of these deaths can with certainty be said to be a suicide and that involved a newly arrived asylum seeker taking his own life in 2008 while in hospital.

The number of asylum seekers who died between 2005 and 2012 while being provided with accommodation by RIA in direct provision centres is set out in the following table.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Deaths</b>
2005	6
2006	4
2007	8
2008	7
2009	1
2010	6
2011	1

Year	Number of Deaths
2012	6
Total	39

While all of these deaths are, of course, tragic, RIA has provided accommodation for over 50,000 persons over the course of the twelve years the direct provision policy has been in place, and the numbers of deaths need to be viewed proportionately and against this background.

It needs to be recorded that the above relates only to asylum seekers living in the Direct Provision system. Some asylum seekers choose not to avail of the Direct Provision system and stay with friends or relatives. It is possible that, during the period in question, there could have been deaths among this cohort but such data is not available to RIA.

### Prisoner Releases

238. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total cost incurred by the Prison Service of a visit (details supplied) in County Roscommon; if he will provide a breakdown of the costs; the number of members of staff, and the grade, that accompanied the visit; the protocol used when deciding on allowing such visits; and if visits such as this are normal practice [15378/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I can advise the Deputy that the prisoner referred to was afforded an escorted visit, in the company of an Acting Chief Officer and a prison Chaplain, to a family grave on the 21 March 2013. The prisoner had previously been granted an escorted visit, again accompanied by an Acting Chief Officer and a Chaplain, to view the remains of their parent, in private, away from the public and other family members at the funeral home. The prisoner did not attend the funeral mass or burial. It should also be noted that the escort only took a few hours and was on condition that the staff resources were available to carry out same.

The Deputy will be aware that it is open to all prisoners to apply for compassionate temporary release or for escorted visits, in the company of prison staff, for significant family occurrences such as funerals, communions or confirmations etc. All requests for temporary release or escorted outings are considered on a case by case basis and subject to appropriate security considerations.

Prisoners may be approved escorted visits on compassionate/humanitarian grounds to the graveside of a close family member in the event of a bereavement at a later stage if they are not permitted to attend the funeral. A number of criteria is considered prior to granting the applications including the prisoners remission date, behaviour in prison and engagement with the therapeutic services within the prison. The safety of the public and any possible victim issues are also taken into account.

In this case the prisoner is due for release early next year and their behaviour and engagement with services, in particular the Psychology Service is very good. There was no risk to the public and the local Gardaí were informed prior to the escort taking place.

The need to escort prisoners outside prisons arises routinely in a number of contexts and prison staff are assigned to carry out these duties as part of their day to day work. Therefore, I can advise the Deputy that no additional expenditure would have been incurred as a result of this escort.

## Proposed Legislation

239. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps being taken and legislation planned to make it more difficult for crime gangs to be involved in illegal activity involving smuggling, laundering and counterfeiting as outlined in the report Tackling the Black Market and Retail Crime (details supplied); if he will form an interdepartmental group to deal with this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15389/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** As I have previously informed the House I am aware of the Report to which the Deputy refers and of its findings.

Of course, as Minister for Justice and Equality, I am also acutely aware of the involvement of organised crime groups in the activities referred to by the Deputy.

As highlighted in the Report, crime of this nature has very negative repercussions for the State in terms of the adverse impact on the legitimate retail sector, the loss of significant tax revenues and the potentially harmful consequences for consumers.

While the lead role in investigating this type of crime primarily rests with the Revenue Commissioners, in the context of the investigation of revenue offences occasioning significant financial losses to the Exchequer, it is the case that there are significant multi-agency law enforcement efforts already underway targeting such activity.

In particular, I would draw the Deputy’s attention to the multi-agency cooperation initiatives that have been established with colleagues in Northern Ireland to target much of the activity referred to on an all island basis. I refer, in particular, to the cross border task forces in place to specifically target the distribution of illegal fuels and tobacco products.

These task forces comprise representatives from the PSNI, HM Revenue Customs, Serious Organised Crime Agency (UK), the Revenue Commissioners, An Garda Síochána and the Criminal Assets Bureau and have had considerable successes in tackling this form of criminality.

With regard to the question of further legislative proposals, the Deputy will appreciate that primary legislation concerning revenue offences does not fall under the remit of my Department. Having said that, I can inform the Deputy that in the context of reviewing the overall legislative response in place to tackle organised crime, my Department is currently undertaking a specific review of the provisions of the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 to see if its provisions can be strengthened and the views of the Garda Commissioner have been sought in this regard.

Finally, while I note that the Report calls for the establishment of an interdepartmental group, under the auspices of the Department of an Taoiseach, to deal with fraud affecting the retail trade, I am satisfied that the existing structures for achieving multi-agency co-operation represent the most effective approach.

## Semi-State Bodies Remuneration

240. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15412/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am interpreting the Deputy's question in the following manner so as to provide the information which I believe he is seeking. The term State Boards is somewhat imprecise as it includes bodies with a wide and diverse range of functions many of which would not fall into the more commonly understood definition of Board which is a body with a governance oversight of an organisation. To be of assistance to the Deputy I have interpreted "Directors" to mean people who are on Boards of State Bodies under the aegis of my Department and who have governance oversight of the organisation under their remit.

Therefore, I am to advise the Deputy that the total of €526,738 was paid in respect of fees, salaries and other remuneration during 2012. Finally, the Deputy should note that the costs of some of the bodies under the aegis of my Department are covered in whole or in part by fee income from their activities.

### **Residency Permits**

241. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in respect of determination of application for residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15426/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The person concerned is a failed asylum applicant. Arising from the refusal of her asylum application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 27th February, 2009, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the then Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against her. In addition, she was notified of her entitlement to apply for subsidiary protection in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006.

The person concerned initiated judicial review proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal in her case. As these proceedings are ongoing, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the case of the person concerned at this time.

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.

### **Garda Transport Expenditure**

242. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of money spent annually on taxi services by An Garda Síochána in each region over the past two years, 2011 and 2012. [15436/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Garda Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote. In that context, I am informed by the Garda authori-

ties that details of the expenditure incurred by An Garda Síochána on taxi services are not recorded separately and would require a disproportionate amount of Garda resources to compile. In the circumstances I regret that I am not in a position to provide the information sought by the Deputy.

### Garda Transport Expenditure

243. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of money spent on vehicle maintenance in each Garda region in 2012. [15437/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The arrangements made in relation to the maintenance of Garda transport are a matter for the Garda Commissioner and the Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote. In that context, I am informed by the Garda authorities that the maintenance costs for Garda vehicles broken down by Region, including the provision of spare parts, tyres and towing, for 2012 were as set out in the following table:

Region	Expenditure
DMR	€2,864,261
Southern	€1,770,606
Eastern	€1,114,539
Northern	€948,247
South Eastern	€935,522
Western	€900,076
National Units	€2,170,180

### Garda Reserve

244. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he intends resurrecting the Garda Reserve Force in order that their hours may be used at more beneficial times, such as St. Patrick's Day parades or sporting events, which would mean less rostering of full members at these times. [15438/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Deputy will be aware that the detailed allocation of all resources, including Garda Reservists, throughout the organisation is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner in consultation with his senior management and I have no direct function in this matter. On 28 February 2013, the latest date for which figures are readily available, there were over 1,000 Garda Reserves throughout the country.

The range of powers and duties of Reserve Gardaí is a matter for the Garda Commissioner to determine under section 15 (5) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005. Such duties include policing at the outer cordon of major events such as festivals and major sporting events.

### Garda Stations Refurbishment

245. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations under the ownership of his Department; the number under the ownership of the Office of Public Works; and if any are owned by any other State agency. [15440/13]

246. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total cost of property maintenance of Garda stations owned by his Department on a station basis for 2012. [15441/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 245 and 246 together.

In relation to the Garda stations operating in the State, the details are provided on the Garda Síochána website and I would refer the Deputy to the relevant webpage at [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie).

The general position is that the properties which serve as Garda stations are owned or leased, on behalf of the State, by the Office of Public Works. However, a limited number of Garda stations are vested in the Minister for Justice and Equality and the stations concerned are Midleton, Kenmare, Callan, Urlingford, Dundalk, Castleblaney, Trim and Waterford.

The Garda Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote. In that context I have been informed by the Garda authorities that financial operating cost statements are not maintained at Garda station level. In the circumstances the Deputy will appreciate that the specific financial information he has sought is not readily available and I understand that the provision of such information would require a disproportionate amount of Garda time and resources which are required for other purposes.

### **Ministerial Transport**

247. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality arising from the Government decision in 2011 not to provide State cars for Ministers and other senior and retired persons, the number of cars that were involved for this purpose at the time of decision; the number of cars that are currently in use for this purpose; the number of the cars that were sold; the make, year and sale proceeds of each car; the number of cars, make and year of any cars that have not yet been sold; the number, make and purchase price of any car that has been purchased since the Government decision; the number of gardaí who drove these cars that retired on foot of this decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15451/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I have sought the relevant information from the Garda authorities and I will contact the Deputy further in relation to this matter as soon as possible.

### **Gambling Legislation**

248. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the methods that will be used to identify and protect minors in relation to gambling issues; the number of Gardai inspections that have taken place since the establishment of the casino gaming controls section of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15463/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I expect to be in a position quite soon to provide the information sought by the Deputy on the methods to be used to identify and protect minors in relation to gambling. However, I am unable to do so at this point since I have not yet obtained the Government's approval for my proposals. The proposals are in the General Scheme of the proposed Gambling Control Bill which I hope to present to the Government within the coming weeks. I plan to make the Scheme available on my Department's website once it has been approved.

I can, however, say at this stage that the new legislation will strengthen the protections available to consumers generally, with additional measures being included that are aimed at protecting vulnerable persons; that term refers primarily to persons under 18 years and to persons who have developed gambling problems, including addiction.

I envisage a new inspection team whose major task will be to monitor compliance by licence holders with the terms of their licence and with the new legislation generally. It will have strong enforcement powers. Licence holders, for their part, will be required to train staff on how to spot problem or excessive gambling and on how and when to intervene. There will be prohibitions on the employment of young persons, they will not be permitted to participate in gambling, there will be arrangements for age verification checks.

I believe that the industry must accept greater responsibility for the down - side of gambling. One of the ways in which this will be done is to require licence holders to contribute to a social responsibility fund, the aim of the fund being to support research, education and treatment programmes. I will also be proposing restrictions on advertising, promoting and sponsoring of events by licence holders if these activities are targeted at young people.

The examples I have mentioned give an indication of the comprehensive scale of the planned measures. However, we are all aware that regardless of whatever the law might provide, there will be particular difficulties in enforcing age and identity checks in the case of online gambling, much of which will be done from home. It therefore seems clear to me that the effective enforcement of rules and procedures for online gambling will require the active involvement of parents and others, particularly teachers. This may mean that parents must monitor the young person's internet and telephone usage and they must never share their PIN or similar number with anyone under 18 years.

I have requested information on the number of inspections by Gardaí of gaming establishments. I will communicate with the Deputy when it becomes available.

The Deputy's question appears to suggest some linkage between the discharge by the Gardaí of their functions and the existence of a particular unit in my Department. It is very important that there should be clarity about the respective roles and functions of the Gardaí and of the named unit, or any other part of the Department. I have already referred to the creation of, in effect, a new, dedicated inspectorate under the new legislation; it will probably take over many of the roles currently assigned to the Gardaí and others. However, pending the enactment and coming into force of the new systems, the enforcement of the current law will continue to be a matter primarily for the Garda Síochána, although the Revenue Commissioners also have certain functions. The Garda Síochána is, of course, independent in the discharge of the duties imposed on it by law. It makes its own determinations on operational grounds, taking account of general priorities, the resources available and other relevant factors.

The Casino and Gaming Control Section in my Department, on the other hand, has no function in relation to law enforcement. Its functions include advising me of developments in the sector, formulating general policy, conducting consultations, such as the public consultation in 2010, the preparation of draft legislation, as well as specific statutory functions such as the preparation of Certificates of Personal Fitness in the case of certain applicants for bookmakers' licences under the Betting Act 1931. The Section operates in accordance with the practices and procedures applicable to the public service generally.

## **Naturalisation Applications**

249. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a naturalisation application in respect of a person (details supplied); the current processing times for such applications; when a decision will be reached in this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15478/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in February, 2012.

The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. Excellent progress continues to be made in reducing the large volume of cases on hands, with some 47,000 applications decided since I came to office, many within 6 months of receipt. However, the nature of the naturalisation process is such that for a broad range of reasons some cases will take longer than others to process. It is a statutory requirement that, inter alia, applicants for naturalisation be of good character. In some instances that can be established relatively quickly and in other cases completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Naturalisation Applications**

250. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a naturalisation application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; the current processing times for such applications; when a decision will be reached in this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15479/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in February, 2012.

The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. Excellent progress continues to be made in reducing the large volume of cases on hands, with some 47,000 applications decided since I came to office, many within 6 months of receipt. However, the nature of the naturalisation process is such that for a broad range of reasons some cases will take longer than others to process. It is a statutory requirement that, inter alia, applicants for naturalisation be of good character. In some instances that can be established relatively quickly and in other cases completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizen-

ship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Citizenship Applications**

251. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the way a person (details supplied) with dual citizenship may apply for Irish citizenship; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15504/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Officials in the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) inform me that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's question.

Section 15 of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation provided certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must:

- be of full age
- be of good character
- have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a total residence in the State amounting to four years
- intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation
- have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows —
  - (i) made a declaration, in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and
  - (ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

In the context of naturalisation, certain periods of residence in the State are excluded. These include:

- periods of residence in respect of which an applicant does not have permission to remain in the State
- periods granted for the purposes of study
- periods granted for the purposes of seeking recognition as a refugee within the meaning of

the Refugee Act, 1996.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended.

An EEA national would be required to submit proof of residence in the State amounting to a total of five years in the last nine years, to include the year prior to application. Three different proofs of residence for each year showing name and address for this period i.e. household bills (gas, electricity, phone or cable/satellite TV), bank statements, revenue letters, mortgage agreement, social welfare, letter from employment, doctors letters etc. are necessary.

The acquisition of Irish citizenship is not contingent on the renunciation of the citizenship of another jurisdiction. However, the Deputy should be aware that persons who obtain Irish citizenship may, as a result, lose or be at risk of losing their existing citizenship(s).

I should remind the Deputy that queries in relation to the status of individual Immigration cases may be made direct to INIS by Email using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. The service enables up-to-date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek this information through the more administratively expensive Parliamentary Questions process.

### **Legal Aid Applications**

252. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will investigate the way a person (details supplied) in County Kerry was refused free legal aid when their spouse qualified for legal aid with the same means; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15622/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I wish to inform the Deputy that I have no function or responsibility in relation to the matter raised. Under the terms of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995, as passed by the Oireachtas, the Legal Aid Board is independent in the operation of its functions and decisions on individual cases are a matter for the Board. Under Section 7(3) of the Act, I am precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any particular case with which the Legal Aid Board is or may be concerned.

The Deputy might further wish to note that the solicitor/client relationship is protected by privilege in accordance with the terms of Section 32 of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 and therefore the Board does not provide information to third parties regarding a person who may or may not be a client of the Board.

Finally, while I can advise the Deputy that a person who is refused legal aid has the right to appeal this decision to an Appeal Committee which is made up of non-executive members of the Board, again I have no role in this process.

### **Ministerial Transport**

253. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15677/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Government introduced a number of changes for the provision of Office Holder transport during 2011. 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 security 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 16th June 2011.

Office Holder cars are currently placed at the disposal of the President, An Taoiseach, An Tánaiste, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, the Chief Justice and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

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 would allow for the identification of costs associated with individual Office Holders. However, the Garda authorities have indicated that a breakdown of expenditure on the provision of Office Holder transport in 2012 is as outlined in the following table:

Category	Cost
Salaries & Overtime	€2,042,000
Travel & Subsistence	€110,000
Other	€49,000
Total	€2,201,000

The Garda authorities do not have details of Ministerial transport costs which are not charged to the Garda Vote.

### Unaccompanied Minors and Separated Children

254. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of separated children seeking asylum here who have gone missing on a yearly basis between 2005 and 2012; and the number of these children whose whereabouts remains unknown. [15720/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** As the Deputy may be aware the HSE has primary responsibility under the Child Care Act, 1991 for the care of separated or unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the State. In that regard, any persons deemed to be unaccompanied minors by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) are referred to the HSE under Section 8 of the Refugee Act, 1996.

On referral by the ORAC, the HSE determines whether it is in the child's interest to have an application for asylum made on their behalf. In the event that an application is made, I am advised that the HSE then assists the minor throughout the asylum process, including accompanying the minor during the course of their asylum interview.

I am also advised that the HSE takes all necessary steps to ensure the safety and welfare of these young people. Children who are unaccompanied and are seeking asylum are received into the care of the HSE under the Child Care Act 1991. They are allocated a social worker, their needs are assessed and a Care Plan is developed. These children are generally placed in a foster

care family placement, although some older children are placed in regulated residential facilities that cater for small numbers. Younger children are, as a matter of policy, placed in family placement. The overall numbers of unaccompanied children seeking asylum has decreased significantly in recent years. There were 26 such applications in 2011 and 23 in 2012.

In relation to the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers who are declared to be missing, I can advise the Deputy that the latest figures are being compiled and will be forwarded to her as soon as possible by my colleague the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs who has overall responsibility in this area.

### **Asylum Support Services**

255. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of women in direct provision who have reported incidents of domestic violence on a yearly basis between 2005 and 2012. [15722/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), a functional unit of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department, is responsible for the accommodation of persons under the Government system of Direct Provision. While accommodation services are provided by RIA, other State supports are provided by the appropriate Government Department or agency, i.e., health services are provided through the HSE, social welfare supports through the Department of Social Protection and Education through the Department of Education & Skills, etc.

Residents in direct provision accommodation may, from time to time, present to centre management reporting incidents of domestic violence. Such reports would, as a matter of course be referred to RIA and onwards to the HSE social work team or An Garda Síochána if appropriate. Under the RIA's Child Protection policy, a referral to HSE social work would also be made where children are involved. While such information would be held on a resident's file within RIA, statistics on this basis are not compiled.

RIA is currently working with Cosc (the National Organisation for the prevention of domestic, sexual and gender based violence) and a number of non - governmental organisations including Akidwa and the Rape Crisis Centre, to develop a policy around incidences of domestic, sexual and gender based violence and harassment within its centres. In advance of the completion of that policy, RIA has created an information poster which will shortly be distributed to its centres. These posters will provide information on accessing professional help if they have suffered or are suffering from domestic, sexual or gender based violence or harassment. This poster will be available in five languages including English.

### **Asylum Support Services**

256. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of women in direct provision who have reported incidents of malnutrition on a yearly basis between 2005 and 2012. [15723/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), a functional unit of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department, is responsible for the accommodation of persons under the Government system of Direct Provision. While accommodation services are provided by RIA, other State supports are provided by the appropriate Government Department or agency, i.e., health ser-

vices are provided through the HSE, social welfare supports through the Department of Social Protection and Education through the Department of Education & Skills, etc.

Residents living in direct provision may complain about issues they have with eating the food available on a personal basis. Such complaints can be made to centre management or to RIA. Where a resident has issues with their diet, they can provide a diet sheet from their doctor to centre management and those needs are addressed. Where necessary, diet sheets and supporting medical documents may be forwarded by RIA to an independent medical referee for review and advice on how best to address specific needs. While such information may be held at the accommodation centre or on the person's file in RIA, statistics in relation to certified dietary requirements are not compiled.

In relation to the dietary element of direct provision, all accommodation centres are contractually obliged to ensure that menus reflect different ethnic tastes or requirements and are cycled on at least a seven day basis to ensure variety. In the case of State owned properties, and the larger accommodation centres, 56 day menu cycles are in place. In other centres, a 28 day menu cycle is in place. A growing number of centres – at least 15 to date – have obtained a 'Q' Quality Mark (or equivalent), which involves considerable examination of quality and procedures. It should be noted that it is not a contractual requirement to obtain such awards. Mechanisms for making and addressing complaints about centre operations, including food complaints, are outlined in considerable detail in RIA House Rules and Procedures, which are widely available in centres and on the websites of the Department of Justice and Equality and the Reception & Integration Agency. The House Rules were extensively launched by RIA with opportunities made available to all residents to attend explanatory presentations on the document.

RIA conducts inspections and other formal and unannounced visits to all centres throughout the year which focus, inter alia, on food, food hygiene, HACCP standards and other quality checks. The HSE's Environmental Health Officers have full access to accommodation centres and visit those centre regularly. Any issues arising are raised with the contractor for urgent action and follow-up visits are undertaken as appropriate.

In relation to child nutrition, RIA, in partnership with the HSE, introduced Healthy Infant Feeding Guidelines for families in accommodation centres in 2005. These Guidelines seek to promote, among asylum seekers in RIA accommodation, healthy feeding practices for small children.

*Question No. 257 answered with Question No. 234.*

### **Departmental Contracts**

258. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 453 of 12 March 2013, if he will provide the full projected unitary cost of the Criminal Courts of Justice complex between 2007 up to and including February 2035, including the projected budgeted 43% of the unitary charge subject to indexation based on the CPI each year, projected budgeted items paid for on a per usage basis and VAT. [15732/13]

259. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No: 453 of 12 March 2013, if he will provide a breakdown of the monthly €1.6 million unitary charge payment; the amount of the payment that is for design and construction of the Criminal Courts of Justice complex, financing, insurance, ICT and the services provided by G4S. [15733/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 258 and 259 together.

As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions, including the provision and maintenance of accommodation for court sittings. As I informed the Deputy in my reply to Question No. 453 on 12 March, the contract between the Courts Service and the Public Private Partnership Company (PPPCo) provides for a single monthly unitary charge payment to cover the design, construction, financing and service provision in the Criminal Courts of Justice. The financial model underpinning the monthly unitary charge formed a central element of the extensive negotiations undertaken by the Service prior to entering into the contract with the PPPCo. I am further informed that this information is commercially sensitive and its release would have implications for the Courts Service's negotiating position for future public private partnership projects. As previously stated, the CCJ contract is between the Courts Service and the PPPCo and ongoing amounts paid by the PPPCo to its subcontractor G4S for the provision of services are part of their internal financial and contractual arrangements. The services provided by the PPPCo through its subcontractor G4S include security, cleaning, maintenance, facilities management, energy and utilities management, health and safety, helpdesk and portering.

Under the terms of the contract, the PPPCo has to provide the facilities and the services in the Criminal Courts of Justice to a required standard and in accordance with a performance regime as set out in the contract. Failure to meet these standards or failure to have all or part of the Criminal Courts of Justice available for use during the course of the contract period will result in financial penalties being incurred by the PPPCo. As the Criminal Courts of Justice will be handed over to the Courts Service in an "as built" condition in 2035, the contract provides that the PPPCo is responsible for the ongoing maintenance, including replacement costs for the fabric, contents and equipment in the Criminal Courts of Justice. In the 2011 Annual Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General, the total expenditure to February 2035 was projected at €625.4 million. The current annual commitment for the Criminal Courts of Justice base unitary charge is €21.9 million (including VAT). In 2013, annual indexation provisions increased the unitary charge by approximately €200,000. In future years, any increases or decreases will depend on the CPI published by the Central Statistics Office on an annual basis. Therefore, it is not possible to predict this in advance. However, I understand the projected costs of the project mentioned above assumed an inflation rate of 2% over the period of the project.

The total amount paid on volume related items, such as jury minding and jury meals, will be based on the usage for these items over the lifetime of the contract. As a consequence, the Courts Service has informed me that it is not possible to predict in any meaningful manner expenditure to 2035 on such items. Expenditure will depend on unpredictable factors such as the number and length of jury trials. In addition, the Courts Service has indicated that it can discontinue the use of the PPPCo for the provision of such services once the contracted notice period is provided. Expenditure on volume related items in 2012 was €650,000, including VAT. As I mentioned in my reply of 12 March, there have ongoing operational savings for other criminal justice agencies, including the Irish Prison Service and An Garda Síochána resulting in more members of An Garda Síochána being released for front line duties, in addition to considerable savings on lease costs. Finally, as stated previously, this PPP contract was dealt with in detail by the Comptroller and Auditor General in his 2008 Annual Report and was also examined by the Committee of Public Accounts in July 2010.

### **Semi-State Bodies Remuneration**

260. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Defence the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15406/13]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The only body under the aegis of my Department is the Army Pensions Board. The Army Pensions Board is an independent statutory body established under the Army Pensions Act 1927. The main functions of the Board are to investigate applications for pensions, allowances and gratuities. The Act specifies that the Board shall consist of a chairman and two ordinary members. The two ordinary members must be qualified medical practitioners: a civilian doctor and an officer of the Army Medical Corps. The chairman and the civilian doctor are appointed by the Minister for Defence with the concurrence of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The Army Medical Corps doctor is appointed by the Minister for Defence on the recommendation of the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces. The chairperson and the civilian doctor are entitled to annual fees of €7,618 and €5,079 respectively.

### Ministerial Transport

261. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Defence the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15670/13]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** In accordance with a Government Decision of 15 March 2011, I retain a State car and Garda drivers in my capacity as the Minister for Justice and 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, Deputy Paul Kehoe, was assigned two civilian drivers in May 2011. Any mileage and car related expenses due to the Minister of State, Deputy Kehoe, are met by the Department of the Taoiseach. The costs associated with the drivers are met by the Department of Defence and amounted to €101,285 for the period 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2012.

### Coillte Teoranta Harvesting Rights Sale

262. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the concerns regarding the sale of Coillte forests (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15395/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Further to the Government's decision that a concession for the harvesting rights to Coillte's forests be considered for sale, the National Treasury Management Agency, via its NewERA Unit, engaged with Coillte, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and my Department to examine the financial and other implications of a potential transaction. Substantial work has been undertaken to date on the identification of the forestry assets involved, the determination of their value and the consideration of a number of issues associated with the proposed sale of the harvesting rights. The replanting obligation, the future management of the estate, the maintenance of existing amenities and public access to recreational land are all being considered in the current analysis. The Government is fully conscious of the concerns that have been raised by the general public, recreational groups, the timber processing sector, trade unions and members of the

Oireachtas in relation to the Coillte sale proposal. The Government will proceed with caution in relation to this matter and no final decision has been taken, as yet.

### Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

263. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a REP 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. [15401/13]

**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. These checks have been successfully in this case completed and payment in respect of 2012 will issue shortly.

### Semi-State Bodies Remuneration

264. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15402/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The details of the fees paid to Board members of the twelve State Bodies operating under the aegis of my Department for 2012 are outlined in the table.

Body/Agency	No of Board Members	Term of Office	Board Fees per Annum
Aquaculture Licensing Appeals Board	7	2 – 5 years	Chair: €8,978 Board member: €5,985
An Bord Bia	15*	3 years	Chair: €20,520 Board member: €11,970
Bord Iascaigh Mhara	6	3 years	Chair €11,970 Board Member €7,695
Bord na gCon	7	3 years	Chair: €21,600 Board member: €12,600
Coillte	9	5 years As long as he shall remain CEO of Coillte or 5 years whichever is the shorter	Chair: €21,600 Board member: €12,600
Horse Racing Ireland	14	4 years	Chair: €21,600 Board member: €12,600
Irish National Stud	7	Not a fixed term appointment	Chair: €12,600 Ordinary member: €8,100
Marine Institute	9	5 years	Chair: €11,970 Board Member: €7,695

Body/Agency	No of Board Members	Term of Office	Board Fees per Annum
National Milk Agency	14 including Chair	3 year s for elected members	Chair: €8,978 No remuneration is paid to Board members, only expenses.
Sea Fisheries Protection Authority	3	5 years	Authority is comprised of 3 staff. No additional remuneration paid to Authority members.
Teagasc	11*	5 years	Chair: €20,520 Board member: €11,970
Veterinary Council	19	4 years	No remuneration is paid to Board members

\* Board members of State Bodies who are officials of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine do not receive board fees.

### Agriculture Schemes Eligibility

265. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps and criteria to be followed by a person to apply for entitlements under the national reserve. [15429/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The National Reserve caters for new entrants to farming. In order to qualify for entitlements from the National Reserve applicants must have a herd number or have applied to their local District Veterinary office for a herd number prior to closing date of the Single Payment application. In addition applicants must have submitted an application under the current Single Payment scheme providing details of the number of eligible hectares farmed.

Applicants are required to meet certain criteria, which varies through the scheme years, with regard to income limits and educational qualifications. Under the 2012 National Reserve applicants must have commenced farming after 17 May, 2010. Any off-farm income cannot exceed €30,000 and total income, including farm income, cannot exceed €40,000. Also applicants must have obtained a FETAC Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Agriculture or its equivalent.

Funds in the National Reserve are limited and the Reserve is only replenished by the value of entitlements that remain unused. Should there be a 2013 National Reserve scheme, it will be announced early April as has been the case for the previous Schemes.

### Forestry Sector

266. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding Coillte (details supplied); the action being taken to stop the sale of forestry areas since the publication of Peter Bacon's report and the other available commentary and analysis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15481/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Further to the Government's decision that a concession for the harvesting rights to Coillte's forests be considered for sale, the National Treasury Management Agency, via its NewERA Unit, engaged with Coillte, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and my Department to examine the financial and other implications of a potential transaction. Substantial work has been undertaken to date on the identification of the forestry assets involved, the determination

of their value and the consideration of a number of issues associated with the proposed sale of the harvesting rights.

NewERA, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and my Department are currently considering the report by Peter Bacon and Associates, commissioned by IMPACT, containing an “*Assessment of the Consequences of the proposed Sale of Coillte’s Timber Harvesting Rights – 10 January 2013*”. The report by EPS Consulting for the Irish Timber Council, “*The impacts on the sawmill sector arising from the proposed sale of Coillte’s harvesting rights*”, is also being considered as part of the analysis. The Government is fully conscious of the concerns that have been raised by the general public, recreational groups, the timber processing sector, trade unions and members of the Oireachtas in relation to the Coillte sale proposal. The outcome of the overall analysis, which is ongoing, will be considered by the Government upon its conclusion with no decision to be taken on Coillte until it is discussed at Cabinet.

### Departmental Schemes

267. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when applications under the equine technical and equine breeding schemes National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 will be decided; the number of applications on hand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15485/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** A total of 38 applications have been received for grants from this year’s allocation under the National Development Plan 2007-2013 Equine Technical and Equine Breeding Schemes. These applications are currently being assessed and it is hoped to conclude consideration of them in the next few weeks.

### Animal Carcass Disposal

268. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will consider expanding the subsidy for the collection and destruction of bovine animals to all ages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15626/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The disposal of dead farm animals is subject to EU Regulations, notably Regulation (EC) No 1069 of 2009. The basic legal requirement is that animals, which die on farms, must generally be disposed of through approved rendering plants.

My Department provided substantial funding towards the collection and destruction of all fallen bovines for a number of years until 2009. This was justified as part of Ireland’s response to the BSE crisis and as a means of protecting our valuable beef industry. In view of budgetary constraints and the greatly reduced incidence of BSE, the revised TSE Subsidy Scheme which was introduced in April 2009 was designed to subsidise the cost of collection and rendering only of fallen bovines which need to be BSE tested as required by EU regulations.

The current subsidy level for the collection of bovines over 48 months of age, for sampling, as required under the ongoing national BSE surveillance programme, is €30 (excluding VAT) for collection and €58 (excluding VAT) for rendering, per animal. Expenditure during 2012 was €5.778m and the budget for 2013 is €5.89m. It is not considered appropriate or necessary at this point to reintroduce funding for the collection and rendering of fallen bovines which do not require to be BSE tested.

## Commonage Lands

269. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will put measures in place for the gradual restocking of commonages areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15628/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Commonage lands form an important part of the farming enterprises of many farmers, particularly along the West Coast. They also form an important part of the local environment from the point of view of bio-diversity, wildlife, amenities and economic returns e.g. tourism. However, there is a substantial risk of land abandonment as under-grazing become more of a problem.

Under-grazing leads to an increase in ineligible land under Direct Aid and Agri-Environment Schemes and leads to risk of financial corrections being imposed by EU Commission. It is vital, therefore, to maintain the commonages in GAEC, or where there is under-grazing, to return the habitat to GAEC. It is my stated aim that this will be achieved by working with the farmers directly managing the lands, relevant State Agencies, the farming organisations and all other interested stakeholders.

I readily acknowledge that it will not be an easy task, but it is achievable if we all work in a co-operative basis. If action is not taken now, the areas will continue to deteriorate and will lead to more land abandonment. If this is allowed to happen, we will lose a valuable resource from the point of view of farming, rural economy, bio-diversity and wildlife. While grazing is the only method of managing these lands, the task facing us is how to ensure that these grazing levels are appropriate to the individual commonages.

In order to ensure that we achieve this objective, as already stated, we need the input of individual shareholders. Grazing plans, at the level of each commonage, will allow for greater flexibility for shareholders and will enable the active farmers to increase their stock to cater for dormant and inactive persons. It will be matter for agreement between the shareholders – as was always the case – to decide how best to reach the stocking levels. Professional assistance will be required, in particular where the commonage has been damaged by under-grazing.

The Grazing Plan will have to cater the traditional farming methods for the area, with provision made for sheep and other animals, such as cattle, providing that they are appropriate to the habitat. An appropriate time-scale will have to be put in place but the Plan should include the incremental steps to achieve GAEC. The whole concept will be output driven, in that the assessment of the Plans will be based on whether the commonage is in GAEC or not or whether the appropriate progress has been achieved.

Apart from ensuring that the Grazing Plan is valid, there are a number of other complications, including:

- Dormant shareholders – in the majority of cases, these persons are no longer farming; and
- Current claimants on the commonages, who do not farm or manage the lands.

The issue of whether the latter claimants will continue to be eligible for payment will have to be examined.

There are other issues that will need to be considered. These include the fact that many commonage habitats have been significantly damaged by under-grazing, with resulting problems that must be addressed including land abandonment, spread of scrub and invasive species.

### Commonage Lands

270. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the protections available for farmers whose commonages areas are being trespassed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15629/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Decisions affecting privately owned land are a matter for the individual owners or commonage shareholders to resolve with any person, who may be trespassing on their land. My Department has no role in this matter in relation to private land and the owners or commonage shareholders should seek legal advice to ascertain what remedies are available to them against trespassers.

### Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

271. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment of the agri-environment options scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15635/13]

**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 and has received full payment totalling €840.57 in respect of 2011.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check of all applications, 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 a checking process which includes verifications of capital investment through checks on receipts. These checks have been successfully completed and the outstanding 2012 payment will issue shortly.

### Ministerial Transport

272. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15666/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The amount spent by my Department on transport for the Minister of State and myself for the year 2012 is set out in the table below.

Salary related costs of Civilian Drivers	Travel & Subsistence costs of Civilian Drivers	Mileage Costs of the Minister	Mileage Costs of the Minister of State	Other travel costs, including airfares for the Minister	Other travel costs, including airfares for the Minister of State
€162,406.18	€27,228.50	€18,368.16	€17,142.05	€9,938.16	€1,325.12

### Youth Services

273. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding funding in respect of an organisation (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if she

will make a statement on the matter. [15472/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department provides a range of funding schemes, programmes and supports to the youth sector. Funding of some €53.173m is available in 2013 to support the provision of youth services and programmes to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. Targeted supports for disadvantaged, marginalised and at risk young people are provided through the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2 and Local Drugs Task Force Projects. These funding schemes support national and local youth work provision to some 400,000 young people and involve approximately 1,400 paid staff and 40,000 volunteers working in youth work services and communities throughout the country.

Youth Affairs Unit provides funding to the organisation in Co. Wicklow, referred to by the Deputy, under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (Rounds 1 and 2) and for a Youth Information Centre.

The Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) published in December 2011 sets out clearly the savings required from my Department in each of 2012, 2013 and 2014. The CRE contained a detailed seven page chapter outlining savings required from youth work funding. The CRE requires a 10% saving in 2013 with a lesser saving in 2014. Having regard to the savings requirements identified in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure my Department has tried to ensure that, in the determination process for the allocations, the front line youth services, particularly those for the most vulnerable young people are protected as far as is possible from the impact of any necessary reductions in funding.

My Department has commenced a comprehensive Value for Money and Policy Review of youth funding and this report is expected later this year. It is anticipated that this report will inform the provision of funding for youth programmes/services going into the future.

### **Children in Care**

274. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of occasions on which the Health Service Executive has offered to take children in direct provision into care, or partial care, in cases of severe malnourishment or other illness. [15725/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy with the most up-to-date information.

### **Semi-State Bodies Remuneration**

275. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15404/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I would like to inform the Deputy there are four agencies which are funded by the Exchequer through my Department's Vote. These are the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI); the Family Support

Agency (FSA); the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) and the Ombudsman for Children. With effect from 1 January 2012, I have taken responsibility for the Children Detention Schools as provided in Part 10 of the Children Act 2001. Apart from the Ombudsman for Children's Office which does not have a board, I am responsible for all Board of Management appointments.

The total cost to the Exchequer for my Department's Boards of Management amounts to €145,853. There were no annual remuneration fees paid to Board members of the National Education Welfare Board or the Children Detention Schools. The annual remuneration paid to Board members of the Family Support Agency and the Adoption Authority of Ireland amounted to €50,873 and €94,9820 respectively.

### **Youth Services**

276. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason that funding for Youth Work Ireland, Galway, projects under SPY, YPFSF and YIC have been cut by 10% retrospectively from 1 January 2013, rather than the expected 6.5%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15473/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department provides a range of funding schemes, programmes and supports to the youth sector. Funding of some €53.173m is available in 2013 to support the provision of youth services and programmes to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. Targeted supports for disadvantaged, marginalised and at risk young people are provided through the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2 and Local Drugs Task Force Projects. These funding schemes support national and local youth work provision and involve approximately 1,400 paid staff and 40,000 volunteers working in youth work services and communities throughout the country.

The Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE), published in December 2011, set out the savings required from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Having regard to the savings requirements identified in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure my Department has tried to ensure that, in the determination process for the allocations, the front line youth services, particularly those for the most vulnerable young people are protected as far as is possible from the impact of any necessary reductions in funding.

My Department has commenced a comprehensive Value for Money and Policy Review of youth funding and this report is expected later this year. It is anticipated that this report will inform the provision of funding for youth programmes/services going into the future. In addition my Department is developing a new youth policy framework for publication later this year. The new youth policy framework will aim to enhance the provision of youth services and activities and it will, inter alia, promote co-ordination between government departments and youth sector organisations with a view to maximising the effectiveness of the State funding available to support services for young people in future years.

### **Child Care Costs**

277. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to make child care universally affordable; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15646/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** My Department currently provides support to parents to assist them with the cost of childcare. This support is provided through the provision of two targeted childcare support programmes - the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme and the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programme - and the universal Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. These support programmes are available to parents who enrol their children in childcare services which are approved to participate in the programmes.

The CCS programme provides funding to community-based childcare services to enable them to provide childcare at reduced rates to parents in receipt of social welfare payments or on low incomes. For the purpose of the CCS programme, eligibility is determined by reference to a range of means-tested allowances and payments including receipt of a social welfare payment, Family Income Supplement (FIS) and qualification for a medical or GP visit card. Eligibility for a GP visit card is based on net income and takes account of outgoings such as rent and mortgage repayments and other expenses including childcare costs and travelling expenses. As a result, middle and low income working parents may also qualify for support. Parents who qualify for the top rate of subvention under the programme receive €95 per week towards full-day childcare costs.

The CETS programme provides €145 towards the weekly cost of full time childcare places to participating childcare services for trainees and students who are deemed qualified by FÁS or the VEC. Students on part-time courses are funded on a pro rata basis. The ECCE programme provides one free pre-school year to all eligible children in the year before commencing primary school. Children aged between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 6 months at 1 September in the relevant year qualify for a maximum of 15 hours per week free pre-school provision over a 38 week period. This is a universal programme to which all children have access.

In 2013, the total expenditure by my Department on these three programmes is expected to be in the region €260 million. These programmes have been maintained despite the ongoing need to reduce Government expenditure and they represent a significant investment in supporting parents with the cost of childcare. You may also be aware that, as part of Budget 2013, I announced with my colleague the Minister for Social Protection, a joint school age childcare initiative which will provide further additional support to both the community and private childcare sector. This initiative, which represents an annual investment of €14 million, will provide important support to parents in low income families wishing to take up employment, along with ensuring that quality after-school care is in place to support children's development.

Future developments relating to early years care and education will be considered during preparation of the new National Early Years Strategy which is currently being developed by my Department. This Strategy will cover a range of issues affecting children in their first years of life such as health, family support, learning and development and care and education and will identify the structures and policies needed to improve early year's experience in Ireland.

## **Youth Services**

278. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the rationale for removing the administration of funding from Youth Work Ireland's national office to the City of Dublin Youth Service Board; the amount of money that this will save in 2013 and subsequent years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15662/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** In 2013, €36.358m will be distributed by my Department to 477 youth projects throughout the country.

Up to 2012 the allocations were distributed to the youth projects through 39 administering agencies/bodies that held funding administration status. These include VECs, national youth organisations and 11 other bodies including some county councils. The City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB), a statutory board established in 1942, under the City of Dublin VEC, is one such body. The CDYSB, on behalf of CDVEC, has for several years, undertaken the administration of over 50 youth projects in the Dublin City area and has developed a strong track record in managing these payments.

My Department is seeking to streamline the tasks associated with the financial management of funding for projects to achieve greater transparency and efficiency in the administration of funding. For these reasons, from January 2013, it was decided to transfer the administration of the allocated funding for some 30 youth projects, involving six national organisations, including Youth Work Ireland, to CDYSB. The new administration process will be monitored during 2013 for efficiency and effectiveness for the Department and for the projects concerned. Discussions have taken place between officials of my Department and the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) on this issue and it is intended that further meetings will take place.

It is expected that the successful streamlining of the administration of the funding for the youth projects will deliver benefits in terms of saving on the administration costs incurred under the present arrangements and efficiencies for both the Department and projects themselves. It is not possible to identify such savings at this early stage of the process. All such efficiencies are important in a context where significant savings are being sought on the €51.423m funding provided in 2013 for youth programmes and youth projects and services throughout the country. Every effort is being made by my Department to ensure that, in the administration of the funding allocations in the present challenging budgetary situation, the focus is maintained on the provision of the front line services for young people.

### **Ministerial Transport**

279. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in her Department for 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [15668/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** In line with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines on ministerial appointments, I employ 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 €65,929 was paid in civilian driver salaries in 2012. 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 €5,416 was paid in 2012 in this regard. In addition, mileage claims totalling €15,354 in respect of the use of my personal car have been paid in 2012.

### **Medical Card Applications**

280. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their medical card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15544/13]

**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.

### **Domestic Violence Refuges**

281. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide in tabular form the number of women and the number of children refused access to domestic violence refuges yearly from 2006 and 2012. [15711/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I would like to advise the Deputy that the information sought is not collected by the Health Service Executive. However, I have been informed by the HSE that there is ongoing work to establish a standardised data collection template for all HSE funded services for victims of Domestic, Sexual and Gender based violence. The information requested by the Deputy for the number of children refused access to domestic violence refuges will be collected and collated for 2013.

### **Home Care Packages**

282. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an extensive home care package in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15379/13]

**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.

### **Primary Care Services**

283. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the role he envisages for private health insurers in the provision of primary care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15397/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Minimum benefit is one of the key principles on which the Irish private health insurance regulatory system is based. Minimum Benefit Regulations, made under the Health Insurance Acts, require insurers to offer a minimum benefit to every insured person. The key purpose of the Regulations is to ensure the continued availability of the type of broad hospital cover traditionally held as a minimum by the insured population and to ensure that individuals do not significantly under-insure. The inclusion of primary care services in health insurance products is not a statutory requirement, as the primary purpose of current health insurance legislation is to provide cover for hospital treatment within an appropriate regulatory system.

This Government is committed to a single-tier health service, supported by universal health insurance (UHI), which provides equal access based on need, not ability to pay, and which delivers the best health outcomes for everyone. Under UHI, everyone will be insured for a standard package of curative services comprising primary and hospital care services, including mental health services. Health insurance will be mandatory, with a system of financial support ensuring affordability by paying or subsidising the cost of insurance premiums for all those who qualify. The system will be founded on principles of social solidarity, including financial protection, open enrolment, lifetime cover and community rating.

The introduction of UHI will see the purchasing of primary and hospital care largely devolved to insurers. Health insurers will commission care for their members from primary care providers, independent not-for-profit Hospital Trusts and private hospitals. In doing this, they will have a duty to use their purchasing role to ensure that quality, continuous care is provided at the lowest level of complexity that is safe, timely, efficient and as close to a person's home as possible. Furthermore, in line with the fundamental principle of social solidarity, neither insurers nor providers operating within the UHI system will be allowed to sell faster access to services covered by the UHI standard package of care. While it is envisaged that supplementary insurance may be purchased for items not covered by the standard package, this may not interfere with the fundamental overriding principle of access to care being based on need.

My Department is currently undertaking detailed work in relation to the preparation of a White Paper on Universal Health Insurance. This White Paper will provide further detail on the UHI model for Ireland in addition to the estimated costs and financing mechanisms associated with its introduction. The work involved is both complex and technical and demands a wide-range of specialised legal and financial expertise. My Department has recently engaged specialised legal expertise to support work in relation to the design of the UHI model and work in this area is underway.

### **Medical Card Applications**

284. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** 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. [15398/13]

**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.

### **Semi-State Bodies Remuneration**

285. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Health the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15410/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The information requested is currently being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

286. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Carlow will receive heart surgery [15432/13]

**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, which has 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.

### **Medical Card Applications**

287. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a medical card application for a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15446/13]

**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.

### **Health Services Access**

288. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the supports available for those with foetal valproate syndrome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15564/13]

**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.

### **Health Services Access**

289. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding social worker support in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 17 [15565/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As the issue raised by the Deputy relates to a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

### **Disability Support Services Provision**

290. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the progressing disability services for children and young people programme by the Health Service Executive for County Kerry; if services will now change from provision for children aged zero to six years to children aged zero to 18 years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15647/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The HSE has recognised the need to increase the level of consistency and standardisation in the way both early intervention services and services for school-aged children with disabilities are delivered. It is currently engaged in a re-configuration of existing therapy resources to geographic based teams for children (0-18 years) as part of the National Programme on Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (0-18 years). The Programme is organised at national, regional and local level and includes representatives from the health and education sectors, service providers (both statutory and non-statutory) and parents. These stakeholders are working together to see how current services can be reorganised in line with agreed policy. The HSE has stated that it is very cognisant of stakeholder's views particularly of parents within this context. It has also worked to

ensure that information about the Programme is made widely available.

The Executive is working very closely with the education sector, which is fully involved in the development of the Programme, to ensure that, from the children's and parents' perspective, the services provided by each sector in so far as possible are integrated. Detailed Local Area action plans are being implemented with the following objectives:

- One clear pathway to services for all children with disabilities according to need,
- Resources used to the greatest benefit for all children and families, and
- Health and Education working together to support children to achieve their potential.

The purpose of the reconfiguration of existing therapy resources is to ensure that the resources available are used to best effect, in order to provide health supports and ongoing therapy to all children (0-18 years) in line with their prioritised needs. In particular, it will mean that all children, regardless of where they receive their education services will have equitable access to services based on their needs. Decisions in relation to the local reorganisation of services will be made by Local Implementation Groups, which include representatives of all the service providers in the local area, parents and the education sector. They have a complex task which includes agreeing the principles which should underpin all disability services, mapping of existing services and gaps, consideration of the changes needed in structures and a detailed plan of how to advance. This plan will include issues of timing and the phasing of proposed changes. My Department has asked the HSE to provide the Deputy with detailed information on the implementation of the Programme in Kerry which he has referred to in his question.

### **Alcohol-Related Illnesses**

291. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the total figure being spent nationally in treating patients for diseases and illnesses that are attributed to alcohol consumption; if he will provide a county breakdown of the same figure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15648/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** The National Substance Misuse Strategy Steering Group reported that alcohol-related illness cost the healthcare system an estimated €1.2 billion in 2007. It further reported that it was estimated that of this figure, €500 million was in the acute hospital sector, €574 million was in General Practitioner and allied health services and €104 million was in mental health services.

### **Underage Drinking**

292. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Health if there is a programme in place nationally to educate adults about the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15649/13]

293. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the action his Department is taking in primary, secondary and third level schools in terms of alcohol awareness education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15650/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 292 and 293 together.

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 Steering Group report. These proposals cover all of the areas mentioned in the report. These include the recommendations to further develop a co-ordinated approach to prevention and education interventions in relation to alcohol between all stakeholders in educational institutions (including third level); to seek greater co-ordination of prevention activities at both national and local levels to target, among others, drink-related anti-social behaviour/public order offences, excessive drinking generally, and those who are pregnant or likely to become pregnant; and to continue the development and monitoring of Social and Personal Health Education (SPHE) Programme in schools.

In addition, the National Substance Misuse Strategy Steering Group recommended low-risk weekly guidelines of alcohol consumption for men and women; and that labels on alcohol products sold in Ireland should include the number of grams of alcohol per container, along with calorific content and health warnings in relation to consuming alcohol in pregnancy. As this is a service matter, I have referred this question to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **HSE Properties**

294. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Health if the Health Service Executive is continuing to pay rent for a premises (details supplied) in County Dublin despite the discontinuation of the service there; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15651/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Management of healthcare property is a service issue. Therefore, your question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

### **Hospital Accommodation Provision**

295. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a respite care bed will be provided to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry in a community hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15654/13]

**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.

### **Ministerial Transport**

296. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15675/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The information requested is detailed below:

**Total paid in respect of travel during 2012**

<b>Minister/Minister of State</b>	<b>Driver Pay €</b>	<b>Driver Subsistence etc €</b>	<b>Mileage &amp; other travel costs €</b>	<b>TOTAL €</b>
James Reilly, T.D.	88,151.80	15,023.45	15,092.44	118,267.69
Kathleen Lynch, T.D.	79,660.79	11,480.03	15,921.62	107,062.44
Alex White, T.D.	12,593.92	0.00	3,339.11	15,933.03
Roisin Shortall, T.D.	0.00	0.00	3,664.31	3,664.31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>180,406.51</b>	<b>26,503.48</b>	<b>38,017.48</b>	<b>244,927.47</b>

Note: the Travel and Subsistence costs shown include travel and subsistence paid in 2013 for 2012 and exclude travel paid in 2012 for 2011.

### Medical Card Applications

297. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry and if he will expedite the matter [15684/13]

**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

298. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a medical card application in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kerry. [15688/13]

**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.

### Suicide Prevention

299. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding suicide legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15690/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** Suicide is a tragedy that we are constantly working to prevent and also working to give more support to the families affected. Dealing with the current high levels of suicide and deliberate self harm is a priority for this Government. *Reach Out* our National Strategy for Action on suicide Prevention makes a number of recommendations in relation to fast track referrals to community-based mental health services, effective response to deliberate self harm, training, stigma reduction, etc. Consequently, the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) has developed a range of initiatives to support people who are suicidal and also supporting their families, friends and peers in recognising and responding appropriately to signs of emotional distress and sui-

cidal thoughts.

It is not accurate to state that suicidal thinking in females will be legitimised by the State by legislation. As the Deputy will know, last December the Government approved the implementation of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the *A, B and C v. Ireland* case by way of legislation with regulations, within the parameters of Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court in the *X* case. It also agreed to make appropriate amendments to the criminal law in this area. The aim of the Bill is solely to regulate access to lawful termination of pregnancy in accordance with Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution as interpreted in the *X* case.

As the Deputy is aware, Article 40.3.3° of the Constitution was inserted by the Eighth Amendment in 1983 and is as follows:

The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.

In *Attorney General v. X*, the Supreme Court considered the meaning of the Eighth Amendment in the circumstances that arose in the case. The case concerned a girl of 14 years of age and the threat to her life was from suicide. The Supreme Court analysed and interpreted the text of Article 40.3.3 and decided that the Constitution permitted abortion in certain limited and particular circumstances, namely, where there was a real and substantial risk to the life of the woman, which could only be removed by terminating the pregnancy. Article 40.3.3° of the Constitution as interpreted in the *X* case judgment is the law of the State and the Oireachtas is legally bound to adhere to this interpretation. In order for the risk of suicide to be removed as a ground for lawful abortion, a referendum must be held. Indeed, two referendums have been held to attempt to remove the risk of suicide as a ground for lawful abortion and they were both defeated.

### **Medical Card Applications**

300. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide in tabular form the shortest, longest and average waiting time yearly between 2006 and 2012 for medical card applications. [15700/13]

**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**

301. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical card applicants who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and 12 months for their claims to be processed. [15701/13]

**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.

### **Speech and Language Therapy**

302. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of children who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and 12 months to be assessed by the Health Service Executive for speech therapy. [15704/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The particular issue of speech and language supports that has been raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly, I have arranged for the Deputy's questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hearing Impairment Assessments**

303. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of children who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and 12 months to be assessed by the Health Service Executive for a hearing test. [15705/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** The information requested is currently being collated by the HSE and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

304. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of children who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and twelve months to attend Health Service Executive provided counselling psychologists [15706/13]

305. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and twelve months to attend Health Service Executive provided counselling psychologists. [15707/13]

306. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and twelve months to attend the national counselling service. [15708/13]

307. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of children who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and 12 months for treatment by the Health Service Executive to tackle an eating disorder. [15709/13]

308. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults who are waiting over three months, six months, nine months and 12 months for treatment by the Health Service Executive to tackle an eating disorder. [15710/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 304 to 308, inclusive, together.

The Government has prioritised the reform of our mental health services and is committed in particular to the delivery of more and better quality care in the community as envisaged in *A Vision for Change*. In 2012, a special allocation of €35 million was provided for mental health to be used primarily to further strengthen Community Mental Health Teams in both adult and children's mental health services, to advance activities in the area of suicide prevention, to initiate the provision of psychological and counselling services in primary care, and to facilitate the transfer of mental health service users from institutional to community based care.

Recruitment of over 330 of the additional 414 posts approved in 2012 has been completed and the HSE is aiming to fill the remaining posts in the very near future. A further €35 million was provided in budget 2013 for the continued development of mental health services across a range of headings, including the further ongoing development of community services and 477 posts have been approved to implement these measures. Discussions are ongoing within the HSE, and in consultation with the Department of Health to finalise the allocation of these resources and commence recruitment. I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy with the specific details requested relating to waiting times.

### **Speech and Language Therapy**

309. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be assessed for their speech impediment treatment by the Health Service Executive, and if he is satisfied with current waiting times for such assessment which in this instance has been nine months to date. [15712/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The particular issue of speech and language supports that has been raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly I have arranged for the Deputy's questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Asylum Support Services**

310. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the medical and psychological services offered to men, women and children housed in direct provision centres. [15726/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As the issue raised by the Deputy relates to a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

### **Asylum Support Services**

311. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the actions his Department has taken to support vulnerable asylum seekers in direct provision following the National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention (2005-2014) identification of this section of the population as particularly at risk of mental health problems, self-harm and other suicidal behaviours. [15730/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** Suicide is a tragedy that we are constantly working to prevent and also working to give more support to the families affected. Dealing with the current high levels of suicide and deliberate self harm is a priority for this Government. *Reach Out* our National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention makes a number of recommendations in relation to fast track referrals to community-based mental health services, effective response to deliberate self harm, training, stigma reduction, etc. Since the launch of *Reach Out* and the establishment of the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP), there has been a significant amount of cross-sectoral working which has resulted in considerable advances in suicide prevention.

Asylum seekers are not specifically identified within *Reach Out: National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention* however their specific mental needs are recognised by the health

services. The NOSP through regional suicide prevention services offer Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and SafeTALK to a variety of community gatekeepers who are working with and supporting vulnerable groups including asylum seekers. The NOSP has additional training programmes focused on self harm which can be delivered to community members.

The primary care and mental health services are available to all members of Irish society. The aim of the HSE is to build the capacity and knowledge of staff working in frontline statutory and non-statutory services to meet the specific needs of all diverse groups in Irish society. All the frontline services from the voluntary sector funded by the NOSP including Samaritans, Pieta House, and Console should be available to asylum seekers and their families who may be in need of support or information. In addition the NOSP funds, My Mind which is a community-based not for profit organisation, voluntary service provider that specialises in providing psychological support services at a community level through counsellors and psychologists who speak 15 different languages. The NOSP has been able to access this service for asylum seekers looking for support or in suicidal crisis. The NOSP has also produced a number of information resources in several languages in order to support different communities to look after their mental health.

Finally, the Director of the NOSP welcomes a dialogue with the representatives from any group in Irish society that has evidence that members of their community may be at risk of suicide or self harm. The NOSP can advise and support such vulnerable groups using proven evidence approaches that have worked with other population groups in Ireland e.g. LGBT and Traveller communities.

### Suicide Prevention

312. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health in view of the fact that there have been 27 suicides in the past 20 days, if he has given serious consideration to setting up an organisation such as the Road Safety Authority which was set up to prevent road deaths; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15736/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** The HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) was established in 2005 on foot of a recommendation in 'Reach Out' our National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention. The role of NOSP is to oversee the implementation of *Reach Out* and to coordinate suicide prevention initiatives around the country. The National Office is advised and guided by an advisory group comprising individuals with considerable knowledge and expertise in the areas of suicide prevention, mental health promotion and bereavement support. In addition NOSP publishes an Annual Report outlining its activities and work each year so it is fully accountable. I believe that a commitment to evidence based programmes and partnerships with a common purpose is what is required to address the issue of suicide and this role is being carried out at present by the National Office.

Earlier this year, the NOSP established a Group to review the current activities in the area of suicide prevention and to determine the priorities within this area to ensure that we maximise available resources. The Group will also review current national and international evidence on effective approaches in suicide prevention and will consider how the emerging evidence base can be used to inform the remaining period of the *Reach Out* strategy and influence new policy on suicide prevention beyond 2014.

The Government has increased the annual budget for suicide prevention this year to over

€13m, with €8.1m available to the NOSP to fund voluntary and statutory agencies delivering services in the area of prevention, intervention, postvention and research and the remaining €5m available regionally to fund Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention, Self-Harm Liaison Nurses in Hospital Emergency Departments and local suicide prevention initiatives. I have no plans to establish an organisation such as the Road Safety Authority, however, the Department of Health is currently in discussions with the NOSP to agree a strategy for suicide prevention in 2013 having regard to the increased funding available this year and the concerns around suicide generally. Priority initiatives will include the further development of existing National Mental Health Awareness campaigns to promote help seeking; increased training for GPs and practice staff; the training of acute hospital staff on suicide and self harm intervention; the development of the SCAN (Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurse) model which allows for crisis interventions at primary care and continued investment in voluntary agencies providing frontline services.

*Question No. 313 answered with Question No. 15.*

### **Driving Licence Issues**

314. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the risk to jobs posed by changes to driving licences and the subsequent impact on retail photographic ID providers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15377/13]

**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 'specialist unit' based in the RSA headquarters.

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 is digital and is not 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. At present, and until September next, local authorities will continue to process driver licence applications and non-digital photographs will be accepted. 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.

*Question No. 315 answered with Question No. 18.*

### **State Bodies Remuneration**

316. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the total cost to the taxpayer of paying the aggregate fees, salaries and any other remuneration to directors of all State bodies, to include majority State owned banks, all public interest directors, all

semi-State bodies, all State agencies and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15415/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the relevant annual reports and accounts of the individual agencies under the aegis of the Department.

### **Taxi Regulations**

317. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason a number of taxi drivers have not registered on the driver check app despite the National Transport Authority's completion date of 31 January for final date of registration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15468/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** The regulation of the taxi industry is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the Public Transport Regulation Act, 2009 and the NTA is also the lead agency with responsibility for implementation of the recommendations of the Taxi Regulation Review Report 2011, including the implementation of the new taxi driver check smartphone app. 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.

### **Taxi Regulations**

318. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason, despite the primary licensing organisation, An Garda Síochána, and the carriage of-fice issuing a renewal licence the National Transport Authority is taking upwards of 90 days to process the photographic licence on display to the public; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15469/13]

**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 issues relating to the SPSV driver identification, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (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.

*Questions Nos. 319 and 320 answered with Question No. 9.*

### **Tourist Accommodation**

321. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which hotel bed accommodation fluctuated in each of the past five years to date; the degree to which future requirements are likely to be met in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15547/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Comprehensive data on hotel accommodation capacity and occupancy are contained in the Tourism Facts bulletins for the relevant years which are available in the Research section of the Fáilte Ireland

website, <http://www.failteireland.ie/Research-Insights.aspx>. The bulletin for 2012 is not yet available but at March 2012 there were 856 hotels registered in Ireland with a total of 57,859 rooms and 135,011 beds. Fáilte Ireland's accommodation occupancy statistics for the period January to September 2012, also available on the website, show hotel occupancy rates of 64%, an increase of 5% on the same period in 2011. Hotel room capacity fell by 3% between 2011 and 2012.

These statistics indicate that we have a sufficient stock of hotel rooms for the coming years and indeed Fáilte Ireland had previously estimated that there will be an overcapacity of approximately 7,000 rooms in 2015, based on overseas visitor numbers returning to 2008 levels.

### **Tourism Promotion**

322. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which the interlinking of air transport and tourism facilities can be achieved with a view to maximising potential growth of the industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15548/13]

323. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which the interlinking of air transport and tourism facilities may be achieved with a view to maximising potential growth of the industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15549/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 322 and 323 together.

Developing more air services from Ireland to global destinations and bringing more tourists from overseas are two of the key policies set out in the Government's 2013 Action Plan for Jobs. From a regulatory perspective my Department aims to ensure that there are no legal or regulatory impediments to the introduction of air services by negotiating bilateral air services agreements with third countries where necessary. The market for air services in and out of Ireland is highly competitive with a very significant number of airlines operating.

Tourism Ireland, the agency with responsibility for the overseas promotion of Ireland as a tourist destination, continues to invest in cooperative marketing activity with airlines. Additional capacity has been secured between Ireland and the US and current indications are that transatlantic capacity for summer 2013 will be higher than summer 2012, with up to 133 departures per week, providing just over 31,000 seats in each direction. This represents a 26.6% increase in capacity, or just over 6,500 additional seats per week, compared to summer 2012. Furthermore additional connectivity direct from Dublin has been achieved through Emirates' hub in Dubai which provides greater ease of access to Ireland from Australia as well as the emerging tourism markets in the Middle East and Asia.

I will continue to act as a champion for improved air access to Ireland, be it increased capacity on existing routes or the development of new routes. Negotiations are ongoing with a number of carriers for additional capacity linked both to general traffic demand and the increased traffic expected over the course of 'The Gathering Ireland 2013'.

*Question No. 324 answered with Question No. 58.*

### **Abbey Theatre**

325. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will outline the mission statement of his Department in respect of Tourism, Transport and Sport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15551/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Mission Statement of my Department is: “To ensure that the transport, tourism and sport sectors make the greatest possible contribution to economic recovery, fiscal consolidation, job creation and social development.”

This Mission Statement is set out in the Department’s current Statement of Strategy and 2011 Annual Report, both of which are available from the Oireachtas Library and from my Department’s Website.

### **Ferry Operations**

326. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which existing ferry services are adequate to meet demand; his preferred options for the future in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15552/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Deputy asked me a similar question in February 2013. Ireland is well serviced in terms of ferry connectivity as the market offers a diverse range of viable maritime links in and out of the State. This is vital to facilitate trade and tourism. There are currently six shipping lines providing passenger services, with approximately 500 sailings weekly between Ireland and Britain and continental Europe, depending on the time of year. All ferry companies servicing these routes are commercial companies and, as such, their services are market driven.

Competition in the sector is encouraged and I expect services to develop and expand to meet any increased market demands in the future. In the past, ferry operators have responded to market developments and demands for increased capacity when required, as shown in their response to the Volcanic Ash crisis in 2010. My Department through its agency, the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO), works closely with all existing operators and continues to promote Ireland as a location for new services.

As the Deputy will be aware, this is a particularly important year for Irish tourism with The Gathering Ireland 2013 now underway and over 3,000 individual gatherings confirmed on the Gathering website. The overall target is to attract at least 325,000 extra overseas visits to Ireland in 2013. Tourism Ireland continues to mount a major consumer campaign to promote The Gathering to people overseas that feel linked by family, friends or otherwise with Ireland. In this regard the agency is undertaking cooperative activity with the major airlines and ferry operators to highlight the value fares that are on offer. This activity will continue throughout 2013.

### **Tourism Promotion**

327. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which it is planned to maximise opportunities for tourism and the promotion of the national image through sport and sporting events; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15553/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** The matter raised is an operational one for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy’s

question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if a reply is not received within ten working days.

*Question No. 328 answered with Question No. 18.*

### **Air Services Provision**

329. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his preferred options for the future development of Ireland as an international hub for air transport; the extent to which he expects the various airlines to participate in such a project with resultant economic benefit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15555/13]

330. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his preferred options for the future development of the airline passenger industry with particular reference to the role he sees for the major carriers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15556/13]

334. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his preferred options in regard to the future development of the air transport passenger sector with particular reference to the respective roles of Aer Lingus and Ryanair and any possible merger; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15560/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 329, 330 and 334 together.

The overarching goal of our current strategy for the aviation sector as outlined in my Department's Statement of Strategy 2011-2014 is to ensure that it supports Ireland's economic and social goals in a safe, competitive, cost effective and sustainable manner and ensures maximum connectivity between Ireland and the rest of the world.

Within this context, one of my key priorities is the successful restructuring of Shannon airport. A key initiative for the new merged Shannon entity will be the development of an international aviation services centre in and around the airport.

In a wider national context, the Deputy may be aware that I have launched a process to develop a national aviation policy. Taking account of the issues that were raised at an initial Conference late last year, I published an Issues paper for consultation on my Department's website on 1 March 2013. Rather than stating any preferred options, I have invited contributions from the industry and all stakeholders about what measures should be included in a new aviation policy to facilitate the continued development of all aspects of the sector in Ireland and to maximise its contribution to the economy.

Following receipt of submissions, a draft National Aviation Policy Statement will be issued in the second half of 2013. That will provide further opportunity for stakeholder input before the adoption of the policy in early 2014.

*Questions Nos. 331 and 332 answered with Question No. 58.*

### **State Airports**

333. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he and his Department continue to monitor passenger volumes at the various na-

tional, international and regional airports throughout the country with a view to addressing any issues likely to affect their viability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15559/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** My Department regularly monitors passenger numbers at all Irish airports. As the Deputy will appreciate, trends in these numbers are key indicators of the underlying airport business. The viability of those airports is a matter, in the first instance, for the Board and management of those entities.

*Question No. 334 answered with Question No. 329.*

### **Tourism Promotion**

335. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to develop winter tourism here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15642/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if a reply is not received within ten working days.

### **Road Maintenance**

336. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to reward local authorities that are less dependent on central Government funding for road maintenance and repair. [15643/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

In determining the annual non-national road grant allocations, the overall objective is to resource each local authority in as fair and equitable a manner as is possible within the Exchequer resources available and using a well established methodology which is applied equally to all local authority areas. I do not currently have any plans to reward, or otherwise, individual local authorities as circumstances differ considerably between them in terms of road lengths, population numbers and other relevant factors.

### **Tourism Promotion**

337. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if recent State initiatives to develop winter tourism has yielded positive results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15644/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if a reply is not received within ten working days.

## Ministerial Transport

338. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the full cost of ministerial transport and the breakdown of this cost between salaries, mileage allowance and other travel costs for Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15680/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The total cost of drivers in 2012 (including salary, overtime, extra attendance and expenses) for myself and the two junior Ministers in my Department amounts to €263,145. Total Ministerial mileage paid in 2012 is €57,305. Total subsistence paid to Ministers in 2012 is €15,950. Information regarding other travel costs i.e. flights, is being prepared and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

## Road Improvement Schemes

339. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide special grant to widen and provide ancillary services, footpath and lighting to the road from Ballyspillane Industrial Estate, Killarney, extending to SPA GAA complex (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [15689/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

The Department has allocated a total of €349.462 million to local authorities for works on regional and local roads in 2013. Of this figure a total of €13,809,639 has been allocated to Kerry County Council. This figure is in addition to the funds that the Council will allocate from their own resources to such works.

My Department recently wrote to local authorities offering additional flexibility this year by allowing Councils to transfer resources into their discretionary grant from their Restoration Improvement Grant to ensure funding is targeted at the areas which are most in need. When doing so councils have been asked to focus on maintenance and rehabilitation works.

The Department's moneys for roads have now been fully allocated.