

Written Answers.

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

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

National Lottery Licence Sale

9. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide an update on his plans to sell off the national lottery licence; if he will outline his timetable for when the legislation will be passed and when he estimates that the sell off will take place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17738/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy is aware, I announced in April 2012 that there will be a competition for the next National Lottery licence. The competition will involve an upfront payment by the operator of the next licence to the State, a portion of which will be used to help build the new National Children's Hospital.

The National Lottery Bill was published in December 2012. The Bill was debated at Second Stage in the Dáil on 29th January, 5th February and 6th February 2013. It passed Committee Stage on 27th March 2013 and Report and Final Stages on 17th April 2013. It is expected that the Bill will be enacted in May of this year, subject to its successful passage through the Seanad.

The preliminary phase of the competitive process is expected to commence in the next few days. However, the full and formal process will not commence until after the Bill is enacted. The process is likely to run until August or September 2013, at which stage a preferred bidder will be chosen. It is anticipated that receipt of the upfront payment will materialise in the fourth quarter of this year. It is expected that the new 20 year licence will commence in 2014, subject to transitional arrangements.

National Lottery Licence Sale

10. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the mechanism he is putting in place to ring-fence part of the proceeds of the sale of the national lottery licence for major capital projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17844/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy is aware, this issue was discussed in depth during the debates in the Dáil on the National Lottery Bill 2012. At Committee Stage, I gave a formal commitment that when the competition for the next National Lottery licence is concluded and the Exchequer is in receipt of the upfront pay-

ment, which will be payable by the successful bidder, I will revert to the Committee in relation to the arrangements for the upfront payment.

As I have stated on numerous occasions, it is intended that part of the upfront payment will be used to help build the National Children's Hospital. I am committed to ring-fencing the sum involved for that purpose.

EU Funding

11. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has contacted the EU Commission on the latest Central Statistics Office figures revealing the current GDP per capita in the BMW region; its impact on the region's status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12677/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): On 8 February 2013 the European Council reached agreement on the EU's budget for 2014-2020. The budget has to be agreed with the European Parliament and discussions are now taking place with the Parliament under the aegis of the Irish Presidency.

In line with reductions to the overall EU budget, Cohesion funding across Europe is expected to be reduced from €347 billion to around €325 billion. Nevertheless, while the precise details remain to be worked out, Ireland's overall Structural Funds allocation is expected to increase from the €901 million we receive under the current round to €979 million in the 2014 - 2020 round. This represents a considerable achievement, and is due to the consistent efforts of the Government to maximize support from Europe for our Structural Funds programmes and take particular account of our serious unemployment problems.

In the case of the Border, Midland and Western Region however, the allocation it receives was reduced. This is because the region no longer qualified as a transition region since its GDP per capita exceeded 90% of the EU average in 2007-2009 - the period used to determine the status of regions across the EU for the purposes of the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020 and the new cohesion spending round. This meant that the BMW Region is now considered a more developed region relative to other regions throughout the EU 27 Member States.

The Government was concerned that the EU budgetary assumptions, which use older GDP economic datasets from 2007-2009 to determine the funding categorisation of EU regions, were likely to lead to a reduction in the BMW Region's allocation from Brussels. Indeed, the Deputy will be aware that the latest Central Statistics Office figures reveal that the **Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita** - a similar measure to GDP per capita - in the BMW Region in 2010 was 84.1% of the EU average, less than the 90% threshold used to categorise regions as more developed.

However, in recognition of the new position of the BMW Region since the 2007-2009 period was used to categorise the Region as more developed, the Government, in the recent MFF negotiations in February, was successful in securing a special allocation of €100 million for the BMW Region to mitigate the effects of its change in status and in recognition of the significant economic downturn that the region has experienced.

The Government also negotiated a special allocation of up to €150 million for a PEACE IV Programme from which the BMW Region is expected to benefit. The European Council also agreed a special Youth Employment Initiative using €6 billion of Structural Funds for regions with levels of youth unemployment above 25%, from which it is expected the BMW Region will also benefit. The focus on youth unemployment is something the Irish Government had

been pressing for.

In the light of this, it is my opinion that an intervention direct to the EU Commission is not appropriate at this stage.

Work in my Department, in conjunction with the Regional Assemblies, has already commenced on the preparation of a new Operational Programme 2014-2020 for the BMW region, which will be submitted to the European Commission for approval later this year.

Estimates for Public Services

12. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when the Oireachtas will commence consideration of the draft Estimates for 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17854/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The *Comprehensive Expenditure Report 2012-2014*, published in December 2011, introduced a Medium Term Expenditure Framework which set out multi-annual expenditure ceilings on a rolling three year basis. It was envisaged that this reform would facilitate Dáil Committees in engaging in constructive dialogue with Ministers and Departments and input their views on which areas of spending should be prioritised in advance of the Budget each year. These viewpoints can then inform the Government in bringing forward its detailed Estimates for the year in question.

The Expenditure Report 2013, published 5 December 2012, included Departmental level current expenditure ceilings for 2014 which the Oireachtas Committees can consider. While it is a matter for the Ceann Comhairle and the Oireachtas to determine the timing, in the first instance, I would be hopeful that Committees can begin their *ex ante* look at the future spending of Departments, in the context of the expenditure ceilings already set out, before the summer.

The full Estimates for 2014 will be set out, as usual, at the time of the Budget later this year after detailed discussions have been taken by Government.

Legislative Programme

13. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when he will introduce the Freedom of Information Bill 2012 in the Dáil. [17839/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In July 2012 the Government approved the drafting by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel of a Freedom of Information Bill (FOI) on the basis of the General Scheme of a Bill. The General Scheme was also published at that time and was submitted to the Oireachtas Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform Committee for a pre-legislative scrutiny process.

As the Deputy will be aware the purpose of the Bill is to address the main substantive restrictions in access to official information introduced in 2003, to extend Freedom of Information to all public bodies, to provide a framework for the extension of FOI to non-public bodies in receipt of significant funding from the Exchequer as well as to consolidate, modernise and update the legislation, including in light of detailed recommendations made by the Information Commissioner.

Pending receipt of the report of the Committee and consideration of its recommendations, drafting of the Bill is at an advanced stage and it is currently planned that following Govern-

ment consideration the Bill will be published during the current Oireachtas session. It is also expected that the final Bill will reflect issues emerging from the operational review of Freedom of Information which I have recently initiated which may be amenable to a legislative solution. The review is being conducted by an expert external group and an internal group composed of representatives of Government Departments and some public bodies in the health and education sector.

Proposed Legislation

14. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans for the establishment of a register of lobbyists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17856/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): My Department is currently finalising the General Scheme of a Bill which will provide for the statutory regulation of lobbying. It is my intention to present these proposals to Government shortly and to submit them to the Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform Committee thereafter for pre-legislative scrutiny.

The aim of regulating lobbying activity through registration and reporting requirements is to strengthen public confidence in politics and in the business of government to increase the accountability of decision makers and to subject public policy making, and those who seek to influence it, to greater openness and transparency. It would facilitate the appropriate independent scrutiny of lobbying activity.

The development of policy on lobbying regulation has been informed by several very valuable sources of information, analysis and experience.

The OECD has developed a set of principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying which have been adopted as a recommendation by all OECD Member States. The OECD principles formed the basis of the consultation exercise carried out by the Department earlier this year.

The project has also drawn on information on regulatory regimes operating for example in Canada, the US, Australia, New Zealand and several European countries. The voluntary register in place in the European Union institutions was also analysed along with proposals for a self-regulatory regime in the UK.

There have been five Private Members Bills published on the regulation of lobbying since 1999. These have proved very useful in illustrating the key detailed features of the possible shape of lobbying regulation.

My Department's assessment has also derived significant benefit from the work of Irish researchers in TCD, DCU and DIT who have provided guidance and insights drawn from the authoritative work that they have published comparing global approaches to lobbying regulation.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

15. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on the equality audit of the Croke Park II proposals, conducted by the former head of the Equality Authority, which shows that women will be disproportionately negatively affected by the proposals in the new public service agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[17831/13]

16. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on whether the proposals under the Croke Park II Agreement represents a retrograde step for family-friendly work practices in the public service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17845/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 15 and 16 together.

I reiterate some of the points I have already made in response to Deputy Wallace's priority question on a similar topic today.

As I have already said, following Congress's decision not to accept the Labour Relations Commission's (LRC) proposals, the Government is reflecting on the outcome of the ballot and the manner in which the required savings can be achieved this year. However, it is still worth clarifying some of the issues which were raised recently, including those made following the publication of the Equality Audit Report which was commissioned by the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO).

Flexible working arrangements, including flexible starting and finishing times, generous leave entitlements, the capacity to take career breaks and avail of the shorter working year scheme and so on, are available across the public service. Had the LRC's proposals been accepted this would have continued to be the case.

When you look at the range of work-life balance arrangements that is available to public servants it is clear that they are among the best available options provided by Irish employers, particularly when considered in tandem with annual leave and other provisions.

If the unions had accepted the LRC's proposals the most popular and widely availed of worksharing arrangements would not have been affected. Those in receipt of Carer's Allowance were exempt from the worksharing proposals and were not being asked to increase their hours above the 15 hour a week limit for payment of their allowance. Employees with disabilities who had reached a reasonable accommodation with their employer to work less than 50% of the full time hours were also exempt from these proposals.

Flexi-time would still have been available which facilitates employees in varying their starting and finishing times and the length and timing of their lunch breaks. In addition, most employees would have been able to use additional hours worked to avail of, potentially, an additional 13 days' leave a year.

Some of the LRC proposals in respect of flexi-time and worksharing simply reiterated management prerogatives that are currently in place in line with previously agreed arrangements.

The Equality Audit makes reference to the proposals in respect of longer working hours and their potential impact on sections of the public service. In implementing the arrangements management would have facilitated staff members who wished to opt to remain on their current hours with the appropriate pro-rata pay reduction for a period of time. This would have given these individuals an opportunity to make necessary arrangements to balance their responsibilities at work and at home. They would then have moved to one of the standard worksharing patterns after a set period of time.

An appropriate level of staff must be available during the span of the working day to meet the business needs of the organisation and to provide services to the public. In the context of falling numbers and changing demands for public services, flexitime and work sharing should

better reflect the current needs of public service organisations. The operation of these arrangements must support the business of the organisation and the provision of services to the public. The proposed changes were an attempt to balance the requirements of the business while enabling staff to balance work and personal life requirements.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

17. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide details of any and all pay increases awarded to special advisers in his Department over the last two years. [17838/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As I have advised in previous Parliamentary Questions since I appointed Anne Byrne and Ronan O'Brien as special advisers no salary increases have been requested in respect of either appointment.

However, on appointment, Ms Anne Byrne was placed on the second point of the PO Standard non-PPC scale with effect from 10 March 2011. In accordance with the normal practice Ms Byrne has been awarded an increment on each anniversary of her appointment.

Since his appointment Mr. O'Brien has had no increase.

Public Procurement Regulations

18. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reforms he has introduced since taking office to ensure a greater portion of all public procurement could go to small medium enterprises. [17834/13]

23. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the distinction if any he makes between small medium enterprises and micro-businesses in public procurement tendering. [17833/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 18 and 23 together.

In relation to improving access for small and medium sized enterprises my Department has issued guidelines (Circular 10/10) that require public bodies to promote participation of such enterprises in the award of public contracts. The guidance does not distinguish between micro-enterprises and other SMEs, and the approach set out is intended to be applicable to them all. These guidelines set out positive measures that contracting authorities are to take to promote the involvement of smaller enterprises in a manner that is consistent with the principles and rules of the existing public procurement regulatory regime. The guidance also highlights practices that are to be avoided because they can unjustifiably hinder small businesses in competing for public contracts. The key provisions of the guidance include:

- supplies and general services contracts with an estimated value of €25,000 or more to be advertised on the www.etenders.gov.ie website;
- less use of "restrictive" tendering procedures and greater use of "open" tendering;
- ensuring that the levels set by contracting authorities for suitability criteria are justified and proportionate to the needs of the contract;

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

In order to promote and improve such practices the National Procurement Service (NPS) established its 'Working Group to assist Small and Medium Enterprises' in February 2012 to facilitate open discussion on the issue of public service procurement. The Working Group consists of representatives from the NPS, the Health Service Executive, the Irish Business and Employers Federation, the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association, Chambers Ireland, and the Small Firms Association. The Group has met on a number of occasions and has raised many issues relating to procurement and particularly how these issues impact on SMEs. Resulting from these discussions the NPS has issued two circulars to all buyers in, and suppliers to, the public service with the aim of improving practice in the procurement arena.

In order to encourage greater SME participation the NPS, over the past three years, has conducted a targeted programme of education for suppliers who wish to learn more about doing business with the Irish Public Service. This programme consists of seminars, workshops and large scale 'meet the buyer' events hosted nationwide. To date the NPS has facilitated workshops and presented at seminars to over 3,000 SMEs nationwide. Parallel with these events the NPS also works closely with business representative bodies such as ISME and IBEC to provide briefings for their members.

Circular 10/10 has been in place for just over two years. It is clear that there is a need to ensure greater consistency in relation to the implementation of this circular. In this regard, I have arranged for my Department to remind public bodies about this aspect of the public procurement guidance and the importance of contracting authorities ensuring they implement it appropriately.

Ministerial Travel

19. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will report on the overseas visits for St. Patrick's Day by the Minister of State at his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17734/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy will be aware, I this year visited Luxemburg and Belgium as part of the Government's St. Patrick's Day Travel Programme.

I visited Luxembourg on 14 March 2013 and engaged in a full programme of activities, including a visit to a promotion of Irish food and drink at a local hypermarket, a courtesy call on Luxembourg's Minister for Finance, Mr Luc Frieden, and a meeting at the European Investment Bank with the President, Mr. Werner Hoyer, and Vice President, Mr. Jonathan Taylor. I was also the guest of honour and gave a keynote address at the Embassy's official St. Patrick's Day function in Circle Cité in Luxembourg.

I travelled to Belgium on Friday 15 March 2013 and met with Hendrik Bogaert, State Secretary for Civil and Public Service Modernisation. I also had an opportunity to build on trade contacts and meet with members of the Irish community in Belgium. I held a meeting with the Commissioner General for World War 1 commemorations and finally, on the evening of 15 March 2013, I was guest of honour and gave the keynote speech to the official Belgian Embassy St. Patrick's Day function in the BOZAR Centre, an event that attracted over 600 guests.

I am sure that the Deputy will agree that the importance of these visits, which are aimed at promoting Ireland and enhancing the existing relationships between our countries, cannot be underestimated given the current economic climate.

State Bodies Establishment

20. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of his Department since February 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17849/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question I can confirm that no new State Body has been created by my Department since February, 2011. It is expected that a new regulator for the National Lottery will be created when the legislation is enacted.

Public Procurement Regulations

21. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will amend procurement rules requiring locally based agencies to purchase products from local suppliers when they are able to offer similar or better value to the nationally appointed provider, for example, when a local school has discretion to purchase stationery from a local supplier who is able to offer similar or better value than the nationally appointed supplier; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17702/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Under EU law, public contracts above a certain values must be advertised EU-wide and awarded to the most competitive tender in an open and objective process. The aim is to promote an open, competitive and non-discriminatory public procurement regime which delivers value for money. It would be a breach of the rules for a public body to favour or discriminate against particular candidates on grounds of location or nationality and there are legal remedies which may be used against any public body infringing these rules.

The National Procurement Service (NPS) has put in place a number of national arrangements designed to secure better value for money from leveraging the public service's buying power in relation to a range of goods and services that are commonly purchased across the public service. These national arrangements have benefits that include:

- cash savings;
- administrative savings from reduced duplication of tendering;
- greater purchasing expertise;
- improved consistency; and,
- enhanced service levels.

In some instances the take up of the NPS arrangements has been low. In order to increase the usage of the NPS arrangements and thereby secure best value for money, the Government decided that it should be mandatory for public service bodies to use specified national procurement arrangements. Last year my Department issued Circular 06/12 which implements the Government decision by making it a mandatory requirement that public service bodies avail of specified national arrangements put in place by the NPS. These national arrangements will secure best value for money and facilitate contracting authorities to deliver services within their budgetary constraints.

Where a mandatory framework arrangement exists, any public service body intending to

make a purchase other than through the framework arrangement will need to ensure that it can explain the rationale for not using the NPS arrangement and provide a value for money justification that takes account of the full costs including those incurred in managing its own procurement process.

While the key purpose of Circular 6/12 is to enable the State to do more with less by aggregating procurement to secure better value for money, it is worth noting that such aggregation arrangements can be implemented in a manner that achieves value for money with a minimal negative impact, or indeed a positive impact, on SMEs. While a number of the categories of goods and services mandated under the Circular are suited to single supplier national arrangements, these need not be accepted as the norm. The greater use, where appropriate, of multi-supplier frameworks can address local supplier issues while also ensuring on-going cost competitiveness of the framework itself. Such multi-supplier frameworks may also offer SMEs the opportunity to participate in national level contracts, thereby offering valuable reference work when competing for public procurement contracts in other jurisdictions.

In order to encourage greater SME participation the NPS, over the past three years, has conducted a targeted programme of education for suppliers who wish to learn more about doing business with the Irish Public Service. This programme consists of seminars, workshops and large scale 'meet the buyer' events hosted nationwide. To date the NPS has facilitated workshops and presented at seminars to over 3,000 SMEs nationwide. Parallel with these events the NPS also works closely with business representative bodies such as ISME and IBEC to provide briefings for their members.

To summarise: we in government want better value for money for our substantial procurement spend and we want Irish SMEs, where necessary, to form alliances and networks to ensure they can tender on a competitive basis for this work.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

22. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on whether excess costs have been incurred in payments to former civil servants interviewing candidates for public service jobs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17871/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question I would like to confirm that excess costs have not been incurred in payments to former civil servants interviewing candidates for public service jobs.

The Irish public service has a long history of fair and open recruitment. The Public Appointments Service (PAS) took over the mantle of the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commissioners in 2004, and continue to ensure that all public service posts (filled by PAS) are filled in an open and transparent manner, using an independent merit based system. To ensure that this is the case, it is important to use a mixture of public and private sector board members to ensure as wide a range of expertise as possible on each selection board. A typical selection board appointed by PAS comprises an Independent Chairperson, external expert(s) and nominee(s) of the employing body.

A very stringent shortlisting exercise is conducted so that only the highest calibre candidates are called to interview, greatly reducing the number of interview days for each campaign. PAS processed 38,814 applications for competitions under their control in 2012, and only 4,207 were interviewed.

PAS, in the course of running recruitment competitions for the public service, seeks to ensure that a person sitting on an interview board has the required skills, competence and expertise to assess the suitability of candidates for appointment to that particular post.

PAS uses trained and experienced individuals from both the private and public sectors on such selection boards. The Chairpersons and external experts come from both public and private sector backgrounds. Those assisting in this task who are in receipt of a public or private sector salary receive no payment whatsoever. A large percentage of selection boards consist of unpaid members. Fee paid board member days accounts for only 38% of board days. A fee per day is paid to retired individuals and to those from the private sector (e.g. self-employed) who forego earnings in order to facilitate PAS by sitting on an interview board. The list of individuals who assist PAS in interviewing is constantly changing but is currently approximately 630, of whom approximately 160 are retired public servants. For this work, retired individuals are paid on a fee-per-day basis and are subject to tax and other relevant deductions. The fees are linked to pre-retirement grades and take account of the principal of pension abatement.

The figures of the amounts paid to selection board members for the last 5 years indicate an even balance between amounts paid to those retired from the public sector and those from private sector background.

PAS has actively tried to reduce the amount paid on selection boards in the past five years; and my Department has reduced fees paid to retired civil servants acting on selection board members in May 2009, January 2010 and in January 2012. On average, fees paid to retired civil servants for acting on interview boards have decreased by 50% since 2008.

Question No. 23 answered with Question No. 18.

Sale of State Assets

24. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the recent discussions he has had with the troika in respect of the sale of State assets and the investment of proceeds from such sales; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17860/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy will be aware, I agreed with the troika in May 2012 that all of the proceeds from asset disposals will be available, in the short term, to be used in one shape or another to support job creating initiatives in the economy. Half of the proceeds will be available to fund employment enhancing projects of a commercial nature. The other half, while destined eventually to pay-down debt, will, in the first instance, be constituted as a fund to underpin additional lending into Ireland, for example by the EIB, in support of further investment in job-creating initiatives.

Plans for the first round of disposal transactions are currently progressing, and I would expect to have the first proceeds available later this year to support the project preparation facility for the new PPP programme and additional commercial and publicly needed capital projects.

Performance Management Systems

25. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide an update on his efforts to implement performance management methodologies within the public sectors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17735/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Govern-

ment's Public Service Reform Plan contains a commitment to strengthen performance management across the public service. Good progress in this regard has been made in the various sectors.

In the Local Authority sector, a performance management and development system (PMDS) has been operating since 2005 and periodic reviews of the system have been undertaken. In line with recommendations of the most recent national PMDS Review of 2011, a local authority competency framework was implemented and PMDS has been linked to other HR policies. In December 2012, further improvements were agreed for implementation in 2013, namely, a 5 point scale for the evaluation of performance; a protocol for dealing with underperformance, including performance improvement plans; and linkage of the system to incremental progression, grievance and disciplinary procedures.

In the Education sector, a key proposal in the latest action plan for the sector is to link performance management systems in Universities, Institutes of Technology and VECs to the awarding of increments and incremental progression. To this end, it is envisaged that systems will be put in place, or existing systems adapted, in advance of the commencement of the 2013/2014 academic year, with links to incremental progression to be in place before commencement of the 2014/2015 academic year.

Turning to the Justice sector, a new performance management system– the Performance Accountability Learning Framework (PALF) – has been introduced on a pilot basis for the sworn members of An Garda Síochána. The Irish Prison Service implements the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) in operation in the Civil Service.

The HSE performance management system was developed in 2011 and implemented for management grades in 2012. It is anticipated that the system will be extended to professional and administrative grades during 2013.

Finally, in relation to the Civil Service, my Department has been working with management and unions to strengthen performance management. Over the past three years, significant changes to the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) in operation in the Civil Service have been agreed. These are being introduced on a phased basis.

The Phase 1 changes introduced for 2012 were aimed at streamlining the practical operation of PMDS. Management accountability was also strengthened, and a manager who fails to manage the performance of their staff effectively over the course of the year must themselves receive a rating of 'Needs to Improve' (a rating of 2 on a 5 point scale, 5 being the highest).

The changes under Phase 2 for 2013 are designed to strengthen fairness and consistency in how performance is evaluated. Calibration of performance evaluations will be introduced on a phased basis, commencing with calibration by Assistant Secretaries and Principals in respect of their direct reports. Under Calibration, managers at the same grade who are responsible for conducting performance evaluations meet to discuss staff performance with the aim of making sure that managers apply similar standards for all staff members. The fairness of the system will also be underpinned by strengthening the process through which individual members of staff can seek a review of their evaluation, and introducing a process for external review.

The system of ratings has also been revised, with improved descriptions of performance levels which make explicit reference to the requirement for a Performance Improvement Action Plan in cases where performance is not satisfactory and for subsequent disciplinary action to be taken where performance has still not improved. An evaluation of 'Fully Achieved Expectations' (a rating of 3) will now be required for the award of an increment.

There has been substantial progress on strengthening performance management in the public service. However, we must continue to foster a culture of effective management of performance and to deal effectively with underperformance where it occurs.

Departmental Expenditure

26. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when departmental expenditure targets for the period 2014-2016 will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17857/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Departmental current expenditure ceilings for 2014 were first set out in the Comprehensive Expenditure Report 2012-2014, published in December 2011, which first set out Departmental expenditure ceilings on a three year basis. Updated 2014 ceilings, taking account of pressures and adjustments, were set out in the Expenditure Report 2013 (published in December 2012) together with an aggregate current expenditure ceiling for 2015.

It is intended that the Departmental expenditure ceilings for the period 2014-2016 will be published later this year as part of the Budget.

Ministerial Travel

27. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will report on his visit to Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17737/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In order to promote Ireland over the St. Patrick's Day period, I led an ambitious programme to Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines from 13 to 21 March 2013. The visit included the first senior Ministerial visit to Manila, the first in over a decade to Jakarta and the first ever Ministerial call on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) HQ.

Over the course of my visit I took every opportunity to promote trade, investment and tourism in Ireland, to reach out to the Irish Diasporas across the region, to strengthen political links and to tell the story of our recovery.

I undertook 24 separate engagements during the period, details of which are set out below.

Examples include a speech on Ireland's economy I delivered to a packed auditorium in Manila, an event organised by the European Union External Action Service, facilitated by Ambassador Ledoux. I made a visit to the corporate HQ of Indonesia's biggest Foreign Direct Investor in Ireland, attended financial services Enterprise Ireland (EI) sponsored breakfast in Singapore, led an Enterprise Ireland trade delegation to the Asian Development Bank and participated in an IDA/Enterprise Ireland business lunch in Jakarta.

Irish community St. Patrick's Day events were hosted in the three cities.

I led Singapore's St. Patrick's Day parade with estimates of around 12,000 in attendance. The parade was partnered with the Down's syndrome Associations in Singapore and Indonesia. Singaporean Ministers and MPs attended the Embassy reception and parade and I was guest of honour at a Singapore/Ireland Fund lunch for major donors.

18 April 2013

I had meetings with the Deputy PM and Minister of Finance of Singapore, the Minister for Trade of Indonesia and the Deputy Foreign Minister. In Manila I met Foreign Secretary del Rosario and the Secretary for Budget and Management. In Jakarta I met with the Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN and in Manila with the Vice President of the Asian Development Bank. (The President had just been appointed Governor of Japan's Central Bank.)

I travelled with 2 officials, my private secretary and my press officer. While in Singapore, I and my officials stayed in the Ambassador's residence in order to save costs. There is no such accommodation in either Manila or Jakarta.

The visit achieved significant media coverage in the region and included an editorial in "The Jakarta Post", extensive associated coverage in Indonesia's business press, front page pieces in The Philippines media, the Raffles interview slot in Singapore's "Business Times" and TV news reports across all three capitals.

Every possible attempt was made to keep costs low and the costs incurred by my Department to date in respect of the 2012 St. Patrick's Day overseas travel programme are detailed in the following table:

Costs for St Patrick's Day Travel	€
Flights	8,248.53
Minister: Hotel Manila	378.15
Private Secretary: Hotel Manila	378.15
Press Officer: Hotel Manila	378.15
Gifts	692.48
Visa Costs	51.00
Taxi	42.95
Total	10,169.41

The total costs of the visit have not yet been finalised. Invoices will be submitted in due course through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for reimbursement by my Department.

Visit to Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines by Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform Mr. Brendan Howlin, T.D. 13 – 21 March 2013

Wednesday 13 March

15:45 Arrive Soekarno Hatta International Airport, Jakarta.

Transfer to Hotel.

19:30 Dinner briefing by Ireland House - Embassy/Enterprise Ireland (EI)/ IDA Ireland.

Thursday 14 March

09:30 Coffee briefing with EU Delegation, Jakarta.

10:30 Call on H.E. Mr. Wardana, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs.

11:00 Call on H.E. Mr. Gita Wirjawan, Minister for Trade.

12:15 Press Conference – principal Indonesian media outlets.

Questions - Written Answers

Contract signing ceremony – Tango Telecom (EI client) and XL Indonesia.

12:45 Roundtable lunch and discussion for high-level Indonesian business contacts, EI clients and IDA clients.

14:30 Jakarta Post 1:1 interview.

14:45 Contract signing ceremony – ICDL Asia (EI client) and YPL Indonesia.

15:00 Depart hotel.

15:30 Call on Mr. Lim Hong Hin, Deputy Secretary General of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

18:30 Depart hotel (check-out).

19:00 Indonesian-Irish community networking evening, Molly Malone's Irish Pub, Minister to speak.

21:00 Transfer to Purwakarta, West Java.

22:30 Welcomed by senior management of Indorama Synthetics PT (major IDA client with investment in Co. Cavan). Overnight at guesthouse.

Friday 15 March

09:00 Site visit at Indorama Synthetics PT plant: meeting with senior management.

14:00 Depart Bandung for Singapore.

16:50 Arrive Changi International airport.

Transfer to Residence.

18:30 Depart Residence.

18:45 Meeting with IDA target company Transportation Partners/Lion Air.

19:30 St. Patrick's Society of Singapore Annual Ball Minister to speak.

Saturday 16 March

12:15 Depart Residence.

12:30 Embassy St Patrick's Day reception and lunch at first Singapore St. Patrick's Festival.

Minister to speak.

Minister of State, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Manpower, Mayor (Southwest District), Ms Amy Khor to attend.

14:30 Visit Singapore Gaelic Lions Skills Demonstration at UOB Plaza.

15:00 Visit Molly Malone's Irish Pub.

Musical performance by Dunleavy family.

18 April 2013

15:30 Return to Residence.

19:00 Visit OCBC Building, One Raffles Place & Merlion for photographs.

19:30 Dinner hosted by Ambassador Hayes.

Sunday 17 March

09:30 Depart Residence.

10:00 St. Patrick's Day Mass.

12:30 Informal Singapore-Ireland Fund lunch hosted by Dr. Stanley Quek.

15:00 VIP Parade Guests Assemble.

15:30 St Patrick's Day Parade.

Minister to speak.

Senior Minister of State, Ministry for Law and Ministry of Education, Ms. Indranee Rajah to attend.

16:00 Post-parade community reception (St. Patrick's Festival).

17:00 Return to Residence.

Monday 18 March

07:15 Depart Residence.

07:30 Enterprise Ireland Business Breakfast (banking/financial focus) with EI Clients: Corvil, First Derivatives, Information Mosaic and Singapore Stock Exchange (SGX).

09:15 Call on Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Minister for Finance.

10:00 Interview with Vikram Khanna, Deputy Editor, Singapore Business Times.

12:25 Depart Singapore for Manila, Philippines.

16:00 Arrive Ninoy Aquino International airport.

16:45 Visit to Malate Church.

Guided tour by Irish Columban Order.

17:30 Transfer to Hotel

19:30 Filipino-Irish community networking evening.

Minister to speak.

Honorary Consul General's Residence.

Tuesday 19 March

10:15 Meeting with Asian Development Bank constituency office officials.

11:15 Meeting with Acting President of the ADB, Mr. Bindu Lohani.

12:00 Contract signing ceremony PM Group (EI client).

12:15 Irish business networking lunch.

Minister to give opening address.

13:30 Call on Mr. Florencio Abad, Secretary of Budget and Management.

16:00 Call on the Hon. Albert F. Del Rosario, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.

20:00 Dinner with Irish Honorary Consul General, Ms. Noreen F. Trota.

Wednesday 20 March

10:00 Public Lecture, "Ireland's Economic Recovery within the Euro Zone".

Invitees: Think Tanks, NGOs, Government Agencies, Media.

11:30 Media Interviews.

14:30 One to one Interview with Manila Bulletin (largest broadsheet paper in the Philippines), Rob Mabasa, Diplomatic Correspondent.

Thursday 21 March

11:00 Debriefing on Visit.

17:35 Depart Manila for Dublin.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

28. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisers' pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisers for 2012. [17836/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question the following table outlines the name and salary of each Special Adviser appointed by me:

Name	Title	Salary (per annum)	Increases
Anne Byrne	Special Adviser (D/PER)	€83,337 with effect from March 2011	€86,604 with effect from March 2012.
Ronan O'Brien	Special Adviser (D/PER)	€114,000 with effect May 2011	Nil

As I have advised in previous Parliamentary Questions since I appointed Anne Byrne and Ronan O'Brien as special advisers no salary increases have been requested in respect of either appointment.

However, on appointment, Ms Anne Byrne was placed on the second point of the PO Standard non-PPC scale with effect from 10 March 2011. In accordance with the normal practice Ms Byrne has been awarded an increment on each anniversary of her appointment.

Since his appointment Mr. O'Brien has had no increase.

Public Sector Reform Implementation

29. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will report on the PeoplePoint project; if he will outline what the project will entail and the way in which the human resources function will be changed in the public sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17739/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Public Service Reform Plan (November 2011) identified the implementation of shared services as a major element in the Reform Programme.

In May 2012, a formal decision was taken by the Government to set up a Civil Service HR and Pensions Administration Shared Service Centre for the Civil Service, called PeoplePoint, in Clonskeagh in Dublin; to consolidate transactional HR activities and allow organisations to focus their resources on core activities.

PeoplePoint Project: The PeoplePoint Project is tasked with delivering a shared services centre to process transactional HR and Pension Administration to 40 Civil Service Departments and Offices. The project will transition the 40 in-scope bodies on a phased basis over the next 18 months.

The project will:

- Create a HR Shared Service Centre with multi-channel access for managers and staff via portal, phone, email or post
- Improve customer service by providing consistent, effective and reliable HR Services to all staff across the Civil Service
- Develop a "customer service" culture within the shared service centre
- Optimise HR processes to transition administration to the shared services centre
- Improve technology, where necessary, to enhance processes
- Create a service management capability to drive on time service delivery and ongoing continuous improvement
- Enhance HR's capability
- Improve governance of HR processes

PeoplePoint commenced its HR services operation at the end of March, 2013. It is estimated

that with the establishment of PeoplePoint and post 2014, when all 40 Civil Service Departments and Offices in-scope have transitioned, and the shared service is stabilised, that the annual cost of HR services for the civil service will be reduced significantly by €12.5m per annum and by 149 staff.

PeoplePoint is staffed and managed by Civil Servants and currently does not provide services to the broader public service. It will change the way Human Resources will function in the Civil Service in a number of ways including:

- Improved administrative efficiency and by reducing costs
- A shift in HR focus in Departments/Offices away from compliance and administrative personnel activity to work that is of higher value to the business of the organisation.
- Transforming HR service delivery across the entire Civil Service which in turn will enable and drive continuing organisational change and on-going delivery of front-line services to the citizen
- Freeing up the capacity of the resources who process those HR transactions within the individual organisations to more front-line core activities

The introduction of PeoplePoint at the end of March represents a very significant step in making Shared Services a reality across the Civil Service.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

30. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has had discussions with representatives of retired public sector workers concerning the impact on them of the Croke Park II agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17868/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I have not had discussions with representatives of retired public service workers in relation to this matter.

As the Deputy will be aware, the talks leading up to the recent Labour Relations Commission proposals for a Public Service Agreement 2013 – 2016 took place between Government officials representing the State as employer, and staff representatives, principally the Public Services Committee of the ICTU, representing public servants. The talks and draft Agreement did not encompass public service pensioners and their pension entitlements.

As referred to in the Labour Relations Commission proposals document, separately to the planned pay and productivity measures for existing public servants, the Government has decided to legislate for certain changes in respect of public service pensions. These changes are not part of the draft Public Service Agreement, and were not proposed by the Labour Relations Commission.

While I acknowledge the contribution made by public service pensioners to the fiscal consolidation process, to date, the changes now proposed are an important burden sharing element in the Government’s progress towards a restoration of the country’s economic sustainability, to that end my officials intend to meet with the Alliance of Retired Public Servants in the coming weeks.

Pension Provisions

31. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he is examining payments of pensions in excess of €100,000 to former public servants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17869/13]

34. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will introduce legislation that will tackle the pensions being paid to former politicians, bankers from bailed out institutions and senior civil servants; his views on whether the continued payment of these pensions, at the current rates, is socially acceptable in the context of the national economic recovery process; if he is prepared to examine constitutional amendments to tackle this injustice in the event of being unable to frame workable legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17744/13]

36. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will consider applying a special levy or charge to reduce the pensions of former Taoisigh, Ministers and other Oireachtas officeholders. [14065/13]

37. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on whether pensions paid to former Taoisigh, Ministers and office holders cannot be significantly reduced on the basis that these payments are legally interpreted as property rights. [17837/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 31, 34, 36 and 37 together.

As I have set out, on a number of occasions before, the position in relation to the pensions of senior public service retirees is kept under review by my Department. Over the course of recent years, several Government measures have been taken which serve to substantially reduce pension awards and pensions in payment to former senior public servants, Taoisigh, Government Ministers and other office holders.

A key measure in this context has been the Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR), which applies to all public servants who retired on pensions of over €12,000 up to the end of February 2012. This progressively structured measure was introduced on 1 January 2011, based on a set of income bands and percentage reductions bearing most heavily on higher-pensioned retirees. Acting on foot of my concern in relation to high public service pensions, I subsequently acted to make the PSPR even more progressive in application, by legislating for an increase in the rate on pension amounts in excess of €100,000, from 12% to 20%, effective from 1 January 2012.

In the case of former public servants who retire or have retired from March 2012 onward, pensions have also been subject to a significant effective reduction, insofar as they have been impacted by the pay reductions applied under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) legislation. These reductions have again been progressively structured, so that higher paid public servants and public service retirees, including the groups referred to by the Deputies, have proportionately been harder hit. In this context some of the most significant pay cuts have been imposed on ministerial pay, and these cuts will be fully reflected in the pension awards to current and future Ministers.

Future pension awards will also be moderated by the general pay ceiling of €200,000 for appointments to higher posts across the public service which I introduced in 2011. Revised salary rates in line with that ceiling are now in place for future Secretaries General in the civil service, who, in addition, can no longer get notional added years or immediate pensions before preserved pension age. These retrenchments in respect of salary and exit terms will ultimately reduce Exchequer pension costs in respect of senior civil servants.

Looking further ahead, the recently commenced Single Public Service Pension Scheme which applies to all new-joiner public servants, including civil servants, office holders and Ministers, will in time deliver significant savings to the public purse through reduced public service pensions. These long-term savings will derive from key features of the Single Scheme, principally an increase in pension age, inflation linkage of benefits and career-average accrual.

The various FEMPI and other measures which I have outlined indicate the significant action already taken in terms of reducing the pensions payable currently or in the future to former senior public servants, Taoisigh, Ministers and other office holders. In this general context it is important to point out that legal advice from the Attorney General states that it is possible to apply proportionate reductions to existing pensions, as has been done to date in the FEMPI legislation. However, due account must be taken of the fact that pension benefits are generally regarded as vested property rights, which must be considered in the public interest when taking action.

Finally, as Deputies will be aware, some of the institutions referred to in Deputy Griffin's question are the responsibility of my colleague Mr Michael Noonan, TD, Minister for Finance.

Departmental Debt Collection

32. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to establish a centralised agency for the collection of all moneys outstanding to the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17862/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Currently the Government has no plans to establish a centralised agency for the collection of all monies outstanding to the State.

In line with our commitments in the Programme for Government and the Public Service Reform Plan, my Department is considering a range of alternative service delivery models, such as centralised services, shared services and external service delivery, to improve service delivery in a number of areas.

Debt management has been identified by my Department as one such function that should be assessed to establish if it could be delivered more effectively using other options. No decision has been made to change how debt management is carried out – my Department is considering all options, including improving existing debt management processes in their current organisations; centralising all or part of the workload into a single body; creating a dedicated shared service (such as the new PeoplePoint HR Shared Service for the Civil Service); and the external service delivery of all or part of the workload.

A Project Board has been established made up of Assistant Secretaries or equivalents from the five organisations (the Departments of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Environment, Community and Local Government; and Social Protection; the HSE; and the Courts Service) in scope for this project. A Senior Responsible Officer from the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine and a Project Manager from the Revenue Commissioners have been appointed. A request for tender seeking consultants to assist with this evaluation closed on 28 March. Work on the evaluation is expected to commence in the summer.

The ultimate outcome of this process will be a decision for Government, cognisant of whatever findings and recommendations emerge from this evaluation.

Proposed Legislation

33. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when he will introduce the Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Bill 2012 in the Dáil. [17840/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy is aware, the Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries Privileges and Procedures) Bill 2013 aims to establish a comprehensive statutory framework for the Oireachtas to conduct inquiries within the current constitutional framework. I wish to advise the Deputy that the Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries Privileges and Procedures) Bill 2013 is currently at an advanced stage in the drafting process and I expect to present the Bill to Government for publication in the coming weeks.

Question No. 34 answered with Question No. 31.

Pension Provisions

35. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the basis on which cuts to public sector pensions starting at €32,500 in Croke Park II, could be imposed on people who retired under defined terms in Croke Park 1 and signed a contract based on those terms. [17742/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy will be aware the LRC noted the Government's intention to require public service pensioners to make a further contribution to the consolidation measures in conjunction with the contribution being sought from serving staff, thereby ensuring an element of burden sharing from higher paid public service pensioners. These matters now fall to be considered further in the light of the ICTU decision on the LRC proposals.

Questions Nos. 36 and 37 answered with Question No. 31.

Departmental Contracts

38. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the percentage of supplies and services public contracts that have been awarded to micro-enterprises which have collaborated on public sector tender through a joint bidding or consortium formation year on year over the past three years. [17835/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): While the National Procurement Service (NPS) actively encourages the participation of SMEs in the tendering process, it does not have the information requested. The exact nature/make up of a company is not one of the pieces of information sought by the NPS when tendering.

The NPS uses its Standard Suite of documents, designed in conjunction with the Chief State Solicitors Office and the Attorney Generals Office, for every competition it goes out to tender for. The following paragraph is contained in each NPS Request For Tender explicitly encouraging SMEs to tender in their own right or for those who feel that the scale of the competition may be beyond their own capacity to form potential consortia:

“NPS policy seeks to encourage participation by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in this Competition. SMEs that believe the scope of this Competition is beyond their technical or business capacity are encouraged to explore the possibilities of forming relationships with other SMEs or with larger enterprises. Through such relationships they can participate and contribute to the successful implementation of any contracts, agreements or arrangements that result from this Competition and therefore increase their social and economic benefits.

Larger enterprises are also encouraged to consider the practical ways that SMEs can be included in their proposals to maximise the social and economic benefits of the contracts that result from this tendering exercise. A main focus of this Competition is a reduction in transaction costs for both Clients and suppliers.”

Question No. 39 answered with Question No. 7.

Flood Relief Schemes Funding

40. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide details of all flood relief and large scale water drainage works carried out by the Office of Public Works in the past five years including the location of each scheme, the cost of each scheme and the numbers employed; his views on whether the use of OPW resources for such works represents a saving over the potential cost of contracting the work to the private sector; if he has considered advancing other public works projects under the auspices of the OPW that may provide employment to suitably qualified individuals who are long-term unemployed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17842/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The Question has been taken to refer to flood relief schemes carried out directly by the OPW’s labourforce in the past five years.

The majority of OPW capital flood relief schemes are carried out through private sector contractors. However, in some circumstances it is considered more appropriate and efficient to undertake the works directly using OPW’s own staff - permanent and temporary. In deciding which approach would be the most appropriate use of resources in any instance, the OPW has regard to a number of factors such as the scale and complexity of works involved, their geographic location relative to OPW’s regional depots and the extent of other work commitments.

Using a direct labour approach to undertaking capital works offers advantages in some respects over using private contractors. It is generally a faster way to get the works commenced as the onerous and time consuming process of procuring a private contractor is avoided. It also allows more flexibility in managing risks on a project through targeted deployment of resources to deal with delays caused by unforeseen events and conditions which frequently arise in these type of works. It is the case that, in certain circumstances, using direct labour is a more cost effective way of undertaking works compared to engagement of a private contractor. However, each case must be looked at and decided on its own merits as there are a multiplicity of factors that must be taken into account in considering the most appropriate approach to use.

In terms of the employment generating potential of using a direct labour approach over a private contractor approach, it is considered that there is not a significant difference in either model as, in broad terms, both would employ the same number of staff. It has to be borne in mind that the OPW, like all Government Departments and Agencies, is required to manage its staff resources within the Employment Control Framework total allocated to it by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Therefore, the OPW is constrained in the scope it has

to recruit additional staff to allow it to undertake any significant expansion in its direct works programme.

The number of staff involved in the construction of a scheme varies over the course of the project as the elements of the works being carried out changes. As indicated, the numbers employed would be broadly similar irrespective of whether the scheme is being carried out by contractors or through staff employed by OPW. Where OPW is carrying out a project directly, in addition to recruiting temporary staff on contract for that scheme, the Office generally also uses members of its permanent workforce. While the primary and core function of this workforce is the maintenance of completed arterial drainage and flood relief schemes, staff members are also deployed to the construction of capital schemes where appropriate. It is important to mention also that, even where a scheme is being carried out “in-house” or directly by the OPW, it is often the case that private contractors are employed to carry out discrete specialist elements of the works such as stone works, cladding or sheet piling.

Details of the main large flood relief schemes carried out in the relevant period are given below. Because OPW staff, including supervisory staff, are deployed between projects, the full overhead cost in relation to these staff would not be reflected in the cost figures shown for each scheme. In addition to these schemes, a number of smaller-scale projects were carried out, generally as agents of the relevant Local Authorities for schemes approved under the OPW’s Minor Flood Mitigation Works scheme.

Scheme	Average number of staff*(permanent and temporary)	Total cost
Mornington Flood Relief Scheme, Co. Meath	11	€4.2m
Dodder Flood Relief Scheme, Dublin	15	€10.9m
Johnstown, Co. Kildare	9	€3.0m
Tullamore, Co. Offaly	9	€1.0m
Claregalway	13	€1.0m

(*These numbers would not include staff employed by any contractor engaged for specialist elements of the project.)

The number of temporary staff recruited by the OPW in any given year is decided on the basis of the work programme for that year and the financial and supervisory resources available.

It should be noted also that since its introduction in 2009, the OPW Minor Works programme has to date funded around 400 flood mitigation projects throughout the country, through the Local Authorities with a total allocation of €28m.

Flood Risk Assessments

41. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the current steps which are being taken to address flood risks within the Shannon basin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17703/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The River Shannon Catchment Flood Risk Assessment & Management Study is being progressed. This is an in-depth examination of the flood risk in the Shannon catchment and a

detailed plan with specific recommendations on measures to manage that risk will be produced by consultants, Jacobs Engineering.

In advance of the detailed analysis which is being carried out under the Shannon CFRAM Study the consultants were requested by the Office of Public Works (OPW) to prioritise a formal review of the operating regulations and procedures of the control structures along the river Shannon with the purpose of identifying potential improvements with respect to flood risk management that could be introduced in the short term.

That report and a non-technical summary of the Report - 'Understanding Water levels on the River Shannon' was circulated to all public representatives in the region, last Autumn. In addition, a direct briefing on the report was made by Jacobs Engineering in late 2012 to the Irish Farmers' Association and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht.

As the Deputy is aware, operational control of water flows and levels on the Shannon is a matter for both the ESB and Waterways Ireland, in the first instance.

The OPW meets regularly with both organisations to review matters relating to the River Shannon. As part of these consultations and in the context of the ongoing work under the Shannon CFRAM study being undertaken for the OPW by Jacobs Engineering, it was agreed to explore the possibility of carrying out a water level monitoring exercise, involving controlled raising and lowering of weir boards at selected locations, subject to favourable hydrological conditions.

For the monitoring exercise to go ahead three criteria have to be satisfied. The first is that the level downstream of Athlone must be sufficiently low not to cause flooding in the callows. The second is that the level on Lough Ree is not below the recently agreed ESB lower target operating level in early summer and the third is that a significant rainfall event is forecast.

At the moment only the first of the above criteria is clearly satisfied. The situation is being monitored closely so that when suitable conditions prevail the exercise can proceed.

In addition to the water level monitoring exercise and following consultations between the OPW, the ESB and Waterways Ireland, the ESB has indicated agreement to a change in the existing control regime, which will remain in place until the publication of the Flood Risk Management Plan for The Shannon Catchment. The change will provide for a trial lowering of the Spring/early Summer target levels in Lough Ree. By increasing the storage capacity in Lough Ree this change will reduce somewhat the risk of summer flooding in the callows.

Official Engagements

42. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the recent meetings he has held with the trade union movement. [10975/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I met with representatives of the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in December last regarding the commencement of discussions with public service management on a new agenda for reductions in the cost of delivering public services and substantial longer term productivity improvements and workplace reforms.

Following intensive discussions earlier this year, I attended a plenary meeting of the parties to the public service discussions on 25th February last at which the Labour Relations Commis-

sion presented proposals for a draft Public Service Agreement.

I also hold periodic meetings with trade union leaders and officials of my Department meet with stakeholders including representatives of public service trade unions on a regular basis.

Capital Expenditure Programme Issues

43. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he expects the fall in capital expenditure in the first quarter of the year compared to 2012 to be reversed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17847/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The net capital expenditure allocation for 2013 is €3.097 billion, as set out in the Revised Estimates Volume published yesterday. The end March Exchequer returns showed that €387 million was drawn down by Departments and Offices during the first quarter of the year. This is just €50m below the level they had profiled to end-March. I fully expect that Departments and Offices will utilise their full capital allocations over the course of the year.

In line with the five year capital envelopes, the total allocation in recent years has been progressively reduced because of the need to find savings from all areas of Government spend as part of our bringing the overall public finances back onto a sustainable footing. Therefore, the 2013 capital spending will not be profiled to eventually reach the 2012 level, as the allocation this year is lower than for 2012.

Capital spending has general characteristics which influence the allocation drawdown pattern. Expenditure on capital projects typically occurs in large tranches at fixed milestones, unlike current expenditure which is generally continuous throughout the year. This will, of course, affect the phasing and profiling of capital expenditure from year to year. Given the one-off nature of much capital expenditure, year-on-year comparisons may not accurately reflect progress on capital expenditure, particularly during the early part of the year. A more appropriate measure of how capital expenditure is progressing is the comparison with published profiles.

Strategic Management Initiative

44. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on the efficacy of the Strategic Management Initiative of 1994; the action that he has taken to promote greater systematic incentives for public service workers in this decade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17736/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) was launched by the then Taoiseach, John Bruton, in February 1994. The stated objective of the SMI was to present Public Service management with an opportunity to make a substantial contribution to national development, through the provision of quality and effectively delivered services. It should be noted that while the focus of the SMI was primarily on the Civil Service, parallel initiatives took place in the other sectors of the Public Service.

In 1996, the Delivering Better Government report expanded on the framework set out in the SMI and presented a vision for the Civil Service built around six key organisational themes. These were greater openness and accountability, quality customer service, the efficient and fair operation of simplified regulations, improvements in human resource management, better

financial management and enhanced information systems management.

Under the SMI, progress was made across the six organisational themes in areas such as the introduction of more rigorous strategic planning and reporting; the introduction of a legislative programme including the Freedom of Information Act, the Public Service Management Act, the Committees of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Immunities, Privileges and Compellability of Witnesses) Act, and the Prompt Payments Act; the introduction of Customer Charters and Customer Service Action Plans; the introduction of the Performance Management and Development System for the Civil Service; the development of Regulatory Impact Assessment; the introduction of the Management Information Framework; and a greater focus on cross-organisational ICT provision.

Notwithstanding the progress made under the SMI and other reform programmes since, when this Government came to office it was clear that we needed a new, radical and far reaching reform programme, to contribute to economic recovery as part of the Government's strategic response to the crisis. This was reflected in the commitments to reform made in the Programme for Government, which set the basis for the Government's Public Service Reform Plan, published in November, 2011.

The Reform and Delivery Office in my Department was established to lead and coordinate delivery of the reform agenda. Under the Reform Plan, we are implementing a series of reforms under the following five key commitments to change: placing customer service at the core of everything we do; maximising new and innovative service delivery channels; radically reducing our costs to drive better value for money; leading, organising and working in new ways; and strong focus on implementation and delivery.

The Reform Plan has a particular emphasis on strong governance and programme management structures, in order to drive and monitor the implementation of reform across the system. The Public Service Reform Plan is complemented by Integrated Reform Delivery Plans produced by all Government Departments and major Offices. These plans outline the reform programmes at organisational and sectoral levels, as well as central initiatives.

A more effective and sustainable Public Service is in the interests of all stakeholders, including public servants. We are working hard to build a Public Service of which we can all be proud and a Public Service that values its most important asset – its people. Increased flexibility, mobility, development and up-skilling are key aspects of reform that will provide public servants with greater opportunities for more fulfilling, rewarding careers in the years ahead.

Equality Proofing of Policies

45. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has equality proofed the proposed Croke Park II proposals with a particular reference to the impact of the proposals on women working within the public sector. [17841/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): All changes in relation to work-life balance arrangements in the Labour Relations Commission (LRC) proposals were aimed at streamlining existing arrangements so that a satisfactory balance could be struck between the delivery of the business needs of the employer – in this case the consistent delivery of high quality services to the public – and the need for working parents and carers to have flexibility to meet their personal commitments.

Work-life balance arrangements in the public service are, and will continue to be, among the best available options provided by Irish employers. This is particularly the case when consid-

ered in tandem with annual leave and other family friendly provisions.

The range of flexible working arrangements that will continue to be available across the public service, includes flexi-time, work-sharing arrangements, the shorter working year scheme, career breaks, as well as all of the statutory entitlements such as parental leave and carer's leave. This is an extensive range of options within which public service employees can balance their work-life commitments.

The Irish public service has a proud record of promoting these arrangements and the employee profile across the service reflects the strong efforts made over the last few decades to ensure that public servants' employment terms allow them to balance their work and home commitments.

EU Funding

46. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will outline the current status of the BMW region under the MFF following the heads of State agreement in February; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12676/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): On 8 February 2013 the European Council reached agreement on the EU's budget for 2014-2020. The budget has to be agreed with the European Parliament and discussions are now taking place with the Parliament under the aegis of the Irish Presidency.

In line with reductions to the overall EU budget, Cohesion funding across Europe is expected to be reduced from €347 billion to around €325 billion. Despite this, Ireland's overall Structural Funds allocation is expected to increase from the €901 million we receive under the current round to €979 million in the 2014 -2020 round. This represents a considerable achievement, and is due to the consistent efforts of the Government to maximize support from Europe for our Structural Funds programmes and take particular account of our serious unemployment problems.

In the case of the Border, Midland and Western Region however, the allocation it receives was reduced. This is because the region no longer qualified as a transition region since its GDP per capita exceeded 90% of the EU average in 2007 - 2009 - the period used to determine the status of regions across the EU for the purposes of the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014 - 2020. This meant that the status of the BMW Region has changed from that of a "transition region" to that of a "more developed region" relative to other regions throughout the EU 27 Member States.

However, in recognition of the special position of the region, the Government, in the recent MFF negotiations in February, was successful in securing for the region an additional €100 million and additional special allocations under PEACE IV and the Youth Employment Initiative. The focus on youth unemployment is something the Irish Government had been pressing for.

Emigrant Support Services

47. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the total funding provided in 2013 for emigrant support programmes; the organisations and the programmes to be funded this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18120/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Emigrant Support Programme, ESP, provides funding to non-profit organisations and projects to support Irish communities overseas and to facilitate the development of more strategic links between Ireland and the global Irish. The emphasis of the Emigrant Support Programme is on supporting culturally sensitive, frontline welfare services, targeted at the most vulnerable members of our overseas communities, particularly in Britain and the United States. These services have made a substantive difference to the lives of these communities overseas through reducing homelessness, tackling social isolation, and enabling Irish emigrants to access their local statutory entitlements. In addition, the ESP has facilitated Government support for a range of community and heritage projects, strategic capital projects and other initiatives aimed at creating practical results-orientated links between Ireland and the global Irish, including those that emerged from the Global Irish Economic Forums. Details of all grant recipients since 2006 can be found on my Department's website at <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=298>. I am pleased that, despite the difficult financial situation we face, the Government has maintained the 2013 funding for the ESP at €11.59 million, the same level as 2012. The focus in 2013 will be on key frontline welfare and advisory services and on projects aimed at supporting new arrivals.

The 2013 grant round closed on 20 February. Applications for 360 projects from 16 countries are currently under review. I expect to be in a position to make announcements in the coming weeks.

Good Friday Agreement

48. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the further discussions he proposes to hold with the Northern Ireland Secretary of State in relation to the proposed Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18121/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Government remains firmly committed to ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Good Friday and St. Andrews Agreements. In contacts with the British government, we will continue to stress the importance of implementation of all aspects of the Agreements, including of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland which takes account of the separate and specific context of Northern Ireland. I will avail of a planned meeting later this month with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to have a further discussion on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

I will also 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.

Humanitarian Aid

49. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if there is adequate monitoring being undertaken to ensure that humanitarian aid is reaching those most in need in Syria and in neighbouring areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18124/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costel-

lo): The conflict in Syria continues to escalate in scale and scope with devastating humanitarian consequences for the civilian population. There are now over 4 million people in need of life saving humanitarian assistance within Syria and over 1.3 million refugees in neighbouring countries. As the conflict enters its third year, the coping mechanisms of the internally displaced and the refugee populations are severely depleted and the numbers in acute need are increasing every day. The Tánaiste saw first-hand the terrible suffering being endured by people who are forced to flee the violence when he visited refugee camps in Turkey last week. Ireland has responded generously to the humanitarian crisis in Syria and its neighbouring countries, and to date has provided over €8.15 million in assistance through long standing and reputable partners such as WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Government recognises the significant challenges involved in reaching those most in need within Syria, and the Tánaiste has consistently raised concerns about humanitarian access at the EU Foreign Affairs Council. The constraints are many. Excessive controls on aid agencies working in the country, the fragmentation of the armed opposition and the intensity of military confrontations have made the operating environment extremely volatile and insecure, particularly in opposition controlled areas. Restrictions imposed by the Assad regime, combined with logistical constraints and increasing insecurity, make it very difficult to access the most vulnerable populations.

Despite these challenges, it is a fact that our humanitarian partners on the ground are succeeding in reaching increasing numbers of vulnerable people. During consultations this week in Dublin I was informed by Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of World Food Programme that her organisation is reaching 2 million Syrians, including about 500,000 in opposition held areas. This represents a scale-up of 300,000 people from the February distribution. Other partners such as the ICRC, working with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, have been reaching areas inaccessible to the United Nations. These are partners that have a demonstrated track record of effective humanitarian response in Syria, with strong strategies for targeting and delivery and robust systems for monitoring and accountability.

Despite these considerable achievements, it is acknowledged that many people still remain beyond the reach, particularly in the most insecure areas in the north of the country. The United Nations and other humanitarian actors on the ground are committed to urgently scaling up the scope and reach of the humanitarian response. The approval of additional NGO implementing partners and the decision to establish inter-agency operational field hubs is assisting the UN and other actors to reach the most vulnerable populations. UN hubs are already in place in Homs and Tartous, where the strengthened presence is enhancing outreach, and further hubs are planned for other areas.

Ensuring that our humanitarian contribution reaches people most in need, wherever they are, is a top priority for Ireland and we continue to closely monitor the humanitarian response in Syria and the region. As part of Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union the Government has consistently raised the issue of humanitarian access and respect for humanitarian principles in Syria. This has also been a key issue for Ireland when represented at the 'Friends of Syria' conferences and the 'Syria Humanitarian Forum'. Ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches those most in need will be part of any future assessment of how we can further respond to humanitarian needs in Syria and the wider region.

Foreign Conflicts

50. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the most recent discussions he has held at bilateral level with other member

states of the European Union or at the European Union Foreign Affairs Council in regard to the ongoing conflict in Syria; if the European Union proposes any new initiatives for this region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18126/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The situation in Syria was the major issue discussed at the most recent Foreign Affairs Council meeting, which I attended in Brussels on 11 March, and also at the informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers which I co-hosted with High Representative Ashton in Dublin on 22-23 March. These discussions focussed on how the EU can best promote a peaceful resolution to the crisis and alleviate the sufferings of the Syrian people, 70,000 of whom have been killed since March 2011. We will continue this discussion at the next Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg on 22 April which I will attend and where Syria will figure prominently on the agenda. At the Council meeting on 11 March, my EU colleagues and I had a valuable exchange with the UN/League of Arab States Special Envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, who briefed us in detail on the current situation in Syria. Special Envoy Brahimi was honest in his assessment and expressed the clear view that only a negotiated settlement can salvage what is left of Syria and offer the hope of an end to the conflict. Special Envoy Brahimi is expected to brief the UN Security Council on 19 April where he will update the SECCO members on the situation on the ground and share his views on the prospects for a political settlement. At the informal “Gymnich” meeting at the end of March in Dublin, EU partners reaffirmed their full support for Special Envoy Brahimi and his efforts. We also made clear that the priority for the EU is to achieve a peaceful and negotiated solution to the crisis.

Considerable attention has also been devoted at EU level recently to reviewing the current EU sanctions which apply against Syria. We want to ensure through these measures that pressure remains on the Assad regime to stop its repression and to engage in a process of political dialogue with the opposition. At the 18 February Foreign Affairs Council, we agreed to renew the full range of existing sanctions for a further period of three months, until 1 June. At the request of the European Council on 14-15 March, we again discussed this subject at the informal Gymnich meeting held in Dublin. We agreed to continue our discussion at the next Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg on 22 April with a view to reaching a common position ahead of the 1 June renewal date.

There is also a need to ensure full accountability in relation to the gross human rights violations and war crimes which have been committed by all sides to this conflict. Ireland has been to the fore within the EU in supporting calls for the situation in Syria to be referred by the UN Security Council to the International Criminal Court. As a new member of the UN Human Rights Council, we have been active during the Council’s most recent session in building support for a strong resolution on the current human rights situation in Syria. This resolution, which calls for referral to the appropriate international criminal justice mechanism in the case of gross human rights violations, was overwhelmingly adopted by the Council on 22 March.

Discussions are currently underway at the UN in New York about a possible adoption by the UN General Assembly of a Resolution on the situation in Syria. Together with our EU and Arab partners, we are working towards ensuring that the Resolution contains strong accountability messages. We are also encouraging the sponsors to seek as wide a measure of support for the Resolution as possible within the General Assembly so as to demonstrate the extent of international concern over the current situation.

The plight of millions of ordinary Syrians remains a major concern for Ireland and its EU partners as the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, in and outside Syria. I was able to witness first-hand the dreadful cost of the conflict paid by thousands of ordinary civilians including children when I visited the refugee camp of Nizip in southern Turkey on 8 April.

Ireland and its EU partners are making a major contribution to the UN-led humanitarian relief operations. The EU is collectively the largest donor to such efforts, having contributed some €600 million in aid to date. Ireland's humanitarian assistance to Syria over the past year now amounts to €8.15 million which include the additional €1 million pledge I announced when visiting the Nizip camp.

The conflict in Syria has been a major priority for Ireland and the EU over the last two years and will remain at the top of our foreign policy agenda during the remainder of Ireland's EU Presidency. We will continue to use whatever influence we have in our Presidency role and at all levels of our international engagement to support and promote European and UN efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Passport Applications

51. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will issue an Irish passport in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare who has already furnished copy of their birth certificate and confirmatory affidavit in respect of their citizenship but who is not in a position to obtain her original birth certificate; if arrangements to process her passport application will be made in the circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18137/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Passport Service cannot locate a record of a passport application for this person on the basis of the limited information provided. Accordingly, it is not possible to provide a specific answer in relation to this case. However, if the applicant can make direct contact with Mr. Kevin Walzer at the Passport Office, Balbriggan, the application can be progressed. His contact details are - email: kevin.walzer@dfa.ie and telephone: 01.673.3215.

Undocumented Irish in the USA

52. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of meetings that officials have had with the US authorities in relation to the undocumented Irish and US emigration reform in the past 12 months; his views that these meetings are at an appropriate level and represent the maximum political pressure possible; if there is any specific effort being made to lobby Republican Party representatives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18153/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Government has identified the position of the undocumented Irish in the United States and the need to provide for future flows of migration between the two countries through the E3 visa programme as important priorities in our bilateral relationship. We have engaged in an intense campaign of engagements at political and official level with the US Administration and Congress since being elected to office. This has included direct discussion of the issue at the highest level with President Obama, Vice President Biden, Speaker of the House Boehner, Secretaries of State Kerry and Clinton and the main Congressional leaders on the issue from both the Republican and Democratic Parties. The most recent round of political level engagements with these leaders occurred during the St Patrick's Day visit to Washington by the Taoiseach and me. Prior to this, I had also discussed the issue with Senator John McCain, Senator Patrick Leahy and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. The Embassy in Washington, led by our Ambassador, continue to implement the Government's lobbying strategy on a daily basis, including regular meetings

with Senators, Congressmen and their key staffers from both parties. This strategy is executed in very close consultation with the key Irish immigration reform organisations in the United States, including the Irish Lobby for Immigration Reform, the Chicago Celts, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Coalition of Irish Emigration Centres. We have also provided significant financial support through the Emigrant Support Programme to assist several of these organisations.

I am therefore fully satisfied that the Government's campaign is targeted, strategic and is successfully connected at the highest level within the Administration and in Congress.

The advice of Ireland's friends and contacts within the US Administration and Congress has long been that comprehensive reform of the US immigration system and procedures is likely to be the only manner by which such a resolution can be achieved.

While immigration remains a very challenging issue in the United States, I am encouraged by the progress achieved since President Obama's re-election and by the legislative work already significantly advanced by the bipartisan group of 8 Senators. In particular, I very much welcome the publication this week of a draft Senate Immigration Bill. I can assure the Deputy the Government will continue to prioritise this issue and will maintain its ongoing close contact with all of the key players.

Departmental Bodies

53. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of occasions that the Trade Council has met since September 2011; the number of occasions on which these meetings were chaired at ministerial level; the issues that were discussed at these meetings; and his views on the operation and work of the Trade Council. [18154/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Export Trade Council (ETC) has met on three occasions since its inaugural meeting in September 2011. I have chaired each of these meetings. Members of the Council include Minister Bruton, Minister Varadkar, Minister Coveney and Minister of State Costello. Other relevant Departments are represented at senior official level, while the Chief Executive Officers of Bord Bia, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, SFI, Forfás and Tourism Ireland are also members. The ETC's role is to strengthen cooperation and coordination across all Government Departments and State Agencies involved in the promotion and development of trade, tourism and investment, and to oversee the progressive implementation of the recommendations set out in the Government Trade Strategy, *Trading and Investing in a Smart Economy*.

Matters discussed at meetings reflect these goals. For example, at our most recent meeting, the Council considered progress made in 2012 in achieving the targets for export, tourism, FDI and jobs growth set out in *Trading and Investing in a Smart Economy* and discussed opportunities for Ireland presented by the ongoing negotiation of a number of Free Trade Agreements between the EU and third countries. The schedule of EI trade missions for 2013, which Minister Bruton and I approved, was also reviewed. Examples of other areas which have been considered in previous meetings are my Department's Africa Strategy; visa issues and their impact of trade, tourism and investment in Ireland; and the issue of education and skills, which Minister Quinn briefed the Council on at its meeting of 20 September 2012.

I believe that the role of the Export Trade Council is key in ensuring a coherent and joined up approach to meeting our growth and jobs targets in the areas of trade, tourism and invest-

ment and in identifying areas in which Departments and agencies can work effectively together in promoting Ireland in overseas markets. Progress in meeting the targets outlined in *Trading and Investing in a Smart Economy* by 2015 remains on track.

International Relations

54. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the most recent discussions that have been held at European Union level in relation to North Korea; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18162/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Ireland, together with our partners in the European Union, is in close contact on matters of concern involving the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). We continue to engage with key partners to build a firm and unified response. Recent actions by North Korea directly threaten peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and are a clear violation of the country's international obligations under United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1718, 1874, 2087 and 2094. On the 18 February 2013, at the Foreign Affairs Council, together with EU colleagues, Ireland agreed to the further strengthening of sanctions against North Korea by adopting EU autonomous measures in addition to those contained in UNSC Resolution 2087. These further measures in particular concern trade in conventional weapons involving North Korea and the export to North Korea of certain key components for ballistic usage. At this meeting, Ireland together with our EU partners further called upon North Korea to reengage constructively with the international community, in particular to rejoin with the other members of the Six-Party Talks on denuclearisation, and thus to work towards lasting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.

On the 8 April 2013, High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Catherine Ashton called the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, Yun Byung-se and discussed the latest developments regarding North Korea. High Representative Ashton reaffirmed the EU's strong support for the approach of the United Nations Security Councils and again called upon North Korea to reengage constructively with the international community in order to work towards lasting peace and security on a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. Both sides also remain in close contact regarding developments in the situation.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

55. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisers in his Department over the last two years. [18313/13]

56. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisers pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisers for 2012 [18327/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 55 and 56 together.

Details of the salaries paid to Special Advisers in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which are commensurate with the responsibilities attaching to their positions, are pro-

vided in the following table.

Name	Position held	Annual Salary
Mark Garrett	Chief Adviser - Office of the Tánaiste	€168,000
Colm O'Reardon	Economic Adviser - Office of the Tánaiste	€155,000
Jean O'Mahony	Special Adviser - Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	€86,604
Niamh Sweeney	Special Adviser – Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	€80,051
Stephen O'Shea	Special Adviser - Minister of State for European Affairs	€64,257

Ms Jean O'Mahony received salary increments of €3,286 and €3,267 in March 2012 and March 2013 respectively and Mr Stephen O'Shea received a salary increment of €2,291 in November 2012, in line with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines relating to Special Advisers. The total cost of the salaries paid to Special Advisers in 2012 was €483,635.

Bank Charges

57. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the changes in cash handling charges by the Allied Irish Banks; and if he, or representatives of his Department, have raised this matter with the bank. [18035/13]

58. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the cost impact on the small medium enterprises sector of the changes in cash handling charges by the Allied Irish Bank; and if he will confirm if his Department was consulted with regard to these changes. [18036/13]

65. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm if his Department was consulted with regard to changes in charges for cash handling by the Allied Irish Bank. [18038/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 57, 58 and 65 together.

As the Deputy will be aware the Relationship Framework with the bank provides that the State will not intervene in the day-to-day operations of the bank or their management decisions. These frameworks are published on the Department of Finance website. I must ensure that the bank is run on a commercial, cost effective and independent basis to ensure the value of the bank as an asset to the State, as per the Memorandum on Economic and Financial Policies agreed with the EU Commission, the ECB and the IMF.

However, AIB has informed me of the following:

While AIB's standard notes lodged fee is one of the most competitive in the market, we are aware that the above changes will impact on c. 5% of our business customers.

Changes to European Regulations in 2011 have meant that AIB is now obliged to check cash lodgements for fitness and authenticity before lodgement to the Central Bank. Historically,

18 April 2013

AIB has been one of the only Banks to offer a discount to some of its business customers who prepared lodgements to an agreed standard. This removed the requirement to check the cash in such lodgements and thus allowed for reduced cash handling/notes lodged rates (€0.25 and €0.17) off the standard €0.45c per €100 fee.

As a result of the manual nature now involved in checking/counting cash, a review has taken place of AIB's historical cash handling fees.

In this regard, we have written to all impacted customers offering them the opportunity to approach the Bank to discuss their transaction fee arrangements in advance of the next fee charging period. These discussions and any potential revised fee negotiation and transaction fee arrangements can be put in place up to 30th August next and back dated to the start of that fee quarter. AIB's business customers often negotiate individual fee arrangements based on their specific circumstances and needs, and the bank is offering them the opportunity to do so in the coming months in order to minimise the impact of the above changes.

More broadly, there may be opportunities for business customers to reduce their overall cash handling and fees through some electronic banking services such as:

- AIB's Point of Sale systems

- AIB has also launched its 'contactless payment' service for transactions up to €15 which involves customers holding their card up to a secure reader which records the transaction in seconds

- For business customers with larger cash lodgement requirements, the use of AIB's centralised Lodgement Processing may reduce costs.

- In-store ATM's offers the ability to recycle cash and which may reduce cash lodgement costs."

Property Taxation Administration

59. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will support a matter regarding the property tax (details supplied). [18061/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the Local Property Tax is a self-assessed tax so in the first instance it is a matter for the property owner to calculate the tax due based on his or her assessment of the chargeable value of the property. The chargeable value is defined in the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, as amended, and means the price that the unencumbered fee simple of a residential property might be expected to fetch on a sale on the open market, were that property to be sold on the valuation date of 1 May 2013, in a manner that would secure the best possible price for the property. In assessing the market value of a residential property no account may be taken of any encumbrance on the property. Therefore, any restrictions on the sale of the units in the complex referred to are not relevant when establishing the chargeable value for Local Property Tax purposes. The individual units should be valued as if there was no restriction on their sale. However, the state of the completion of the complex, including the common areas, is clearly a relevant factor in assessing the valuation band for the individual units.

Tax Collection

60. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding probate (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18215/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the examination of the documentation in the case referred to is close to completion, and that the executor was advised of this earlier this week. The delay in completing the examination is regretted, and has been exacerbated due to the size and complexity of the estate. Revenue has recently been advised of significant additional assets in the estate, which require further examination. Revenue will expedite the examination and conclude the case when outstanding issues have been addressed. In the meantime, Revenue will keep the agent and executor updated on progress. The probate documentation was received in Revenue in early November 2012.

Property Taxation Collection

61. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the options available to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare in respect of the payment of the local property charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18014/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that a wide range of different payment options have been put in place to assist people in meeting their Local Property Tax (LPT) obligations, including phased payments and the facility to pay by cash. Revenue's strategy in this regard is to ensure taxpayers have a choice of payment options available to them from which they can choose the method which is most suited to their individual circumstances. If the person in question is concerned about his/her ability to pay LPT in a single payment then he/she may wish to consider one of the phased payment options that spreads payment in instalments across the year. The various payment options are detailed in 'Chapter 11' of the Revenue booklet 'Your guide to Local Property Tax'. For example, LPT can be deducted at source on a phased basis from salaries or occupational pensions or from certain payments from the Department of Social Protection. The Revenue Commissioners advise that, where deduction at source is chosen, there is no additional administration or interest charge.

Payments can also be made by direct debit from current accounts in banks and other financial institutions including credit unions. In addition, liable persons can avail of phased payment facilities through Revenue-approved third party payment service providers, which are An Post TaxPay, Payzone and Omnivend. These service providers, each of which has extensive nationwide outlets, will accept either full or phased payments in cash or by debit/credit cards. Charges are however imposed by the payment service providers on a per transaction basis. I am advised that An Post levies a charge of €1 per transaction, while Omnivend charges a fee of 4% per transaction. I understand that Payzone will be introducing the following charges this week: 75 cent per transaction for payments up to €50, €1 per transaction for payments between €50.01 and €100 and €2 per transaction for payments over €100.

The person in question may qualify for either a full or partial deferral of LPT as provided for by the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012. Chapter 12 of the Revenue booklet 'Your guide to Local Property Tax' sets out in detail the various types of deferral that are available and Revenue has also published extensive guidelines on the various types of deferrals, including examples, on its website www.revenue.ie. To qualify for a deferral, the person's residential property must be occupied by him/her as a sole or main residence. The income thresholds for a full deferral are €15,000 for a single person or widow/er and €25,000 for a couple, whether married persons, civil partners or cohabitants. An increased income threshold of 80% of mortgage interest payments may also apply if the person's property is subject to a mortgage.

The Deputy should note that deferral is not an exemption. Payment of the tax is deferred, meaning that it becomes payable later and carries an interest charge at a rate of 4% per annum on all amounts of LPT that are deferred. Any deferred amount, including interest, will be a charge on the property and will have to be paid to Revenue on any future sale/transfer of the property.

Property Taxation Application

62. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if a landlord's company, which has been set up for the purposes of managing rental properties and when the company is the owner of the residential properties, is liable for the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18015/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Based on the information provided by the Deputy it is not possible to give a definitive reply. However, by way of general information the following may be of relevance in this case. I have been informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the liable person in relation to a residential property is generally the owner of the property for the purposes of the charge to LPT. This is on the basis that he or she has the right to immediate possession of the property or is entitled to receive the rent if the property is rented rather than occupied by the owner. However, in a situation where an owner has given a substantial interest in his or her property to another person, that other person may become the liable person instead of the owner. This would happen, for example, where the owner has leased the property to a lessee/tenant for a period of at least 20 years.

In this case, the Deputy has indicated that the company is the owner of the properties so, assuming that it has not created at least a 20-year leasehold interest in these properties, it would appear to be the liable person. On the other hand, if the landlord is the owner of the properties and has merely engaged his or her company to manage the properties without conveying an interest of at least 20 years in the properties to the company, the landlord would be the liable person.

Banking Operations

63. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance his views on when State supported banks reach agreements with individuals regarding restructuring and writing down their loans and when these agreements are subject to confidentiality agreements, if this information will be passed on by the banks for credit reference purposes or will these individuals who had loans written down continue to have good or clear credit ratings notwithstanding the write down of their loans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18022/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The State supported banks have provided me with the following information.

Bank of Ireland

In certain cases Bank of Ireland will require a customer to sign a Confidentiality Agreement prior to entering into discussions in relation to the formulation of alternative arrangement/restructuring. The reason for this is that Bank of Ireland treats customers on a case by case individual basis and, especially in cases of particular sensitivity, we wish to ensure that the subject matter of the arrangement is confidential between the Bank and the customer. Where appropriate and depending on the nature of the individual case the Bank may communicate to a

credit reference agency relevant details concerning the status of the credit relationship between the Customer and the Bank.

AIB

All bank correspondence/interactions with borrowers are treated confidentially. AIB complies with its reporting obligations to the Irish Credit Bureau. However, the bank cannot comment on how the information provided is used by the Irish Credit Bureau.

PTSB

Permanent TSB has confirmed that it does not ask customers to sign non-disclosure agreements in respect of restructurings. Permanent TSB provides information to the Irish Credit Bureau in compliance with its reporting obligations.

Banking Sector Remuneration

64. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether there should be a reduction in pay levels in the State supported banks; if this should apply to persons above certain pay levels and be directed at those on high pay or if this should be directed at persons at lower and medium pay scales in the banks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18028/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): When publishing the Review of Remuneration Practices and Frameworks at the Covered Institutions, on 12 March 2013, I indicated that the Government had formed the view that with the remaining covered institutions still incurring losses it was an inescapable conclusion that the cost base of the institutions needs to be reduced further. This is essential if they are to return to profitability, be in a position to support the economy and repay the State's investment through a return to private ownership. On behalf of the Government, I have now directed the banks to come up with plans as to how they intend to address this issue in a manner that can help meet the State's objectives. I expect the value of those plans to mean a saving of 6% - 10% of total remuneration costs, through reductions in payroll and pension benefits, new working arrangements and structures that deliver efficiency gains. Tackling the cost base is of course only one of many goals that need to be achieved but combined with other measures will deliver the required results.

I, and the Government, acknowledge that the sacrifices and changes made by bank employees to date at all levels and recognise that this has been achieved without major industrial unrest in what is a critically important sector. However, it can never be forgotten by management and employees of these banks – both past and present – that without enormous cost to Irish taxpayers these institutions would not have survived and that this needs to be borne in mind during future discussions. If remuneration costs are to be reduced with the aim of a return to profitability then sacrifices at all employee levels will be required.

Question No. 65 answered with Question No. 57.

Household Charge Collection

66. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the procedures in place to collect the unpaid household charge and the way this will be collected under the new local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18048/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by my colleague, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, that under the Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011 an owner of a residential property on the liability date is liable to pay the Household Charge, unless otherwise exempted or entitled to claim a waiver. It is a matter for an owner of a residential property to determine liability and pay the charge. The Local Government Management Agency is administering the Household Charge system on a shared service/agency basis for all county and city councils. The agency has been working with the Revenue Commissioners to support the introduction of the Local Property Tax (LPT), including in relation to arrangements under section 156 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, which concerns the treatment of Household Charge arrears. The arrears of the Household Charge for 2012 will be capped at €130 if paid to the Local Government Management Agency by 30 April 2013.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they will receive the final register of those who have paid the Household Charge by 1 July later in the year. Where the Household Charge for 2012 has not been paid by 1 July 2013 the arrears amount will be converted into LPT and collected through the LPT system. Revenue will pursue this additional liability when the LPT system is fully operational. Interest and penalties under the LPT system will apply to the additional €200. It is in the interest of all those who have not yet paid the Household Charge to do so as promptly as possible, or they will end up with an additional LPT liability.

Property Taxation Administration

67. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons who will be liable for local property tax on a number of residential properties; the number of properties to be covered for which local property tax will be paid; the number of letters that have been issued to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18049/13]

71. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the number of letters issued by the Revenue Commissioners to people outside the State; and the number of residential properties covered by these letters in respect of the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18114/13]

72. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the mechanisms in place to ensure that persons who are non-resident and or non-domiciled here for tax purposes pay the local property tax on residential property; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18115/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 67, 71 and 72 together.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that a key aspect of the work they have undertaken in connection with Local Property Tax (LPT) has been the development of a register of residential properties in the State, which is the cornerstone of the new tax. The Register was developed using data drawn from a range of sources including Revenue's own databases (which includes details from the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge database), the Local Government Management Agency database, and data from utility companies. This register has been used to issue correspondence to property owners and, by 16 April 2013, Revenue had issued 1.29 million letters to owners of 1.6 million properties.

It is expected that letters will issue this week to owners of approximately 35,000 properties. Given the scale of the task involved and the multiple sources that have been used to create the register, I understand the Revenue Commissioners are continuing to update it with new cases

as they come to light and letters will continue to issue to newly identified property owners as a result. This may include a certain number of non-resident liable persons. I am also informed by the Revenue Commissioners that, according to the LPT Register, there are about 154,000 owners of multiple properties who are liable to pay the tax on approximately 470,000 properties.

The Commissioners can confirm that 4,381 letters have issued to individuals who are described on Revenue's records as non-residents. According to the LPT Register, these individuals own 7,736 residential properties in the State. Revenue also advises that included in the 1.29 million letters that have issued to date are letters to two further categories of property owner that are potentially non-resident. A number of letters have issued to foreign addresses and Revenue is aware that letters will have issued to an Irish address where the person who owns the property is residing outside the State, because Revenue would not be aware in the normal course of a change of residence. It is not possible to provide any definitive numbers in respect of these categories of property owners until LPT Returns have been filed and the necessary analysis has been completed. The Commissioners advise that a number of non-residents have already engaged with the process and fully met their obligations.

The Commissioners also advise that where an owner is not on Revenue's register a Return will not issue. However, such owners are still obliged to complete and file an LPT Return by the relevant deadline – 7 May for paper filers and 28 May for electronic filers. As part of its media campaign this week Revenue is advising property owners that, if they have not yet received an LPT Return from Revenue, they should request a paper form by contacting Revenue's LPT Helpline or accessing the on-line system on Revenue's website to file their LPT Return on-line. I am also advised that even where a property owner has not received a Property ID and PIN code from Revenue, they will still be able to file their Return online.

Every effort is being made to ensure that non-resident owners of residential properties in the State are aware of their obligations with regard to LPT. Revenue is engaging in a public communications campaign and a substantial amount of information on the tax has been published on the Revenue website. This information is being updated regularly and is accessible from abroad. Non-resident owners have full access to the online filing system for LPT and can contact the LPT Helpline through a dedicated line for callers outside the State at +353 1 7023049, if they have any queries or require assistance with filing their Returns on-line. I understand that, to date, 6,131 phone calls have come through this telephone number.

As part of the general issue of LPT Returns, property owners also receive a Notice of Estimate of LPT. This is the amount of LPT that will be pursued by Revenue, in accordance with the LPT legislation, if the resident or non-resident owner does not complete and submit their LPT Return.

The compliance strategies for non-resident property owners will vary depending on whether the property is let and whether there is a letting agent, etc. The legislation provides that Revenue may require anybody acting as an agent in relation to a letting or who receives rent provide details on request in relation to the property. A tenant may also be required to give the relevant details. I am further advised that the normal compliance and debt recovery provisions apply to LPT as apply to the collection and recovery of other taxes and duties under the care and management of the Revenue Commissioners. This includes the attachment of rent payable. An additional mechanism that Revenue can invoke in the case of residents of countries with which Ireland has a double taxation convention is the exchange of information provisions which would assist with profiling, and corresponding with, the individual involved.

Finally, as the Deputy will be aware, any unpaid LPT will attach to the residential property, and the resident or non-resident owner will not be able to sell or transfer the property without

paying the LPT, along with interest and penalties due. I am advised by Revenue that their initial focus is on the completion of the Register, that it is clear that there is already a significant level of engagement with the tax, and that it is too early in the process to be specific on the strategies they will deploy to address compliance issues on the part of non-residents.

Tax Reliefs Availability

68. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will amend the Finance Act to ensure that section 469 of the Taxes Consolidation Act(1997)(1) under the health expenses reads (f) physiotherapy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18055/13]

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

Section 469 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 consolidated all previous legislation pertaining to relief for health expenses, in particular section 12 of Finance Act 1967 which introduced the relief in the first instance. This section also required that physiotherapy or similar treatment be prescribed by a practitioner before qualifying for relief. This requirement has, therefore, been part of the qualifying criteria since the introduction of relief for health expenses and I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that guidance and instructions to staff have remained unchanged in this regard. For 2010 the cost of tax relief for health expenses was €127 million and was availed of by 368,000 individuals who had sufficient income to benefit from a claim. There is no specific breakdown in these figures of the costs related to physiotherapy.

If self-referral for physiotherapy were allowed, an estimate of the additional cost would be unquantifiable, but, undoubtedly, it would increase the overall cost of health expenses relief to the Exchequer. While the Government supports measures to lower the cost of medical treatment which should in turn lower the costs of health care provision by the State, an extension of the relief along the lines proposed would inevitably lead to calls for other treatments to similarly qualify for relief, which would greatly increase the overall cost of the scheme. I would point out that this issue was raised during the debates in the Seanad on Finance Bill 2013 during which I agreed to re-examine the matter during the course of this year.

Property Taxation Collection

69. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the person who determines the market value of Áras an Uachtaráin for the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18112/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) provides that a liability for Local Property Tax (LPT) will arise where a per-

son owns a residential property on the liability date which will be 1 May 2013 for the year 2013. As LPT is a self-assessed tax it will be a matter for the property owner to calculate the tax due based on his or her assessment of the market value of the property. All residential properties owned by the State including those owned by the Office of Public Works (OPW) are liable for LPT. In this regard the OPW is liable to LPT in respect of properties under its control, including Áras an Uachtaráin.

I am advised by the Office of Public Works (OPW) that it is engaging with the Revenue Commissioners to assess the market value of all those buildings in the State's property portfolio which are or could be considered to be residences for the purposes of the LPT, including Áras an Uachtaráin. The Valuation Service of the OPW will be responsible for assigning a market value to this and all the other properties under its control judged liable for the tax.

Property Taxation Administration

70. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons who occupy residential properties owned by the State or public bodies; the person who determines the market value of such properties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18113/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) 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. The 2012 Act provides that the State or other public bodies, including local authorities, will be liable for 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. As LPT is a self-assessed tax it will be a matter for the property owner to calculate the tax due based on his or her assessment of the market value of the property. In this regard it will be a matter for the relevant State/public body to establish a market value for each property and submit a completed LPT Return in respect of the properties in their ownership. The 2012 Act provides that where local authority owned properties are not exempt from LPT, the market value of any such property will be deemed to fall into the lowest valuation band of zero to €100,000 for the period up to and including 2016. This will result in an LPT charge of €45 per property for 2013 and €90 per year for 2014 to 2016. In addition, section 119 of the 2012 Act also gives local authorities until 1 January 2014 to pay the 2013 tax. In common with other liable persons who own multiple properties, local authorities have until 28 May 2013 to file their LPT Returns.

I am advised by the Office of Public Works (OPW) that it is engaging with the Revenue Commissioners to assess the market value of all those buildings in the State's property portfolio which are or could be considered to be residences for the purposes of the Property Tax. The Valuation Service of the OPW will be responsible for assigning a market value to all such properties under its control judged liable for the tax.

The number of persons who occupy residential properties owned by the State or public bodies is not relevant to the operation of the tax and is not information that Revenue would have.

Questions Nos. 71 and 72 answered with Question No. 67.

Property Taxation Administration

73. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance if a person may pay the local

property tax by cheque to the Revenue Commissioners/Collector General. [18116/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the Collector-General will accept payment by cheque of Local Property Tax (LPT) from owners of a single property. The LPT legislation provides that owners of multiple properties must file their LPT returns and pay their LPT online so cheque payment is not an option for this category of liable persons. In circumstances where a single property owner chooses to pay by cheque, he/she should ensure to complete the LPT Return, attach a cheque for the full amount and send it to LPT Branch, P.O. Box 1, Limerick. I draw the Deputy's attention to the Single Debt Authority (SDA) option, which Revenue has developed as part of its suite of flexible payment methods designed to make payment of LPT as easy and user friendly as possible. The SDA, which operates like an 'electronic cheque', will not be deducted by Revenue from the person's bank account before 21 July 2013. Any owner of a single property wishing to avail of the SDA option should simply complete the payslip at the bottom of the LPT 1 Return and send it to LPT Branch, P.O. Box 1, Limerick.

Mortgage Interest Relief

74. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if the Revenue Commissioners may be prepared to accept repayments of €100 per month in respect of overpayment of mortgage interest relief in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18131/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): This is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners who are responsible for the administration of mortgage interest relief through the tax relief at source [TRS] system. I am advised by Revenue that this matter has been ongoing for some time and that the persons in question agreed a repayment schedule in June 2011. In November 2011 the persons contacted Revenue with a view to renegotiating the payment schedule and a revised arrangement was agreed at that time. Given the circumstances of the case Revenue has made direct contact with the persons to further revise the repayment schedule.

Tax Yield

75. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of additional revenue that will be raised for the Exchequer if the corporation tax rate here was raised by the same proportion, that is by 25%, as the increase to the Cypriot corporate tax rate in the original Cypriot bailout plan of 16 March 2013. [18152/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the full year yield to the Exchequer, estimated in terms of expected 2013 profits, of increasing the standard rate of corporation tax by 25% from 12.5% to 15.6%, is tentatively estimated on a straight line arithmetic basis to be about €928 million. While this estimate is technically correct it does not take into account any possible behavioural change on the part of taxpayers as a consequence. In terms of an increase in the 12.5% rate, estimating the size of the behavioural effects is difficult but they are likely to be relatively significant. An OECD multi-country study found that a 1% increase in the corporate tax rate reduces inward investment by 3.7% on average. On this basis, it would take only a 2.5% increase in the rate (to 15%) to decrease Ireland's inward investment by nearly 10%. This assumes the average applies across the board but in fact the effect is likely to be more extreme for Ireland.

The very major importance of maintaining the standard 12.5% rate of corporation tax to

Ireland's international competitive position in the current climate must also be borne in mind. Ireland, like other smaller member states, is geographically and historically a peripheral country in Europe. A low corporate tax rate is a tool to address the economic limitations that come with being a peripheral country, as compared to larger core countries. Ireland's low corporation tax rate plays an important role in attracting foreign direct investment to Ireland and thereby increasing employment here. Recent research by the OECD also points to the importance of low corporate tax rates to encourage growth.

Further, it would be difficult to justify such a move in the context of Ireland's stated position that we will not change our corporation tax strategy. Even a marginal change would undermine both our long held stance on this issue and the certainty of business, domestic and international, in our resolve to maintain that position.

Mortgage Arrears Rate

76. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the proportion of residential mortgage holders in arrears of longer than 90 days in which one or both parties to the mortgage are classified as unemployed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18164/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank has advised me that it does not publish a breakdown of its quarterly mortgage arrears statistics in the format requested by the Deputy. However, the Deputy may wish to note that the Central Bank commissioned a survey of households with mortgage debt in 2012. The purpose of the survey is to identify any changes in the income and consumption patterns of mortgage holders since they drew down their mortgage. The Central Bank has informed me that the results of this survey are to be published in the coming months and will provide more granular analysis of the specific circumstances of indebted households.

Central Bank of Ireland Properties

77. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the plans being considered for the future use of the headquarters of the Central Bank of Ireland; the timetable for completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18165/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank owns four premises in Dame St, including the landmark Tower Building. It also leases premises in Spencer Dock in the Docklands and Iveagh Court near Harcourt St. It is the intention of the Central Bank to develop disposal proposals for the Dame Street buildings. Due regard will be given to the public interest and maximising the return to the Central Bank in decision making around the future of these properties. The Central Bank will consider all proposals for the future use of the building, taking into account that this is a valuable asset that should give maximum return so that the Central Bank can continue to return a portion of their profit to the Exchequer. The decisions on future use will be informed by the need to balance both the asset value on the Central Bank's profit and loss account and taking into account the public interest in the Dame St tower.

Construction on the Central Bank North Wall Quay site is expected to commence in 2014 and the Central Bank is aiming to move in late 2015.

IBRC Staff

78. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to non co-operation by former Irish Bank Resolution Corporation staff with the National Assets Management Agency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18166/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Special Liquidators that they have only experienced co-operation and support from employees to date.

Insurance Industry Issues

79. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the current maximum outstanding liability of the State in respect of claims against the Insurance Corporation of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18167/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy should note at the outset that the State no longer has any outstanding liability in respect of claims against the Insurance Corporation of Ireland. In this regard the administrator of Icarom obtained the approval of the High Court on 27 November 2012 for a portfolio transfer of all of Icarom's insurance liabilities to another regulated entity, EIFlow, in return for a payment of circa €17 million. EIFlow is an EU-regulated company incorporated in Gibraltar and licensed by the Financial Services Commission in Gibraltar, and is controlled by the shareholders of Quest Group Holdings Limited, a company which specialises in the servicing of the run off of insurance and reinsurance portfolios.

Icarom has therefore disposed of its entire insurance business, and there are no remaining outstanding liabilities of the State in respect of claims on the Insurance Corporation of Ireland. As a consequence the administration has been terminated and the company dissolved.

It should also be noted that in completing this transaction the administrator was able to repay to the Insurance Compensation Fund a total of €88,530,782.55.

The Icarom administration was financed by loans from the State, one for IR£100 million in 1985 which was repaid on schedule in 2000, and one for IR£32 (€40.6) million in 1993, which was repaid in 2002, ten years ahead of schedule. Icarom has also benefitted from, inter alia, profits on the sale of the general insurance and life assurance businesses (€135 million), proceeds from a settlement with the Company's former auditors (€49 million), the settlement of claims for less than their estimated cost (€46 million) and contributions from AIB under a 1992 agreement with the State (€224 million).

Finally, the Deputy should be aware that at the time Icarom was placed in Administration in March 1985, there was great concern about what the ultimate cost to the taxpayer would be. The actual outturn is significantly better than was originally envisaged with both the life assurance and the general insurance businesses continuing to operate under new ownership and approximately €88.5 million now being returned to the State. The only cost to the State is the interest foregone of €20.9m on the 1993 interest free loan of €40.6m.

Eligible Liabilities Guarantee Scheme

80. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of funds covered by the eligible liabilities guarantee; the amount he expects that will be covered by it at the end of 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18168/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank of Ireland report an

amount of €68.349 bn. for outstanding liabilities covered under the Eligible Liabilities Guarantee scheme 2009 (ELG scheme) at end February, 2013, which is the latest available figure. Estimated ELG liabilities at end 2013, 2014, and 2015 as recently reported by the participating institutions are set out in the following table.

2013	2014	2015
€21.446 bn.	€16.025 bn.	€3.264 bn.

The Deputy will be aware that the ELG Scheme issuance period for eligible liabilities ended at midnight on 28 March, 2013. However, eligible liabilities covered under the scheme which were incurred up to that time continue to be covered up to their maturity date which could be up to five years maximum from the date the liability was incurred. This means that covered liabilities will wind down over the period 28 March, 2013 to 27 March, 2018 at the latest.

Central Bank of Ireland Issues

81. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will set out in tabular form the value of the Central Bank holdings of gold at the end of each year from 2005 to 2012; the value of all purchases and sales of gold by the Central Bank in each year from 2005-2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18169/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank has not bought or sold gold holdings since 2005. The value of the Central Bank holdings of gold at the end of each year from 2005 to 2012 is set out in tabular form.

Year	Value (€m)
2012	266 (figure as at 28 December, year-end figure will be published in Annual Report)
2011	237
2010	204
2009	148
2008	120
2007	110
2006	93
2005	84

Tax Code

82. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance his views on certificate 2 in respect of persons (details supplied). [18214/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): For reasons of taxpayer confidentiality the Revenue Commissioners do not discuss or reveal information regarding any taxpayer to third parties, including business associates of the taxpayer. The Commissioners have, however, noted the details supplied by you.

Tax Code

83. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance his views on C2 certificates

(details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18217/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the C2 certificate to which the Deputy refers is no longer in use. The Revenue Commissioners have substantially modernised the operation of the Relevant Contracts Tax (RCT) system following the introduction of a dedicated online facility on 1 January 2012, which offers principal contractors a fast, efficient and paper free system. This has streamlined the process for the submission of information and payments to Revenue and has had the effect of significantly reducing the administrative burden associated with RCT. A feature of the new system is the online notification to principal contractors of the rate of tax to be applied to payments to subcontractors. The system provides for three rates of deduction - zero, 20% and 35%. All subcontractors are issued with a Notification of Determination showing the deduction rate determined by the Revenue Commissioners for the subcontractor. This has removed the need for C2 certificates as the new online notification carries out the same function in a more efficient and streamlined way.

The zero rate is only applied where the Revenue Commissioners are satisfied, among other things, that the subcontractor has complied with all of his income tax, capital gains tax and VAT obligations throughout the previous three years.

A newly registered subcontractor, who has no previous tax history or a subcontractor who has not complied with all of his income tax, capital gains tax and VAT obligations throughout the previous three years but who has complied substantially with those obligations is allocated a deduction rate of 20%, compared to 35% under the old RCT system. The rate of deduction is reviewed periodically and if the subcontractor meets the necessary conditions the deduction rate is adjusted to zero.

In tandem with the introduction of the new system, the Department of Finance has revised the procedures for tax clearance in respect of public service contracts. In the case of all public sector contracts of a value of €10,000 or more, the contractor will be required either to produce a current tax clearance certificate or demonstrate a satisfactory level of tax compliance. A subcontractor who is subject to the 20% rate is regarded as having a satisfactory level of tax compliance and can use the Notification of Determination to demonstrate this.

Accordingly there is no intention or need to introduce a temporary C2 certificate.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

84. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisers in his Department over the last two years. [18312/13]

85. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisers' pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisers for 2012 [18326/13]

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

In my Department, I have appointed Mary Kenny and Eoin Dorgan as special advisers. The salaries below are in line with guidelines issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the appointment of Ministerial staff.

Name	2011	2012	2013
Mary Kenny	€83,337 (Mar 2011)	€86,604 (Mar 2012)	€89,898 (Mar 2013)
Eoin Dorgan	€83,337 (Oct 2011)	€86,604 (Oct 2012)	---
Total (approx.)	€166,674	€173,208	

My colleague, the Minister of State, Deputy Brian Hayes, has not appointed a special advisor.

State Bodies Establishment

86. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of his Department since February 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18340/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In response to the Deputy's question, details requested are contained in the following table.

Name of Body	Date Established	Is the Body subject to a sunset clause
Credit Union Restructuring Board (ReBo)	1 January 2013	ReBo is subject to a sunset clause in relation to its continuance after 1 January 2016.
Irish Fiscal Advisory Council	Created on an administrative basis on 07 July 2011. Became a statutory body on 31 December 2012	The Body is not subject to a sunset clause

In September 2011 the Government announced the establishment of the New Economy and Recovery Authority (NewERA) within the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA). Work on the necessary draft legislation to put NewERA on a statutory footing is ongoing.

There are no further plans to set up any new public bodies under the aegis of my Department.

Higher Education Institutions Issues

87. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the suggestion of technological university status for a merged Cork IT and IT Tralee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18004/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairi Quinn): As you are aware, I endorsed the framework for system development laid out in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 which outlines a developmental pathway towards designation as a Technological University for merged institutes of technology who seek to apply.

In relation to the evolutionary pathway laid out in the National Strategy for institutes of technology, the implementation process is well underway. The Landscape document published

in February 2012 lays out a clear four stage process and criteria for institutes of technology who wish to apply for designation as a technological university. The process for designation is designed to ensure educational quality, objectivity, international expertise, fairness and transparency. The process will consist of four stages overseen by HEA, with an independent international panel of experts to advise the Authority in the final stages.

The first stage requires institutes of technology to submit a formal expression of interest in merging and seeking designation. I understand from HEA that three such expressions of interest have been received including one from Cork Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Tralee. The Higher Education Authority are considering all proposals and their advice on system configuration will include their advice on the progress of institutes of technology interested in seeking designation to the second stage of the designation process. I am expecting to receive their advice for my consideration shortly.

Having regard to the process that has been put in place to assess proposals for designation as technological universities I do not propose to comment specifically on any potential applications for designation by any group of Institutes of Technology.

School Transport Provision

88. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide school transport or a grant towards school transport for a student (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18027/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Under the terms of my Department's School Transport scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs arising from a Diagnosed Disability, children are eligible for transport where they have special educational needs arising from a diagnosed disability in accordance with the designation of high and low incidence disability set out in Department of Education and Skills (DES) Circular 02/05 and are attending the nearest recognised mainstream school, special class/special school or a unit, that is or can be resourced, to meet their special educational needs. Eligibility is determined following consultation with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) through its network of Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO).

My Department has not received an application for school transport on behalf of the child referred to by the Deputy in the details supplied.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

89. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) in County Cork who was unable through illness to complete first year, will be grant aided on the basis of a new Central Applications Office application if successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18043/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that the student referred to by the Deputy has been awarded a grant and an award letter issued on 4 January, 2013. If the student is commencing a new course of study in the academic year 2013/14 it will be necessary for her to establish her eligibility by submitting a fully completed online grant application to Student Universal Support Ireland via the *studentfinance.ie* website once the application process for the 2013/14 academic year opens. Article 15(8) of the Student Grant Scheme 2012 provides

awarding authorities with discretion to waive the provisions of Article 15(7)(b)(ii) in exceptional circumstances and consider funding for a repeat period of study, in line with guidelines drawn up by the Minister. The Deputy will appreciate that in the absence of all of the relevant details that would be contained in an individual's application in relation to exceptional circumstances for a repeat period of study, it would not be possible for me to say whether or not a student would qualify for a grant.

Schools Building Projects Status

90. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current position in relation to the construction of a new school at a location (details supplied) in County Westmeath; if he will indicate a firm timeframe when such school should be constructed and ready for occupation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18054/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The school project referred to by the Deputy is included in the 5 year construction programme announced in March 2012 and is scheduled to progress to construction in 2015/16. The delivery of this school has been devolved to Westmeath County Council who are in the process of appointing the Design Team. Details of all school building projects included in the 5 year construction programme are available on my Department's website at www.education.ie

School Transport Provision

91. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will, arising from changes in the primary school transport scheme for 2011/2012, review the extent to which such changes are likely to impact negatively on a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18067/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Changes to my Department's Primary School Transport Scheme were announced in Budget 2011 and derived from recommendations contained in the Value for Money review of the scheme. The changes announced covered the uniform application of the distance eligibility criterion, the cessation of the Closed/Central School Rule (CSR), an increase from seven to ten in the minimum number of eligible children required to establish or retain a service and the introduction of charges for eligible primary children. These changes to school transport provision are applied uniformly and equitably on a national basis.

Bus Éireann, which operates the School Transport Scheme on behalf of my Department, has advised that they have not received an application for primary school transport from the family in question.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

92. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the financial support available to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18072/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The student referred to by the Deputy should contact the SUSI Helpdesks in relation to making enquiries to complete a grant application form in order to determine his eligibility for student support.

While maintenance support is not available for students entering approved postgraduate courses, those who meet the qualifying conditions for the special rate of grant under the Student Grant Scheme 2012 may be eligible to have their post-graduate tuition fees paid up to the maximum fee limit of €6,270. Postgraduate students may qualify to have a €2,000 contribution made towards the costs of their fees where they meet the relevant terms and conditions. The income threshold for this payment is €31,500 for the 2012/13 academic year, increasing relative to the number of family dependents.

Tax relief is also available on postgraduate tuition fees. Details in relation to this relief are available from the Revenue Commissioners. In addition, the Student Assistance Fund will continue to be made available through the access offices of third-level institutions to assist students in exceptional financial need.

Residential Institutions Issues

93. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current status of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board, including structure, staffing and finance. [18100/13]

94. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason almost two years after the processing of grant applications ceased, the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board has not resumed the processing of applications. [18101/13]

95. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the breakdown of the way the €110 million euro allocation of Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board is being spent. [18102/13]

97. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria for eligibility and acceptance of applications for Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board education grants. [18105/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 93 to 95, inclusive, and 97 together.

I established the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (RISF) Board pursuant to the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act, 2012, with effect from 25 March. The Board will oversee the use of the cash contributions of up to €110 million pledged by the religious congregations to support the needs of some 15,000 survivors of residential institutional child abuse.

The Board held its inaugural meeting on 27 March and has commenced work on the arrangements to be put in place for the operation of the Fund. I am pleased to report that the Chief Executive Officer, Ms Mary Higgins, has recently taken up her post. Following the dissolution of the Education Finance Board on the commencement of Part 4 of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act, 2012, with effect from 29 March 2013, the three staff of the Education Finance Board have transferred to and become staff of the new Fund Board.

It is now a matter for the RISF Board to determine the range of approved services within the four classes of service stipulated in the Act, i.e. mental health services (including counselling and psychological support) health and personal social services, education services and housing services. The Board is also required to determine the criteria by reference to which it will make decisions in respect of applications to it.

The 15,000 former residents who will be eligible to receive support from the Fund are those

persons who have received awards from the Residential Institutions Redress Board or equivalent Court awards. Further publicity will be undertaken as the work of the Board progresses and a website with detailed information on the Fund's services will be developed.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

96. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria for eligibility and acceptance of applications for education grants. [18103/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The criteria for eligibility for a student grant is set out in the Student Support Act, 2011 and the Student Support Regulations 2012 and in the Student Grant Scheme 2012. Under the terms of the student grant scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students who meet the prescribed conditions of funding including those which relate to nationality, residency, approved course, previous academic attainment and means.

To determine eligibility, a student may submit a fully completed online grant application to Student Universal Support Ireland, via *studentfinance.ie*, once the application process for the 2013/14 academic year opens.

Question No. 97 answered with Question No. 93.

Schools Building Projects Status

98. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when site construction work will commence on a school project (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18107/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning. The design team are currently working on the Stage 2(b) submission, including the preparation of tender documents, which, on completion, will be forwarded to the Department for review.

The project is included on the five year Capital Investment Programme, announced in March 2012, to progress to tender and construction in 2013. When the Stage 2(b) submission is received and reviewed and assuming no issues arise, the project will then proceed to tender and construction stage.

Student Grant Scheme Payments

99. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a student grant has not been paid to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo despite being told by Student Universal Support Ireland that no further documentation was required and an award letter for the higher maintenance grant would issue in the coming days; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18109/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland, that on 1st February 2013, a request for further documentation was issued to the student referred to by the Deputy. When the requested documentation is returned the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Asbestos Remediation Programme

100. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if grant aid will be approved in respect of a project that needs to be undertaken urgently as outlined in written representations (details supplied) in County Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18119/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department has recently advised the OPW to appoint a Design Team to carry out works to remove and replace the asbestos roof at the school in question.

Schools Building Projects Status

101. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the building of a new school (details supplied) in County Offaly will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18161/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Responsibility for the delivery of the school referred to by the Deputy has been devolved to the Office of Public Works. The OPW have recently forwarded a tender report for this school project to the Department and the Department is currently, with the OPW, considering these documents. The school project is being progressed so that the accommodation required for the school will be provided at the earliest possible date within the Department's five year construction programme.

My Department is in contact with the school to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for September 2013.

Teachers' Remuneration

102. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on DES Circular 0008/2013 (details supplied). [18199/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I think it would be useful if I set out the sequence of policy and budgetary measures in relation to new appointees to teaching and their pay entitlements. The first measure took effect on 1 September 2010. It requires that, in order to be eligible to receive the qualified rate of pay and allowances, a person on their first appointment to teaching must be registered with the Teaching Council and appropriately qualified for that position or sector. This was introduced for the purpose of ensuring quality and promoting professional standards in teaching and this goal has been strongly supported by the teacher unions.

The second measure was taken as part of Budget 2011. The last Government applied a reduction in the pay of new entrants to the public service. In the case of new teachers, a reduction of 10% was applied to pay and certain allowances and all new teachers were required to start on the first point of the scale rather than the third point as had previously been the case for most teachers. The new pay rates applied to all teachers who were new appointees appointed on or after 1 January 2011. Where a person gave any service - qualified or unqualified - in an analogous teaching position before 1 January 2011, he or she was not regarded as a new appointee to teaching and so was not affected by this measure.

The third measure formed part of Budget 2012 and related to qualification allowances. The

Government announced that additional qualification allowances would not be payable to existing teachers and new teachers would be paid qualification allowances up to a maximum of the allowance applicable to an honours primary degree level.

Furthermore, in 2012 a public service-wide review of allowances was also carried out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and, pending its outcome, the payment of qualification allowances was suspended with effect from 1 February 2012. As a result of the review, the Government abolished qualification allowances with effect from that date and a new salary scale was created with a starting point equivalent to the fourth point of the previous scale. This reduced the impact of the ending of the qualification allowances and ensured a broad consistency across the public service.

The introduction of this new salary scale has been a complex task which has required a detailed implementation process. My Department, in consultation with VECs, is working through the operational aspects of these changes as they affect existing teachers and their pay.

Special Educational Needs Staffing

103. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding special needs assistants in respect of a school (details supplied) in County Wicklow. [18202/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to clarify that the staff referred to by the Deputy are not funded by my Department. I am aware that the Association in question is experiencing difficulties as my officials are in direct contact with the school under the Association's management and with the Health Service Executive.

I wish to clarify that the level of teaching and Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support allocated to the school for the 2012/13 school year remains in place. My Department continues to support the school through the ongoing provision of funding for the principal, teaching and special needs assistant staff in the school as well as the normal supplementary funding provided to such schools. The school has assured my officials that the posts in the school which are funded by my Department remain unaffected by the Association's recent difficulties.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

104. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 338 of 29 January 2013, if he will outline the reason that no progress has been made whatsoever in providing ASD units to mainstream schools by the NCSE at Primary Level in Limerick City, where SNOs are doing everything possible to work with limited resources, the reason the regular reply in this regard to constituents (details supplied) is provided by the NCSE when this matter is raised; if he will outline the plans for future development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18206/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I previously advised the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is an independent agency with responsibility for processing applications from primary and post primary schools for special educational needs supports, including the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas as required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

18 April 2013

The Deputy will also be aware that the establishment of a network of autism-specific special classes in schools across the country to cater for children with autism has been a key educational priority in recent years.

I understand the NCSE has been in contact with the Deputy subsequent to his previous question to advise that SENOs are liaising with schools in relation to the establishment of special classes for pupils with Autism in Limerick and that parents may contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs.

School Closures

105. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on allowing schools to remain open (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18219/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I assure the Deputy that there is no decision to close small or rural schools. I am aware of the concerns of the small rural schools and I am cognisant of the importance of schools to rural communities. Our current configuration of small primary schools is being examined by my Department in a value for money review. This review had been commenced by my predecessor in office is part of the normal review processes undertaken by Departments on selected areas of expenditure. Among the issues the review will take into account are questions such as availability of diversity of provision, ethos of schools, parental choice, language of instruction, travel distances, transport costs and the impact of schools on dispersed rural communities. The report of the review is currently being finalised and I expect to receive it shortly.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

106. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisors in his Department over the last two years. [18310/13]

107. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisors pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisors for 2012 [18324/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 and 107 together.

The table that follows this reply gives details of the Special Advisers employed at my Department and their respective salaries, which have remained constant since the date of their appointment. The total salary cost for Special Advisers in 2012 was approximately €198,548, including the employer's P.R.S.I. contribution. While there are ministerial staff at my office and the Minister of State's office at the grades of Personal Secretary and Personal Assistant, none of their salaries exceeds the Principal Officer salary scale.

Appointee	Position	Current Salary
John Walshe	Special Adviser	€92,672
Deirdre Grant	Special Adviser	€86,604

State Bodies Establishment

108. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of his Department since February, 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18338/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the Public Service Reform plan, the following rationalisations were identified: the merger of the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology and the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Science into a consolidated single council under the HEA; the amalgamation of the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Award Council and National Qualifications Authority of Ireland into one body, Quality and Qualifications Ireland; and the reduction of the number of VECs from 33 to 16.

The following actions have been taken to date: the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology and the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences were merged in March 2012 to form the Irish Research Council. The Irish Research Council has been established as a sub-board of the HEA and is not subject to a sunset clause. Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, the Higher Education Training Awards Council and the Further Education Training Awards Council were amalgamated into a new agency, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, on 6 November 2012 and is not subject to a sunset clause. In June 2011, I announced that the Government had approved a revised reconfiguration of the Vocational Education Committees system. The Government decision confirmed that the number of VECs would be reduced to 16. It is anticipated that the Education and Training Boards will be established in early 2013. Once established, the Education and Training Board will continue to provide a wide range of educational and training programmes into the future.

In section 8.1.iv of the Public Service Reform plan contains a commitment to legislate for the establishment of SOLAS in addition to the rationalisation of the VECs. My Department is in the process of establishing a further education and training authority, to be called SOLAS, which will result in the dissolution of FÁS. The Further Education and Training Bill was published in January 2012 and is expected to be enacted before the summer recess. In addition, the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board was established in March 2013 under the provisions of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act 2012 and is not subject to a sunset clause. As a result of the establishment of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board, the Education Finance Board has been dissolved and its remaining functions have been transferred to the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board.

Public Sector Staff

109. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide the annual salary amount to be received by the Taoiseach, each Government Minister and each Department secretary general, if the proposed Croke Park II Labour Relations Commission reduction in pay proposals are imposed. [18003/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The salaries which will apply to the Taoiseach, each Minister and the Secretaries General of Government Departments, if the pay reductions set out in the recent Labour Relations Commission proposals on the draft Public Service Agreement 2013-2016 are implemented, are set out in the following

tables:

-	Current Pay	Rate of pay on application of proposed deductions	Pension Related Deduction	Revised effective rate of pay
Taoiseach	€200,000	€185,350	€17,412	€167,938
Tánaiste	€184,405	€171,309	€15,937	€155,372
Minister	€169,275	€157,540	€14,492	€143,048
Minister of State	€130,042	€121,639	€10,722	€110,917

Non-PPC Rates

-	Current Pay	Rate of pay on application of proposed deductions	Pension Related Deduction	Revised effective rate of pay
Secretary General Level I	€200,000	€185,350	€17,412	€167,938
Secretary General Level II	€190,000	€176,350	€16,467	€159,883
Secretary General Level III	€180,000	€167,300	€15,517	€151,783

PPC Rates

-	Current Pay	Rate of pay on application of proposed deductions	Pension Related Deduction	Revised effective rate of pay
Secretary General Level I	€200,000	€185,350	€17,412	€167,938
Secretary General Level II	€200,000	€185,350	€17,412	€167,938
Secretary General Level III	€189,474	€175,877	€16,417	€159,460

PPC stands for “personal pension contribution” and refers to established officers that make employee contributions in respect of superannuation benefits. “Non-PPC” refers to officers who do not make a personal pension contribution.

Peace and Reconciliation Programme

110. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will outline the position regarding the proposed Peace IV Programme; the likely timescale for the introduction of this programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18117/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): On 7/8 February 2013, the European Council agreed the Multi Annual Financial Framework (MFF). The

EU budget included provision for funding of €150 million towards a new PEACE programme. This budget is subject to European Parliament agreement. The final size of the next PEACE programme, which will include funding from Ireland and the UK, will depend on the outcome of the programme planning process.

The planning process for a possible successor Programme for PEACE III was initiated in April 2012 by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland, asking the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) to begin work on the development of a future PEACE programme for the period 2014 -2020. This work is ongoing and includes public consultations, ex ante evaluations, strategic environment assessments and equality impact assessment, all of which will inform the development of a draft Operational Programme for PEACE.

The Operational Programme will then be presented to the Northern Ireland Executive, the Irish Government and the Scottish Government before being submitted for formal approval to the European Commission.

At European level negotiations are continuing with the Council and European Parliament on regulations covering the Cohesion package. Until such time as agreement is reached on the draft regulations and the EU budget, operational programmes cannot be agreed with the European Commission.

Public Sector Pensions

111. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his attention has been drawn to the impact of his proposed reductions in public service pay on the retirement income of survivors' public service pensions, where survivors on income as low as €16,250 will see a reduction in their income arising from the linking of their income to existing salaries in the public sector; and the action he plans to take to ameliorate the effect of the proposed cuts in this particular group. [18172/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy will be aware the LRC noted the Government's intention to require public service pensioners to make a further contribution to the consolidation measures in conjunction with the contribution being sought from serving staff, thereby ensuring an element of burden sharing from higher paid public service pensioners. These matters now fall to be considered further in the light of the ICTU decision on the LRC proposals.

Exchequer Savings

112. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which the various targets set by his Department in respect of public expenditure throughout the public sector are in line with expectations and/or targets to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18175/13]

113. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which cost-cutting targets set by his Department in respect of all areas of the public service remain in line with expectations to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18176/13]

114. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform

the extent to which reform, savings, or cost cutting measures have respectively contributed in line with budgetary expectations in each of the past two years to date; the degree to which options in this regard remain open in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18177/13]

119. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if, in the context of the current year in respect of public expenditure reform, the extent to which he expects each sector throughout the public service to be in a position to contribute to the overall objectives keeping in mind the on-going economic difficulties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18182/13]

120. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the degree to which he expects to be in a position to monitor the effects of cost-cutting and savings with particular reference to the impact on individual public service at all levels in view of the impact of the on-going economic situation; if he sees any particular areas that might offer some relief in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18183/13]

121. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform having regard to discussions with the Troika and/or his EU colleagues, the extent to which it is recognised that the achievements made by his Department and the Irish people are in line with expectations and have substantially impacted on the restructuring budgetary measures required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18184/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 112 to 114, inclusive, and 119 to 121, inclusive, together.

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

As regards discussions with the Troika regarding the achievements made to date, there has been a series of meetings held with the Troika to appraise all the elements of the Programme covering fiscal developments, the macroeconomic outlook, progress on commitments regarding restructuring of the financial sector and structural reform. A substantial number of actions – over 200 taking into account Q1 2013 - have now been completed. Ireland's continued strong implementation record has been recognised by our European Partners, by the IMF and by the financial markets despite the continuing deterioration of the international economy and the recent return to uncertainty. The Programme remains well financed and we have already started to regain market access as envisaged with a number of successful initiatives this year. As we have said repeatedly, the Government remains focused on achieving our commitments as set under the EU/IMF programme, including the fiscal targets.

With regard to cost cutting measures, the Government began its process of medium-term expenditure management with the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) exercise in 2011, which was carried out by all Departments to identify ways of reducing expenditure, in line with commitments under the Joint EU/IMF Programme of Financial Support for Ireland. Ministerial expenditure ceilings for 2012 - 2014 were introduced in the Comprehensive Expenditure Report, published in December 2011, which were set in line with consolidation targets over the medium term. The arrangements for these three-year ceilings will be put onto a statutory footing following the enactment of the Ministers & Secretaries (Amendment) Act 2012 later this year.

While good progress has been made on delivering savings and implementing change, it remains a matter for each Minister and their Departments to ensure that the Vote-level allocations are adhered to and at the same time ensure that they continue to provide essential services and respond to increasing demands.

The annual detail Revised Estimates Volume (REV) 2013 sets out details of the financial allocations for each Department and, as part of our expenditure reform initiative, it also contains performance information on the key outputs and outcomes being delivered by Departments through the use of public funds. This information has been built into the heart of the budgetary documentation. Through performance budgeting, Dail Committees will in future know what public service outputs and outcomes are being delivered with public funds and this can inform their work and discussion.

The REV 2013 (published yesterday) shows, for each key area of Government spend, output and performance information for 2012 and targets for 2013.

Croke Park Agreement Savings

115. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he is satisfied that the targets identified in the Croke Park Agreement and its subsequent review are being met as anticipated; his expectations in this regard in the coming year and thereafter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18178/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Implementation Body, which is charged with driving the implementation of the Public Service Agreement, is required to assess the savings being facilitated under the framework of the Agreement on an annual basis. As part of this annual review process, savings returns are completed and returned to the Body in respect of every sector, Department and Office.

The Body has carried out two annual reviews of the Agreement to date. The two Annual Progress Reports published on foot of these reviews show that the Agreement has delivered on the objectives of facilitating significant savings and reform in a climate of industrial peace. For example, approximately €1.5bn in savings has been facilitated by the Agreement during its first two years, comprising of €810m and €678m in sustainable pay bill and non-pay (efficiency) savings respectively.

The reports of the Body also show that significant reforms have been delivered across the sectors of the public service, including for example:

1. Extensive redeployment and reassignment of staff, for example in the health and education sectors
2. Progress on rationalising structures and office requirements, for example Department of Agriculture and Revenue local offices, court venues and Teagasc offices
3. Introduction of revised rosters, for example in An Garda Síochána and health service locations to better match resources with demands
4. Local authorities have changed structures, the way in which services are delivered and the way staff are organized and deployed in order to manage the significant reduction in staff in the sector, as approximately 8,500 have left the sector since 2008.

The Implementation Body is currently undertaking the third annual review of the Agree-

ment which will assess the level of savings achieved and progress on implementing the reform commitments under the framework of that Agreement during the relevant period. I expect that the Body's review will be completed in the coming weeks and its third annual report will be published soon after.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

116. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which he may be in a position to offer the terms agreed in the context of Croke Park II to bodies outside the discussions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18179/13]

118. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which wage and/or salary cuts, longer working hours or other reforms have each contributed in any arrangements entered into under Croke Park II; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18181/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 116 and 118 together.

In view of the Unions' non acceptance of the measures proposed by the Labour Relations Commission, it will now be necessary for the Government to decide on and secure alternative measures that will deliver the necessary savings to meet our expenditure targets. As the Labour Relations Commission proposals have not been agreed the extension of the terms to other bodies does not now arise.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

117. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent if any to which his Department has been approached by representatives of groups not covered by the discussions or agreements entered into in the context of Croke Park II which remain the subject of approval by way of vote by union membership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18180/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The discussions which led to proposals from the Labour Relations Commission for a draft Public Service Agreement were between public service management and the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. In addition, a parallel process involved the staff representative associations of the Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána. The objective of these discussions was to secure agreement on measures to deliver savings of €1bn in the pay and pensions bill by 2016 which would build on the original framework of the Public Service Agreement.

I receive correspondence and representations from various interests on a regular basis on many issues in regard to the work of my Department and government policy.

Question No. 118 answered with Question No. 116.

Questions Nos. 119 to 121, inclusive, answered with Question No. 112.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

122. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on the Retired Nurses Association of Ireland Representation at the Croke Park 2 talks (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18196/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The discussions which led to proposals from the Labour Relations Commission for a draft Public Service Agreement were between public service management and the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, as representative of public service staff. In addition, a parallel process involved the staff representative associations of the Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána. The objective of these discussions was to secure agreement on measures to deliver savings of €1bn in the pay and pensions bill by 2016 which would build on the original framework of the Public Service Agreement.

The parties to the discussions were those that were comprehended under the framework of the original Public Service Agreement 2010-2014.

Shannon Development Companies

123. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will intervene to ensure a satisfactory management model for Kerry Technology Park, Tralee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18005/13]

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

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

Following discussions between my Department, Shannon Development and other departments and agencies about the future plans for Kerry Technology Park, including the Youth Entrepreneur Programmes run from the Park, a range of proposals for the future management of the Park are being formulated. I will present these to Government for consideration over the coming weeks.

Job Protection

124. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps taken by his Department, or relevant State agency, to safeguard the jobs and production at the Diageo site in County Waterford. [18017/13]

125. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the total investment of public moneys in the Diageo site in County Waterford; and if he will confirm if any claw back clauses will be enacted if the site is closed. [18018/13]

126. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps taken by his Department, or relevant State agency to promote the Diageo site in County Waterford for future investment if the company ends production at the site. [18019/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 124 to 126, inclusive, together.

I understand from Enterprise Ireland that the Waterford brewery will close at the end of this year with the loss of 21 jobs and that they are working with Diageo in terms of finding a replacement industry for the site. In this respect, I understand that a number of potential investments are being actively considered and I am hopeful that any new investment will safeguard employment at the site.

I am very conscious of the concern that the proposed job losses will create for the workers involved and the local community. It is very important that the impact of the site's closure on employment in Waterford is minimised and the State enterprise agencies will make every effort that they can to develop new employment opportunities for Waterford and to support the retention of existing jobs there.

Diageo Waterford received one grant package from Enterprise Ireland for capital equipment, totalling €800,000 which was approved in 2002. There is no grant liability and no claw-back clauses relating to this grant.

Enterprise Support Services Provision

127. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on the attached submission regarding SIABH. [18198/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I thank the Deputy for bringing this business idea to my attention. My Department has already had contact with the Deputy's correspondent. Enterprise Ireland has a broad system of financial and non-financial supports in place to assist clients through all stages of the business development cycle. My Department has provided the Deputy's correspondent in this matter with the contact details of the relevant Development Adviser in Enterprise Ireland who is available to discuss his proposal with him and who can provide him with details of the supports available from Enterprise Ireland to entrepreneurs and early stage companies that have an innovative product, service or technology, and have the potential to achieve exports sales and create employment. These supports include:

Pre Investment Supports for High Potential Start-Ups (HPSUs)

New Frontiers Entrepreneur Development Programme This national incubation programme offers successful applicants a package of supports to help accelerate their business development and to equip them with the skills to successfully start and grow a company.

HPSU Feasibility Grant Used to investigate the viability and potential of an innovative/high potential start-up and the development of an Investor Ready Business Plan.

Innovative HPSU Fund (Equity) The Innovative HPSU Fund allows Enterprise Ireland to offer equity investment to HPSU clients, on a co-funded basis to support the implementation of company business plans. First time and follow-on equity investments in HPSUs are supported under this offer.

Mentor Grant Used to support the cost of a Mentor Assignment. Enterprise Ireland can match an entrepreneur with an experienced business mentor to assist the start-up phase or advise on specific areas of a company development plan.

Innovation Voucher Innovation Vouchers, worth €5,000, are available to assist a company

to work with a registered college or knowledge provider to explore a business opportunity or technical problem.

Internet Growth Acceleration Programme (iGAP) A 6 month intensive management development programme aimed exclusively at high potential internet/games companies.

As I outlined previously, funding from the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) would be suitable for small start-up enterprises, such as those linked with the SIABH hub proposal. Eligible clients may qualify for a Priming Grant, which is a business start-up grant that is available to micro enterprises within the first 18 months of start-up. The grants are subject to certain criteria, such as commercial viability, avoidance of displacement of jobs elsewhere in the economy, creation of sustainable employment, etc. The typical Priming Grant payable is 50% of the investment or €80,000, whichever is the lesser, although funding of up to €150,000 may be provided in exceptional circumstances. Students wishing to engage with the local enterprise board following graduation may wish to note that the contact person for Dublin CEB is Greg Swift, CEO, 5th Floor, O'Connell Bridge House, Dublin 2, tel: 01-6351144, email: gswift@dceb.ie, website: www.dceb.ie, although contact details for all CEBs are available on www.enterpriseboards.ie.”

It is a requirement of all approved applications that matching funding is available from the applicant for investment in the venture. This requirement for matching funding is a proven technique in stimulating change, in that the commitment of entrepreneurs to development projects is significantly increased by virtue of the promoter having a financial interest in the success of the business. In this regard, the availability of the Microenterprise Loan Fund might be of benefit to Mr Bell's students in overcoming this condition.

The Microenterprise Loan Fund was launched on the 27 September 2012 to improve access to credit for entrepreneurs and micro-enterprises and to facilitate the growth and expansion of viable businesses from all industry sectors which have been refused access to credit by banks.

The Fund provides support in the form of loans of up to €25,000, available to start-up, newly established, or growing microenterprises employing less than 10 people, with viable business propositions, that do not meet the conventional risk criteria applied by banks. The potential viability of the business proposal will be the dominant factor in all credit decisions.

Generally loans will be provided for business start-up costs, expansions costs and working capital. Due to its focus on job creation and the benefits this creates, the new Microenterprise Loan Fund will have a greater risk appetite than Banks could possibly have and therefore will be able to fund and help create and sustain additional micro-enterprises which cannot satisfy conventional Bank credit criteria.

Further information on the Scheme is available at www.microfinanceireland.ie and by telephone on 01-2601007.

Job Creation Numbers

128. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs as a direct result of foreign direct investment and the number of jobs from indigenous industries for the years 2007 - 2012. [18201/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Forfás Annual Employment Survey reports on job gains and losses in companies that are supported by the enterprise development agencies. Details of total employment and the number of new jobs

created in IDA and Enterprise Ireland client companies in each year from 2007 to 2012 are set out in the following tabular statements.

I am delighted to say that 2012 was a particularly good year for job creation in Agency supported companies, with IDA client companies creating a total of 12,722 gross new full time jobs (6,750 net new jobs). The IDA client base in Ireland now employs 152,785 people, a level last recorded before the global financial crisis began in 2008. Clients of Enterprise Ireland created 12,861 gross new jobs (3,338 net new jobs- the highest net gain for Irish companies since 2006).

Total Employment in IDA and Enterprise Ireland

Client Companies in each of the years from 2007 to 2012

Employment Data	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total Employment (IDA)	156,308	152,910	138,654	140,281	146,215	152,785
Total Employment (EI)	185,030	179,191	161,806	159,808	166,359	169,451

Number of new jobs created in IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland Client Companies in each of the years from 2007 to 2012

Employment Data	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
New Jobs Created (IDA)	9,372	6,766	3,582	12,178	13,381	12,722
New Jobs Created (EI)	17,412	13,191	8,888	10,987	14,023	12,861

Industrial Relations Issues

129. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on the attached submission regarding threatened redundancies (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18209/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I understand that the issues in dispute are currently before the industrial relations machinery of the State. The system of industrial relations in Ireland is designed to help and support parties in their efforts to resolve their differences, rather than imposing a solution on the parties to an industrial dispute.

The Labour Relations Commission provides a free conciliation service, in which a trained facilitator assists employers and workers to resolve disputes when their own unassisted efforts have not succeeded. The Labour Court acts as an industrial relations tribunal to provide a free, comprehensive service for the resolution of industrial relations disputes, where the parties to a dispute have been unable to reach agreement. Since the Labour Court is a court of last resort in the industrial relations process, it is expected that the parties come to the process in good faith

and, consequently, are prepared to accept the outcome of the process, namely, the Labour Court recommendation.

Responsibility for the settlement of this dispute rests, ultimately, with the parties themselves. The obligation lies with the parties to seek to resolve their differences and to carry their efforts through to completion. Continued engagement with the State's industrial relations machinery offers, in my view, the best way whereby the parties involved in this dispute can hope to resolve their differences.

In addition to the industrial relations process, there exists a body of legislation to protect workers in redundancy situations such as the Protection of Employment Act, the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Act, the Payment of Wages Act and the Redundancy Payments Acts. In particular, the Protection of Employment Act 1977 provides for a mandatory consultation process between the employer and the employee representatives and the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Act 1973 guarantees minimum notice of redundancy, or compensation in lieu of notice, to employees.

Information on employment rights is available from the National Employment Rights Authority: either from its website www.employmentrights.ie or by contacting an Information Officer directly at 1890 80 80 90.

Policy matters relating to Fáilte Ireland are a matter for my colleague Mr Leo Varadkar, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, while issues regarding the day-to-day operations of a public body should be directed to the Chief Executive of the relevant body.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

130. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisers in his Department over the last two years. [18315/13]

131. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisers' pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisers for 2012 [18329/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 130 and 131 together.

The following table outlines the names and salary details of the two Special Advisers appointed by me as Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. There are no further Ministerial advisers appointed in my Department.

Position	Name	Salary Scale	Pay Bill for 2012
Special Adviser	Mr. Ciaran Conlon	€127,000	€126,562.02*
Press Adviser	Mr. Conor Quinn	€80,051- €98,424 (Principal Officer)	€82,243.53*

*Based on fortnightly pay dates within 2012.

State Bodies Establishment

132. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of his Department since February, 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18342/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): In answering the Deputy's question I am taking State Bodies to mean State Agencies and Offices under the aegis of this Department. No new State bodies have been established under the aegis of this Department since February 2011.

There is a very extensive programme of reform within the agencies and offices under my remit and, as part of those ambitious plans three new State bodies are being planned from mergers and rationalisations of existing offices, the details of which are as follows:-

Consumer Protection and Competition Authority, following the merger of the National Consumer Agency and the Competition Authority.

In November 2012, the Government decided to proceed with the separation of Shannon Airport from the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) and to merge the airport with a restructured Shannon Development to form a new integrated entity in public ownership.

The proposed Workplace Relations Bill will establish a Workplace Relations Commission with a full range of functions formerly carried out by NERA, the Equality Tribunal, the LRC and the EAT, with some appeal cases going to the Labour Court.

Questions Nos. 133 and 134 withdrawn.

Back to Education Allowance Eligibility

135. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if back to school allowance is payable to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18012/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) is a one off payment which assists towards the cost of uniforms/ footwear in respect of school-going children. An applicant must be in receipt of a Qualified Child Increase with their social welfare payment. The scheme for 2013 is not yet operational. However following receipt of his application in 2012 the customer concerned was paid the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance in respect of all 5 children. The customer should apply in the same way for the BSCFA this year once the scheme is operational.

Exceptional Needs Payment Eligibility

136. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to which support is available to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18013/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off, exceptional and unforeseen expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. The ENP scheme is not intended to cover circumstances where responsibility rests with another Government Depart-

ment or Agency.

The payment of the Local Property Tax (LPT) is not covered under the ENP scheme. The Office of the Revenue Commissioners has provided for a full or partial deferral of the LPT in circumstances where owner-occupiers have an inability to pay.

Public Services Card

137. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection the requirements for applicants for social welfare payments to complete the safe registration appointment process; the reasons for this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18025/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department of Social Protection has developed, in conjunction with a number of other Government Departments, a rules based standard for establishing and authenticating an individual's identity for the purposes of access to public services.

This programme of work, which is known as the Standard Authentication Framework Environment or SAFE for short, also provided for the introduction of a Public Services Card (PSC) to enable individuals to gain access to public services more efficiently and with a minimum of duplication of effort.

The benefits of the introduction of the PSC can be found in the following areas: Reducing the rate of fraud and errors caused by incorrectly identified and authenticated citizens; improving existing cards (e.g. Social Services Cards and Free Travel), through better security features, considerably reducing the potential for forgery and fraudulent use; removing the duplication caused by multiple agencies each solving the problem of identity and authentication themselves; improving the efficiency of every service delivered by the State. Even an improvement of a few percent represents major cost savings.

A PSC is currently issued following a "face-to-face" registration process which involves the capture of an individual's photograph and signature, the verification of identity and current address as well as the capture of additional data such as answers to security questions to be used in ensuring the future integrity of customers' data.

Letters which are issuing from the Department to a number of customers in relation to registration for their PSC ask them to bring proof of identity and evidence of current address with them.

The legislative basis for the SAFE registration process is contained in the 2005 Social Welfare Consolidation Act as amended. Section 15 of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act, 2012 amended the Social Welfare Consolidation Act, 2005 to provide that:

i) for any new claim for social welfare payment, the claimant must satisfy the Minister for Social Protection as to his or her identity and

ii) the Minister for Social Protection must be satisfied as to the identity of a person to whom a Public Services Card (as provided for in Section 263 of the 2005 Act) is issued.

Section 15 further provides that, in order satisfy himself or herself as to the identity of a person, the Minister may request him or her to personally attend at a location designated by the Minister, to present documentation supporting authentication of his or her identity and to allow for capture of a photograph and a signature.

National Internship Scheme Placements

138. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Social Protection if exceptions will be made through the jobbridge scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow who previously worked in the company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18041/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I understand that in this case the employer concerned has ceased the employment of an existing worker with the intention of recruiting the same worker as an intern to perform the same work duties he performed as an employee.

The JobBridge scheme is intended to encourage employers to increase the size of their workforce and to give opportunities to unemployed people from the live register who might not otherwise be considered for employment.

The rules governing JobBridge were carefully designed to minimise unintended consequences such as displacement of existing jobs and workers.

Accordingly I will not make an exception in the case referred to by the Deputy.

Questions Nos. 139 and 140 withdrawn.

Farm Assist Scheme Payments

141. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons who are in receipt of a payment (details supplied); if she will publish this information in a county format; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18056/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information requested by the Deputy is collated by my Department annually for inclusion in the Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services report. The total number of recipients of farm assist at 31 December 2012 is listed by county in the attached tabular statement.

Farm Assist

County	31st December 2012
Carlow	84
Cavan	404
Clare	609
Cork	922
Donegal	1,534
Dublin	37
Galway	1,112
Kerry	818
Kildare	53
Kilkenny	146
Laois	158
Leitrim	394
Limerick	250

County	31st December 2012
Longford	260
Louth	87
Mayo	1,813
Meath	93
Monaghan	504
Offaly	130
Roscommon	424
Sligo	310
Tipperary	404
Waterford	92
Westmeath	197
Wexford	248
Wicklow	79
Others	0
Totals	11,162

Exceptional Needs Payment Eligibility

142. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an exceptional needs payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18063/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has not made an application for an exceptional needs payment. However, the local community welfare service office has contacted him and arranged an appointment for him to see a designated officer.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

143. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress made to date in respect of determination of an application for domiciliary care allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18068/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received from the person concerned on the 29th January 2013. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical assessors who found that the child was medically eligible for the allowance. The person concerned was notified on the 19th March 2013 that her claim was awarded. The first payment including arrears issued to her on the 16th April 2013.

Family Income Supplement Application Numbers

144. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection the percentage of families in receipt of family income supplement that are public sector workers. [18099/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are currently 38,387 people

in receipt of a weekly family income supplement. Of these, 3,339 (8.7%) are recorded as public servants.

Rent Supplement Scheme Appeals

145. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 129 of 28 March 2013, wherein it was indicated that she vacated accommodation provided under the RAS without good cause given the herewith attached documentation to the contrary in the case of a person (details supplied) [18136/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): As per previous PQ (15901/13) Rent Supplement is not payable where accommodation provided by a housing authority is vacated without good cause. The person concerned has not provided any further documentation regarding the reasons for leaving her previous accommodation provided by a housing authority, or that she has a current Housing Needs Assessment. The person concerned has submitted an appeal to the Appeals Office and there has been no decision made on the appeal to date.

Mortgage Arrears Proposals

146. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Social Protection if all financial brokers who are independently regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland and who carry professional indemnity insurance will be eligible as operators of his new scheme for assisting persons in mortgage arrears. [18174/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Mortgage Arrears Information and Advice Service was established to provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach to assist people in mortgage distress.

The approach differentiates between mortgage information and mortgage advice. The first two elements involve the enhancement of the website www.keepingyourhome.ie and the establishment of a Mortgage Arrears Information Helpline within the Citizens Information Board both of which focus on the provision of comprehensive mortgage arrears information in particular to people in arrears or pre-arrears.

The third element of the service is the provision of independent financial advice to mortgage holders who are being presented with long term mortgage resolution proposals by their lenders. This advice is provided by a panel of accountants drawn from members of the main accountancy institutes in Ireland who have agreed to participate and support this independent service. This panel is available on a county by county basis on the website www.keepingyourhome.ie.

When a lender is proposing longer-term mortgage resolutions, the lender advises the borrower to obtain independent financial advice on the proposed arrangement and that, if the borrower wishes to avail of this option, that the lender will pay €250 to an accountant of the borrower's choosing for the provision of this advice.

The advisory framework has commenced with practicing accountants because they already operate within a regulatory regime which includes qualitative oversight by their regulating bodies and in these circumstances it was possible to establish the advisory framework for people with mortgage distress within a relatively short timeframe.

There is nothing to inhibit other financial intermediaries from continuing to give advice on mortgages as required by borrowers. While the advisory framework will be monitored on an

on-going basis, it is not intended to conduct a full review of the service before the due date of June 2013. The review will be undertaken to ensure that it is meeting its objectives and will encompass all aspects of the service including if participation is extended to other interested parties, the criteria that would be required in terms of relevant qualifications, experience, independence, professional indemnity insurance, etc.

Rent Supplement Scheme Appeals

147. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the appropriate level of rent support payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18185/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following a statutory means assessment, supplementary welfare allowance (rent supplement) was awarded to the person concerned at €508.86 per calendar month with effect from January 2013.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 08th April 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 16th April 2013 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Family Income Supplement Eligibility

148. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the current position in regard to entitlement of family income supplement in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18186/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Family Income Supplement (FIS) payment is designed to provide cash income for employees with families who are on low earnings. The family concerned have been in receipt of FIS since 21 April 2011. Their latest renewal claim has been awarded, without delay, from 18 April 2013.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

149. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an award of partial rent support is available in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18187/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned submitted their original application in December 2011. Their application was refused on that date as their partner was working full time, according to the documentation supplied. If their circumstances have changed the person concerned can submit a new application with supporting documentation.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

150. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the full entitlement in respect of jobseeker's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18188/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is under 22 years of age and is in receipt of a jobseeker's allowance payment of €100 per week. This is the maximum amount payable under this scheme for a person aged between 18 and 22.

Carer's Benefit Payments

151. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent of any arrears payable in respect of carer's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18189/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 21st November 2012. This application was approved on the 26th March 2013 and a letter issued to the person concerned notifying them of the decision and that carer's allowance would be put into payment from the 18th of April 2013. The person in question was in receipt of supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) throughout this period pending a decision on her carer's allowance application. Once the amount of SWA paid is confirmed, this will be deducted from the total amount due during this period and any outstanding arrears balance paid directly to the person concerned.

Exceptional Needs Payments

152. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position on a parliamentary question reply wherein it was indicated that an exceptional needs payment has been made in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare [18190/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An exceptional needs payment was approved on 10 January 2013 as advised in the written reply on the 21 February 2013 to Parliamentary Question reference number 9460-13. The records of the Department indicate that this payment was made to the person concerned.

It was further advised in the written reply on the 26 March 2013 to Parliamentary Question reference number 14931-13 that the person concerned could make an application for an exceptional needs payment and any such application would be considered based on his circumstances.

The person concerned submitted an application for an exceptional needs payment on 08 April 2013. This application was refused. The person concerned may request a review of this decision.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

153. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if and when rent support will be paid in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18191/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A Rent Supplement application was received from the person concerned on 3rd April 2013. On that date a means test was performed on the family and it was found that with their combined incomes there was no entitlement to Rent Supplement. At present the person concerned does not have an entitlement to Rent Supplement at their current address. The person concerned was informed of this over the phone and in writing. If their circumstances change the person concerned can submit a new application with supporting documentation.

Disability Allowance Appeals

154. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a disability allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18212/13]

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 summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer decision.

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

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

155. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisers in her Department over the last two years. [18317/13]

156. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in a tabular format a list of all her special advisers' pay and that of her Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard and scale salary rate; and if she will supply the total pay bill for all her special advisers for 2012 [18331/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): It is proposed to take Questions Nos. 155 and 156 together.

The names and salaries of the Special Advisers I have appointed in the Department of Social Protection are shown in the table.

Title	Name	Annual Salary
Press Advisor	Kathleen Barrington	€86,604 - €89,898
Press Advisor	Paul O'Brien	€80,051
Special Advisor	Edward Brophy	€127,796

Ms. Barrington was appointed in July 2011 on a salary of €80,051 per annum which was subsequently increased on a retrospective basis, to €86,604 (3rd point of the Principal Officer standard scale) on foot of a sanction from The Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform. In July 2012, she progressed to the next point on the pay scale. Ms. Barrington resigned in October 2012 and was replaced in December 2012 by Mr. O'Brien.

18 April 2013

As Mr. Brophy was previously employed in the private sector on a salary package that was more than twice the highest point of the Principal Officer (standard) scale, I sought sanction from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for remuneration in excess of the applicable pay scale grade. A single point salary of €127,796 was sanctioned by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform effective from 29 July 2011. This represents a reduction of over one third in Mr. Brophy's previous salary in the private sector. The total amount of salary paid in respect of my Special Advisors in 2012 amounted to €205,871. There is no Minister of State assigned to my Department.

By way of information I am attaching tables to show the salaries of the Special Advisors appointed by my predecessors during the period from 2008 to 2011. All salaries are on the appropriate standard payscales. Increases in September 2008 and reductions in January 2010 are as a result of the introduction of revised pay scales for all civil service grades. Any other increases in the tables below relate to the awarding of increments/review of allowance.

Minister Ó Cuív March 2010 to March 2011

Post	Name	2010	2011
Special Advisor	Padraig O'hUiginn	€92,672	€95,550
Press Advisor	Michelle Hctor	€86,604	€86,604

Minister Hanafin May 2008 to March 2010

Post	Name	May 2008	Sept 2008	2009	2010
Special Advisor	Averil Power	€94,740	€97,109	€100,191	€92,672
Press Advisor	Geraldine Butler *	€71,814	€77,629	€81,540	€75,987

* Ms. Butler was a civil servant on secondment and received a higher duty allowance to Assistant Principal salary scale in respect of her role as Press Advisor.

State Bodies Establishment

157. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of her Department since February, 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18343/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): No new State body has been established under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection since February 2011. There are no plans to establish any new public body at present.

Special Areas of Conservation Designation

158. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Questions No. 420 of 12 February 2013, the progress that has been made on this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18057/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As outlined in my reply to Question No. 420 of 12 February last, the individual referred to in the Deputy's

Question has applied to sell his interest in land within a site designated as a special area of conservation, under the voluntary bog purchase scheme administered by my Department. Contracts for sale have been signed by an official of my Department and these contracts, the deposit and, more recently, the outstanding balance of the purchase price have been forwarded to the Chief State Solicitor's Office. I understand that the contracts for sale have recently been forwarded by the Chief State Solicitor's Office to the vendor's solicitor for execution.

Special Areas of Conservation Designation

159. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide an update on the progress of a reclassification of a bog (details supplied) in County Clare which was incorrectly classified in part as a raised bog; and if he will indicate the way and when this issue will be resolved in order for turf cutters to resume cutting turf on their bog. [18059/13]

160. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will confirm that turf cutters on a bog (details supplied) in County Clare, who accept the temporary turf cutting compensation scheme being offered to them due to their unique situation, will in no way be construed as having accepted the cessation of the turf cutting compensation scheme in full and will be free to resume cutting turf on their bog once the matter of reclassification has been resolved. [18060/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 159 and 160 together.

The bog referred to by the Deputy is one of Ireland's 53 raised bog SACs and contains good examples of active and degraded raised bog habitat, transition mires and quaking bogs, and depressions on peat substrates of the rhynchosporion. These are all habitats that are afforded protection under the EU Habitats Directive. To conserve this site, it will be necessary to restrict turf-cutting and associated drainage activities that would have a detrimental effect on these habitats. However, the bog in question is unusual as a raised bog SAC, in that there are areas of cutover bog which do not contain protected habitats and are not hydrologically linked to the parts of the site that contain such habitats. In most raised bog SACs, turf-cutting may no longer take place because such cutting and conservation of the site are incompatible. The particular circumstances of the bog referred to in the Deputy's Questions may allow for a continuation of turf-cutting in some parts of the site in full compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive, and may also facilitate the conservation of the protected habitat through the relocation of turf-cutters away from sensitive areas of the site.

My officials have been engaging constructively with the turf-cutting community in the area, who have refrained from turf-cutting while such a solution is being put in place. Turf-cutters are availing of financial payments or the delivery of turf while this issue is being resolved, which I hope will be fully addressed through the National Raised Bog Management Plan and in time for the turf-cutting season of 2014.

Departmental Funding

161. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide an update on a project (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18088/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): An application for capital funding in the case referred to by the Deputy is currently being evaluated by my Department and I am hopeful that a response will be issued in the very near future.

An Coimisiún Logainmneacha

162. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht cé n uair a cheapfar Príomh-Oifigeach Logainmneacha nua, na cáilíochtaí gairmiúla a bhainfidh leis an bpost seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [18159/13]

163. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cé mhéid oifigeach gairmiúil logainmneacha atá fostaithe i mBrainse na Logainmneacha den Roinn agus an bhfuil i gceist an líon sin a choinneáil mar atá sé; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [18160/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimh. 162 agus 163 le chéile.

Ceapadh Príomhoifigeach Cúnta i mo Roinnse ar na mallaibh chun déileáil le réimse gníomhaíochtaí ó thaobh na Gaeilge de, lena n-áirítear na feidhmeanna a bhíodh ag an bPríomhoifigeach Logainmneacha. Faoi láthair, tá beirt Ardoifigeach Logainmneacha agus Oifigeach Logainmneacha amháin fostaithe sa Roinn agus iad ag plé le clár oibre ar leith. Níl aon phlean ann an líon oifigeach seo a laghdú amach anseo. Mar a thuigfidh an Teachta, tá mo Roinnse ag feidhmiú faoi réir an choisc ar earcaíocht san earnáil phoiblí.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

164. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisors in his Department over the last two years. [18306/13]

165. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisors pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisors for 2012 [18320/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 164 and 165 together.

As I have previously advised the House, I appointed Mr. James Kenny and Mr. Damien Garvey as my special advisors with effect from 7th June 2011 and 2nd April 2012 respectively. Both were appointed at the first point of the Principal Officer scale and are currently on the second point of that scale. No pay increases have been sought or awarded in either case. Details of current salaries and total pay for 2012 are set out as follows:

Name of special adviser	Current Salary	Pay in 2012
James Kenny*	€41,502	€38,462
Damien Garvey	€83,337	€57,639
Total	€124,839	€96,101

*As Mr. Kenny is in receipt of a public service pension, his salary has been abated to

€41,502 per annum.

State Bodies Establishment

166. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of his Department since February, 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18334/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): My Department has not established any new State Bodies since February 2011 and there are no new bodies currently planned.

Gas Exploration Revenue

167. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on the current tax regime pertaining to Ireland's natural gas and oil reserves, his views further on whether the State is poised to reap the optimum benefit from these resources; if he will review the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18090/13]

168. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he is monitoring recent developments relating to the potential extraction of oil off the Irish coast; his plans to encourage progress on this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18173/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): I propose to take Questions Nos. 167 and 168 together.

There have been four commercial natural gas discoveries since exploration began offshore Ireland in the early 1970s, namely the Kinsale, Ballycotton and Seven Heads (Kinsale area) producing gas fields off the coast of Cork and the Corrib gas field off the coast of Mayo. There have been no commercial discoveries of oil to date.

The Kinsale area gas fields are now nearing depletion and currently provide approximately 5% of Ireland's annual gas requirements. The Corrib gas field is under development and first gas is not anticipated before late 2014. All four gas fields are held under petroleum leases issued by my Department.

In terms of the direct financial contribution to the State, profits from the three Kinsale area gas fields are taxed at a rate of 25%. In addition, royalties from the Kinsale and Ballycotton gas fields are payable to the State at a rate of 12.5% of the fair market value of the gas at the well head. The combination of tax, royalties and rental fees currently provides for a State take of 40% of net income from these two fields.

Royalties are not payable on production from the Seven Heads Gas field or from future production from the Corrib gas field as Ireland moved away from a royalty based payments system to a tax based system in 1987. Profits from the Corrib gas field will be taxed at 25% when the field goes into production.

A comprehensive review of Ireland's licensing terms was carried out in 2007 following which both the fiscal and non-fiscal licensing terms were revised. The revised terms seek to

strike a balance between attracting those willing to invest in high-risk exploration while at the same time ensuring the State receives a fair share of profits where a commercial discovery is made. The revised licensing terms provide for a new profit resource rent tax of up to 15% in addition to the 25% corporate tax rate previously applying. The revised terms ensure that the return to the State will increase to a maximum of 40% in the case of the most profitable fields. The revised terms apply to all exploration licences issued since the beginning of 2007.

Countries that have petroleum production use a range of models to obtain a financial return from their natural resources. These models vary both in terms of the instruments used and in terms of the level of take which the State seeks to obtain. Some countries use a combination of instruments, such as: State participation in licences; production royalties; along with taxation, while other countries, including Ireland, take an approach that is principally based on taxing profits. Each country's fiscal system tends to have its own individual characteristics.

In determining the appropriate approach at a national level a range of factors must be considered, with the principal factor being the relative prospectivity of the area. Directly replicating the fiscal regime of another country is unlikely to provide the optimum outcome. Regard must also be had to the approach adopted by countries with whom we are directly competing for a share of international exploration investment.

While there has been a modest but welcome upturn in the level of interest in exploration off our coast in recent years, the reality is that the only commercial discoveries of hydrocarbons made in the Irish offshore to date are the three producing gas fields in the Kinsale area and the Corrib gas field. Despite the low level of commercial discoveries to date, working petroleum systems are known to exist in many of Ireland's offshore basins, as demonstrated by a number of non-commercial discoveries as well as other oil and gas indicators such as hydrocarbon shows in wells. Nevertheless, the oil and gas potential of the Irish offshore is largely unproven and is likely to remain so until there is a significant and sustained increase in the number of exploration wells being drilled from the current levels of 1 to 2 wells per year.

To this end my Department encourages exploration investment through an active and targeted promotion campaign, regular licensing rounds and by supporting petroleum research projects that deepen knowledge of the petroleum potential of the Irish offshore. Maintaining an appropriate fiscal regime is also critical to attracting this much needed exploration investment to Ireland. Ireland does not have proven resources equivalent to those of major oil producing countries such as Norway, and as a consequence Ireland's tax terms for oil and gas production are deliberately aimed at attracting new investment and are set at a level comparable to countries such as France, Portugal and Spain, who, like Ireland, have limited petroleum production and proven resources and with whom we compete for exploration investment.

Broadband Services Provision

169. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views regarding fibre optic broadband (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18216/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Ireland's telecommunications market has been fully liberalised since 1999 in accordance with the requirements of binding EU Directives. The market has since developed into a well-regulated market, supporting a multiplicity of commercial operators, providing services over a diverse range of technology platforms. Details of broadband services available in each County, including County Kerry, can be found on ComReg's website at www.callcosts.ie.

The State can only intervene to ensure access to broadband services in areas where the competitive market has failed to deliver such services, as in the case of the National Broadband Scheme (NBS) and the Rural Broadband Scheme. NBS services are available within 85 of the 166 Electoral Divisions in County Kerry, including the general area of Waterville. I have attached a list of these Electoral Divisions.

With basic broadband services widely available across Ireland, the focus is now on accelerating the roll out of high speed services. The Government's National Broadband Plan, which I published in August last, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed services of at least 30Mbps are available to all of our citizens and businesses, well in advance of the EU's target date of 2020, and that significantly higher speeds are available to as many homes and businesses as possible.

During the preparation of Ireland's National Broadband Plan, the commercial market operators indicated that they expect to provide 70Mbps to 100Mbps services to 50% of the population by 2015. Since the publication of the Plan, investments by the commercial sector are underway in both fixed line and mobile high speed broadband services, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas.

The Government is also committed in the Plan to investing in areas where high speed services are not commercially viable and will not be provided by the market. In an important milestone towards delivery of this commitment in the Plan, my Department has identified, following the evaluation of tender responses to a request for experts, the preferred bidder to assist in the design, planning and procurement of the State-led investment. Intensive technical, financial and legal preparations including stakeholder engagement will be ongoing throughout 2013 with a view to the launch of a procurement process in 2014. High-speed broadband services can be delivered by a diverse range of technology platforms and it is intended to adopt a technology-neutral approach in this procurement process.

Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, we are committed to increasing the availability of next generation speeds significantly, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in a digitally enabled society. I would reiterate that the Government remains committed to ensuring that all parts of Ireland, including all of County Kerry, will have at least 30Mbps connectivity, through public or private sector investment, as outlined in the National Broadband Plan.

Electoral Divisions (ED) Covered by the NBS in County Kerry

ED Name	ED Reference No.
AGHADOE	ED 77002
ARDEA	ED 77006
BAHAGHS	ED 77009
BALLINSKELLIGS	ED 77011
BALLYBRACK	ED 77013
BALLYDUFF	ED 77016
BANAWN	ED 77026
BOOLTEENS	ED 77031
BRANDON	ED 77032
BREWSTERFIELD	ED 77033
BROSNA	ED 77034
CANUIG	ED 77037

ED Name	ED Reference No.
CAPPAGH	ED 77038
CARKER	ED 77039
CARRAGH	ED 77040
CASTLEGREGORY	ED 77043
CHURCHTOWN	ED 77047
CLOGHANE	ED 77048
CLOON	ED 77050
CLOONTUBBRID	ED 77051
CLYDAGH	ED 77052
COOLIES	ED 77053
COOM	ED 77054
CORDAL	ED 77055
CRINNY	ED 77056
CURRAGHBEG	ED 77057
CURRAGHMORE	ED 77058
DARRYNANE	ED 77060
DAWROS	ED 77061
DEELIS	ED 77062
DERREEN	ED 77063
DERRIANA	ED 77064
DOOCARRIG	ED 77066
DROMMARTIN	ED 77069
DROMORE	ED 77070
DUAGH	ED 77071
DUNQUIN	ED 77073
DUNURLIN	ED 77074
EMLAGH	ED 77075
FLESK	ED 77077
GLANBEHY	ED 77078
GLANLEE	ED 77079
GLANLOUGH	ED 77080
GLANMORE	ED 77081
GLIN	ED 77082
GNEEVES	ED 77083

ED Name	ED Reference No.
GREENANE	ED 77084
HEADFORT	ED 77087
INCH	ED 77088
KERRYHEAD	ED 77090
KILCUMMIN	ED 77092
KILFEIGHNY	ED 77093
KILFLYN	ED 77095
KILGARRYLANDER	ED 77096

ED Name	ED Reference No.
KILGARVAN	ED 77097
KILGOBBAN	ED 77098
KILLINANE	ED 77105
KILMALKEDAR	ED 77108
KILMEANY	ED 77109
KILMURRY	ED 77110
KILNANARE	ED 77111
KILQUANE	ED 77112
KILSHENANE	ED 77113
KNOCKNAGASHEL	ED 77118
KNOCKNAHOE	ED 77119
LACK	ED 77120
LACKABAUN	ED 77121
LICKEEN	ED 77124
LOUGHBRIN	ED 77130
LOUHCURRANE	ED 77131
MARHIN	ED 77132
MASTERGEEHY	ED 77133
MAUM	ED 77134
MILLBROOK	ED 77135
MOUNT EAGLE	ED 77139
NEWTOWNSANDES	ED 77142
NOHAVAL	ED 77143
RATHEA	ED 77147
RATHMORE	ED 77148
ROCKFIELD	ED 77150
ST FINAN'S	ED 77154
TAHILLA	ED 77156
TEERANEARAGH	ED 77159
TRIENEARAGH	ED 77162
VENTRY	ED 77166

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

170. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisors in his Department over the last two years. [18308/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): There are two Special Advisers, Mr Finbarr O'Malley and Mr Simon Nugent, employed in my Department. Both were appointed by the Government, on my behalf, with effect from 28 March 2011 and 11 April 2011, respectively.

Sanction was granted by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to appoint Mr O'Malley at a salary rate of €83,337 per annum and Mr Nugent at a salary rate of €97,200 per annum. Mr O'Malley was awarded an annual increment on the Principal Officer Standard pay

scale on 28 March 2012 and 28 March 2013, a total increase of €6,561. This is in line with the terms of his appointment. Mr Nugent's salary has not increased as it is not linked to a pay scale and the awarding of increments does not apply in his case.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

171. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisers' pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard and scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisers for 2012. [18322/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The information requested by the Deputy is outlined as follows:

Name	Post	Current Salary
Finbarr O'Malley	Special Adviser to Minister	€89,898 (4th point Principal Officer Standard Scale)
Simon Nugent	Special Adviser to Minister	€97,200 (not linked to salary scale)

The Minister of State at my Department does not employ a Special Adviser. The total pay bill for Special Advisers in 2012 was €200,460. This total includes employer's PRSI and expenses.

State Bodies Establishment

172. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of his Department since February, 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18336/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I wish to advise the Deputy that I have not established any new State bodies since February 2011 and I do not plan to establish any new bodies.

Motor Tax Yield

173. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total amount of motor tax receipts in 2010, 2011 and 2012 respectively; the number of vehicles taxed in each of these years; the number who opted for three month, six month and 12 month tax discs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18128/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Total gross motor tax receipts and the number of motor tax transactions by year and duration of vehicle licence for each of the years requested are contained in Table 1. It should be noted that this does not equate to the total number of vehicles taxed in each of the years concerned, as some owners will have exercised more than one option in a particular year and

a breakdown of this data is not readily available. The total number of vehicles taxed at the end of December in each of the years concerned is contained in Table 2.

Table 1 – Gross motor tax receipts and number of vehicle licences taken out.

Year	Total Gross Motor Tax Receipts (€)	Annual licences	Half Year licences	Quarterly licences	Total Number of licences
2010	1,023,823,935	1,464,303	742,973	2,357,600	4,564,876
2011	1,010,419,164	1,480,747	705,846	2,436,273	4,622,866
2012	1,054,701,750	1,448,517	682,496	2,481,073	4,612,086

Table 2 – Number of vehicle under taxation at end of December 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Year	No. of vehicles taxed
31 December 2010	2,416,387
31 December 2011	2,425,156
31 December 2012	2,403,223

Infrastructure and Capital Investment Programme

174. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has responsibility in line with guidelines for the provision of infrastructure and capital investments through public private partnerships as published by the National Development Finance Agency in 2005, for all PPP waste projects within the State; if he has such responsibility, his views that the Poolbeg incinerator project, Dublin, continues to represent value for money for the Exchequer; if so, in what way he has satisfied himself that this project passes the necessary NDFA value for money and public sector benchmark tests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18023/13]

175. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has any concerns about the viability of the Poolbeg incinerator, the risk of financial penalties which taxpayers may be exposed to arising out of the failure of Dublin City Council to meet its contractual obligations with the project's developer and the fact that the National Development Finance Agency has informed Dublin City Council that its value for money options issued in June 2007 is no longer valid; in the event that he has such concerns if he will outline the actions he intends to take to ensure that the Exchequer and taxpayers' interests are protected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18024/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 174 and 175 together.

All Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects are subject to guidelines for the Provision of Infrastructure and Capital Investments through Public Private Partnerships. In accordance with the Guidelines, the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) carries out a value for money assessment of the proposed Public Private Partnership agreement. It compares the PPP approach to a Public Sector Benchmark, which is presented as a single monetary value that represents the full estimated cost, taking income and risks into account, of delivering the project using "traditional" public sector procurement.

In the case of the Dublin Waste to Energy project, in 2005, the NDFA advised that it was of

the opinion that the preferred bidders' financial model provided value for money. Following corporate restructuring in 2007, the NDFA advised that the updated financial model provided value for money relative to public sector benchmark and there was no material change in the financial gain to the State from the position as registered in its previous assessment.

The Waste to Energy facility proposed for Poolbeg is being developed by Dublin City Council on behalf of the four Dublin local authorities as part of the implementation of the region's waste management plan, which is a statutory responsibility of local authorities under section 22 of the Waste Management Act 1996. Therefore, the progression of the project is a matter for parties to the contract, Dublin City Council and its private partner and discussions have been ongoing between the parties. Upon conclusion of discussions between the parties, any revisions to the PPP agreement will be submitted to the NDFA for assessment and this will inform any further action which may be required.

Property Taxation Exemptions

176. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of housing units on a county by county basis that are included in the unfinished estates in respect of the exemption for the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18045/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): A full listing of the developments to which an exemption from the local property tax applies is available on my Department's website at www.environ.ie

Household Charge Collection

177. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of people who have paid the household charge up to the end of 2012; the number of people who have paid it up to the current date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18046/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011 provides the legislative basis for the Household Charge. Under the Act, an owner of a residential property on the liability date is liable to pay the Household Charge, unless otherwise exempted or entitled to claim a waiver. It is a matter for an owner of a residential property to determine liability and pay the Charge.

The Local Government Management Agency is administering the Household Charge system on a shared service/agency basis for all county and city councils. I understand from data provided by the Agency that the number of registrations, including waiver registrations, for the Household Charge was 1,129,521 up to the end of 2012. As of 15 April 2013, the number had increased to 1,189,768.

Property Taxation Exemptions

178. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline the methodology used by his Department in deciding the areas deemed unfinished estates in respect of the local property tax and the type of information supplied from local authorities in relation to this process; if the information from the local authori-

ties was accepted by his Department in all cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18047/13]

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 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.

Flood Risk Assessments

179. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which the drainage issues affecting the Waterways Estate in Sallins, County Kildare and publicly referred to by his predecessor have been addressed and attended to in accordance with the recommendations and report following extensive flooding thereat in 2009/2010; if the planning authority has met its obligations in relation to this matter; if any evaluation has been done as to the viability and efficacy of the original attenuation drainage/storage provisions; if any and all outstanding works arising from the completion of the development in accordance with planning permission conditions have been undertaken; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18064/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) provides that a planning authority may attach conditions to a planning permission including related to the provision of infrastructure such as drainage. It is a matter for the planning authority to decide on the planning conditions to be attached including the enforcement of these conditions thereafter.

My Department understands from Kildare County Council that the matter is now resolved on foot of remedial works undertaken and the Council has also undertaken to write to the Deputy to outline the position.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding

180. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local

Government the amount of money allocated for group sewerage schemes in 2013; and the location and amount allocated for each. [18075/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Responsibility for the administration of the Rural Water Programme, which includes group sewerage schemes, has been devolved to local authorities since 1997.

In December 2012 I announced an increase in the grant for group sewerage schemes to €6,500 per house or 75% of the cost of the scheme, whichever is the lesser. The previous rate of grant available was €2,031.58 per house or 75% of the cost, whichever was the lesser.

I propose, in the first instance, to carry out a number of pilot schemes based on the increased grant level. My Department asked local authorities to include in their requests for funding under the 2013 Rural Water Programme proposals for group sewerage schemes which might be viable based on the increased grant.

Following an examination of the proposals received, I approved grant assistance last month towards the following pilot schemes:

County	Scheme Name	Approved Grant
Clare	Woodview, Ennis	€90,000
Kildare	Boston Cottages	€60,000
Kilkenny	Toortane	€105,000
Laois	Derrymoyle	€35,301
Leitrim	Jamestown Rue	€93,000
Offaly	Military Road, Birr	€39,000
Westmeath	Ballykeeran Big	€84,500
Wexford	Coolbawn / Ferns	€14,083
TOTALS		€520,884

Progress on these pilot schemes will be reviewed in due course with a view to deciding how best to proceed with the grant scheme.

Local Elections

181. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the report from the Boundary Commission on the Local Elections will be complete; and when its findings will be made available. [18076/13]

182. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the report from the Boundary Commission on the European Elections will be complete; and when its findings will be made available. [18077/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 181 and 182 together.

I established a Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee on 15 November 2012 *to review and make recommendations on the division of each council area, other than Cork City, into local electoral areas, and to make recommendations on the number of members of each council to be assigned to each local electoral area. The Committee was requested to submit its report as soon as possible and, in any event, not later than 31 May 2013.*

Constituencies for European Parliament elections were most recently reported on in the 2012 Constituency Commission Report, where no change to the existing arrangement of European Parliament constituencies was recommended. At the time of that report there was no change to the number of members to be elected in Ireland. However, with the accession of Croatia to the European Union this year, there is a need to adjust the distribution of seats in the European Parliament. This is done on the initiative of the European Parliament which adopted a resolution on 13 March 2013 on the composition of the European Parliament for the 2014 – 2019 term. That resolution includes a reduction, from twelve to eleven, in the number of representatives to be elected in Ireland. The matter will next go to the European Council for decision by unanimity and with the consent of the European Parliament.

In the event that the number of MEPs to be elected to represent Ireland is reduced it will be necessary to review and revise the constituency arrangement. This can be addressed once decisions are made in Europe. In the meantime my Department is giving consideration to how such a review might be carried out having regard to the provisions of the relevant legislation, that is the Electoral Act 1997 and the European Parliament Elections Act 1997.

Leader Programmes Funding

183. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there is enough funding allocated to support all projects announced for LEADER funding. [18080/13]

188. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when permission will be given to the local integrated LEADER companies to sanction projects again; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18155/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 183 and 188 together.

In late 2011 the European Commission approved a change in the maximum co-funding rate from 55% to 85% for the Axes 3 and 4 elements (LEADER) of Ireland's Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013. Prior to this the LEADER elements were co-funded at a rate of 55% by the EU, with the remaining 45% coming from national exchequer sources. The 2011 agreement reduced the national exchequer input to 15% on a net basis for 2012 and 2013 without a concomitant increase in the amount of funding to be provided by the EU. This resulted in a reduction in the overall Programme complement from €427m to approximately €314m on the basis of the Programme achieving full spend by the end of 2013.

However, given the levels of spending by the Local Development Companies (LDCs) from 2009 to date, it is very unlikely that full spend will be achieved by the end of 2013, at which time the co-funding rate will revert to 55% for all expenditure beyond that date. As a consequence of this the overall Programme requirement will change. In the context of these changes to the co-funding rate the original project allocations given to each LDC contracted to deliver the LEADER elements of the RDP require readjustment.

An exercise is currently being carried out to determine the level of project commitments across all LDCs and all RDP measures in order to rebalance the programme in as equitable a way as possible. This exercise is close to completion and the Department will be in touch with the LDCs shortly.

Water Supply

184. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will take action to tackle the problem of treated water being lost to substandard pipes and connections in County Kerry, which loses the highest amount of treated water in the country, at one and a half times the national average, or 60% of all treated water in the county, according to the Service Indicators in Local Authorities Report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18083/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The primary objective of my Department's National Water Conservation Programme is to reduce water loss and leakage in the distribution networks to an economic level and to address high levels of unaccounted for water. My Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013 (WSIP) places a high priority on water conservation. Since 2005 the level of recoupment of approved costs by my Department to water services authorities (local authorities) in respect of water mains rehabilitation or mains replacement projects was increased from 75% to 90% which reflects this high priority. Nationally, over €247 million has been spent on water conservation projects in the last decade with €39.9 million spent in 2011 and €39.25 million in 2012.

In the case of Kerry, funding of €18.79 million is included in the Programme for Water Conservation Stage 3, Countywide Watermains Rehabilitation Project Phase 1. Stages 1 and 2 (installing leakage control infrastructure and implementing active leakage detection and reduction measures) have already been undertaken by Kerry County Council.

The Water Mains Rehabilitation Project is Stage 3 of the Water Conservation work to be carried out by Kerry County Council. The Council has completed its countywide watermains rehabilitation strategy required as part of its water conservation programme. This strategy identifies specific defective water supply networks requiring rehabilitation and/or replacement. The rehabilitation element involves the replacement of identified water mains as part of a coordinated approach to arrest high levels of water leakage.

My Department has already approved a number of proposals received from Kerry County Council for watermains rehabilitation works throughout the county to the value of €1.26 million. The Council is also identifying further works to be included in the Countywide Watermains Rehabilitation Project Phase 1 contract to be progressed and funded under the current Water Services Investment Programme.

Local Authority Staff Issues

185. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is concerned with absenteeism levels in local authorities, as per the Service Indicators in Local Authorities Report; the estimated annual cost of absenteeism in local authorities, if he has a breakdown by local authority area; the way he plans to tackle this problem; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18084/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Figures related to the cost of absenteeism are not available in my Department. The Local Government Sector has used Service Indicators to monitor sick leave for a number of years. Based on figures reported by local authorities, the total number of days lost in the sector to absenteeism rose slightly from 346,750 in 2010 to 350,224 in 2011. A significant quantum of the sick leave reported also includes unpaid sick leave where individuals are on long-term sick

leave.

The nature of work carried out by front-line local authority staff also has an impact on absenteeism levels. Front-line services include fire and ambulance services, roads, environment, water and drainage services, parks and recreation and leisure services, housing services including homeless and welfare services. By their nature, these services can lead to occupational injury. The front-line nature of local authority service delivery differentiates it from office based activities of certain other areas of the public service. There is no specific Occupational Injury Scheme in place in the sector compared to other sectors (e.g. Gardaí, Health, Prison Service) and any occupational injuries arising are reckoned and reported as general sick leave.

Local authority managers are taking a proactive role in attendance management. Despite very challenging pressures in recent years, where the sector has reduced staffing levels by 8,900 WTE (24%), there has been an increased emphasis on improved reporting and better systems. An Attendance Management Policy and Procedure was issued to the sector in 2006 and revised and updated in 2011, including a resource pack for managers aimed at assisting local authorities in maintaining and / or improving attendance levels and ensuring consistency of practice throughout the sector.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Status

186. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the current position with the Burncourt Regional Water Treatment System in South Tipperary; if the residents of this area who are subjected to using bottled water due to the condition of the water will be exempt from water charges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18125/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Burncourt and Fethard Regional Water Supply Scheme Water Treatment Plants (Burncourt and Gortnapisha) Contract is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013, as a contract to commence during the life of the Programme. In addition, further network elements of the scheme are included to advance through planning during the same period.

I approved the contract documents for the Water Treatment Plants DBO Contract for the Burncourt and Fethard Regional Water Supply Scheme in July 2012. I understand that South Tipperary is in the process of seeking tenders for the contract.

Building Regulations Application

187. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will report on housing building standards and in particular the current insulation and energy standards applicable to new housing here; if he will advise as to the most modern and sustainable standards currently available; when the current standards were last reviewed; his plans to upgrade or recalibrate those standards to ensure new housing here is energy efficient or zero-energy efficient in the context of increasing energy bills for homeowners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18151/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Programme for Government contains a commitment to further improve the energy efficiency of new buildings with a view to moving towards carbon neutral homes in the longer

term. In tandem with this commitment, Directive 2010/31/EU on the energy performance of buildings requires EU Member States, *inter alia*, to ensure that all new buildings will be nearly zero-energy by 31 December 2020 (or by 31 December 2018 in the case of new buildings owned and occupied by public authorities). The Directive broadly defines a ‘nearly zero-energy building’ as a building with a high energy performance where the very low amount of energy required should, to a very significant extent, be met by energy from renewable sources, including renewable energy produced onsite or nearby.

Against this background, Ireland has been making significant progress in terms of both improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon dioxide emissions within the built environment. The statutory minimum energy performance standards (including insulation requirements) for dwellings are addressed under Part L of the building Regulations and the accompanying Technical Guidance Document (TGD L Dwellings). Taking the energy efficiency requirements established in 2005 as the benchmark, the Building Regulations (Part L Amendment) Regulations 2007 set the requirements necessary to achieve a 40% improvement (over the 2005 standards) in the energy and carbon performance of new dwellings. These regulations came into effect on 1 July 2008 subject to certain transitional arrangements. Energy performance requirements were further upgraded under the Building Regulations (Part L Amendment) Regulations 2011, and the accompanying TGD L Dwellings 2011 sets out the current minimum energy performance and insulation requirements. These regulations came into effect on 1 December 2011 and build on the substantial improvements already introduced under the 2007 regulations by delivering a 60% aggregate improvement (relative to 2005 standards) in both the energy and carbon performance of new buildings. Part L 2011 marks an important step on the road to carbon neutrality and puts Ireland at the forefront of EU Member States in terms of energy efficiency standards for new dwellings. All the signs indicate that Irish builders and manufacturers continue to innovate and adapt their approaches and products to meet new standards as they continue to evolve progressively over time. This is important in terms of continuing the development of the market for energy efficient buildings and products domestically while also increasing the considerable potential that exists for high energy efficiency products in export markets. The on-going review of regulations is important in maintaining the momentum that has already been created in this regard.

My Department is also working on the development of a framework for achieving a nearly zero energy framework for dwellings in order to meet our obligations under Directive 2010/31/EU within the prescribed timeframe. It is anticipated that the nearly zero energy framework for dwellings will require further amendments to the building regulations over and above the recent Part L 2011 requirements.

Question No. 188 answered with Question No. 183.

Leader Programmes Applications

189. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of projects approved by Leader companies of more than €150,000 value that are awaiting approval; the date each was submitted to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18156/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Funding of €314m is available under the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013 for allocation to qualifying projects up to the end of 2013. There are 35 Local Action Groups (LAGs) contracted, on my Department’s behalf, to deliver the RDP throughout the country and these groups are the principal decision-makers in relation to the allocation of proj-

ect funding. Such decisions are made in the context of the local development strategy of the individual groups and in line with Departmental operating rules and EU regulations.

Projects that request funding of €150,000 or more are required to seek approval from my Department. The assessment of these higher value projects usually involves detailed consultations between my Department and the relevant local development company. It frequently necessitates the provision of further documentation or clarifications. It may also, in some instances, result in modifications to the project proposed to ensure best value for money and compliance with all the necessary regulations, both national and European, governing the activities funded under the programme. My Department currently has 52 projects at various stages of assessment and the LAGs that have projects currently undergoing assessment are listed below.

The policy in my Department is to work with the LAGs to ensure that the projects submitted are fully compliant and can be approved rather than to refuse approval for funding; it can therefore take some time to come to a final conclusion. My Department will continue to work with the relevant LAGs to make a full assessment of the eligibility of these projects and will advise the LAGs once all queries have been addressed satisfactorily.

LAG	Date Received	Grant aid requested	Stage
Ballyhoura Development Ltd	10/10/2012	€500,000.00	Under Assessment
Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teo	22/01/2013	€200,000.00	Under Assessment
Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teo	01/03/2013	€200,000.00	Under Assessment
Clare Leader	18/01/2013	€230,000.00	Under Assessment
Clare Leader	18/01/2013	€200,000.00	Awaiting Info
Donegal Local Development Co Ltd	21/12/2012	€200,000.00	Under Assessment
Fingal LEADER Partnership Co	30/10/2012	€493,385.02	Awaiting Info
Fingal LEADER Partnership Co	21/12/2012	€494,938.81	Under Assessment
Forum Connemara	23/08/2012	€431,887.50	Under Assessment
Forum Connemara	11/02/2013	€324,766.19	Under Assessment
Galway Rural Development	25/01/2013	€239,949.46	Under Assessment
Galway Rural Development	25/01/2013	€156,914.04	Under Assessment
Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	03/04/2013	€200,000.00	Awaiting Info

LAG	Date Received	Grant aid requested	Stage
Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	03/04/2013	€205,867.43	Under Assessment
Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	05/11/2012	€428,868.75	Awaiting Info
Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	12/11/2012	€200,000.00	Awaiting Info

LAG	Date Received	Grant aid requested	Stage
Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	04/12/2012	€300,000.00	Under Assessment
Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	16/01/2013	€268,125.00	Under Assessment
Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	16/01/2013	€497,212.87	Under Assessment
Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	16/01/2013	€225,000.00	Under Assessment
Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	16/01/2013	€255,384.18	Under Assessment
Leitrim Integrated Development Co Ltd	20/02/2013	€376,641.00	Under Assessment
Leitrim Integrated Development Co Ltd	25/02/2013	€318,130.01	Under Assessment
Mayo North East LEADER Partnership	03/10/2012	€194,725.50	Under Assessment
Mayo North East LEADER Partnership	03/11/2011	€196,386.75	Under Assessment
Mayo North East LEADER Partnership	11/03/2011	€180,000.00	Under Assessment
Meath Partnership	14/03/2013	€200,000.00	Under Assessment
Meath Partnership	19/03/2013	€200,000.00	Under Assessment
Meath Partnership	19/03/2013	€196,934.79	Under Assessment
North Tipperary LEADER Partnership	16/07/2012	€407,675.25	Awaiting Info
North Tipperary LEADER Partnership	18/01/2013	€199,993.63	Under Assessment

LAG	Date Received	Grant aid requested	Stage
Roscommon Integrated Development Co	27/02/2013	€196,925.00	Under Assessment
Roscommon Integrated Development Co	05/03/2013	€155,880.00	Under Assessment
Roscommon Integrated Development Co	15/02/2013	€172,793.75	Under Assessment
SECAD	28/11/2012	€500,000.00	Awaiting Info
SECAD	13/03/2013	€330,000.00	Under Assessment
SECAD	13/03/2013	€500,000.00	Under Assessment

LAG	Date Received	Grant aid requested	Stage
South Kerry Development Ltd.	21/12/2012	€500,000.00	Under Assessment
South Kerry Development Ltd.	25/01/2013	€168,392.50	Under Assessment
South Kerry Development Ltd.	25/02/2013	€194,538.96	Under Assessment
South West Mayo Development	21/12/2012	€500,000.00	Under Assessment
South West Mayo Development	21/12/2012	€200,000.00	Under Assessment
South West Mayo Development	24/01/2012	€196,911.00	Under Assessment
Waterford Leader Partnership Ltd	01/01/2013	€200,000.00	Under Assessment
Waterford Leader Partnership Ltd	01/03/2013	€183,310.00	Under Assessment
Waterford Leader Partnership Ltd	12/03/2013	€198,624.04	Under Assessment
Waterford Leader Partnership Ltd	14/03/2013	€154,927.50	Under Assessment
Waterford Leader Partnership Ltd	10/04/2013	€200,000.00	Under Assessment
West Cork Development Partnership Ltd.	11/03/2013	€194,400.00	Under Assessment
West Limerick Resources Ltd	21/12/2012	€196,313.77	Under Assessment
West Limerick Resources Ltd	26/02/2013	€200,000.00	Under Assessment
Westmeath Community Development Ltd	27/03/2013	€461,809.41	Under Assessment

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

190. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisers in his Department over the last two years. [18311/13]

191. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisers' pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale and salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisers for 2012. [18325/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 190 and 191 together.

The information requested is set out in the following table:

Office	Name	Current Salary €
Minister Hogan	Sean McKeown	92,672
-	Claire Langton	86,604
Minister of State O'Sullivan	Aidan Culhane	83,337
-	Paul Daly	83,337

In line with the Instructions on ministerial Appointments for the 31st Dáil, Special Advisers are to be placed on the first point of the Principal Officer (standard) scale: €80,051 - €83,337 - €86,604 - €89,898 - €92,672, except where the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform sanctions a higher salary rate. In this regard, Ms. Langton, Mr. Culhane and Mr. Daly were all appointed on the first point i.e €80,051. Special Advisers placed on a salary point below the maximum of the scale may be paid annual increments until the maximum of that scale is reached. Ms. Langton is currently on the 3rd point while Mr. Culhane and Mr. Daly are both on the 2nd point. Mr. McKeown was appointed on the maximum point of the scale in light of his particular employment/salary circumstances at that time, he has received no salary increase since then.

The total wage bill for special advisers in my Department in 2012, before application of the Pension Related Deduction, is €360,524, inclusive of employer's PRSI.

State Bodies Establishment

192. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of his Department since February 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18339/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The State Bodies established under the aegis of my Department since March 2011 are as follows:

- The Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency
- The Local Government Management Agency

These bodies were established under the Local Government Services (Corporate Bodies) Acts 1971 to 2012. Section 5 of the Act provides that the Minister may by order at any time revoke an establishment order.

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2012, enacted in June 2012, provided the legal framework for further implementation of the Department's Agency rationalisation programme with the overall number of Agencies reduced from 21 to 10. The Local Government Management Services Board and the Local Government Computer Services Board were merged with the establishment of the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) in August 2012. An Chomhairle Leabharlanna was dissolved on 1 November 2012 and its key residual functions were subsumed into the Local Government Management Agency. The Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency (HSCA), also established in 2012, rationalises the functions of the National Building Agency (NBA), the Affordable Homes Partnership (AHP) and the Centre for Housing Research (CHR).

The operations of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA) will be wound up by the end of 2013; the intervening transitional period will allow the Authority to progress elements of on-going work and to make the necessary preparations for the migration to new arrangements, to be decided by Government. Critical Reviews of possible mergers between some of the Department's Agencies and other Public Bodies were conducted in 2012 and resulted in a decision to merge the Environmental Protection Agency and the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland by mid-2014.

The Government decided in December 2011, based on the recommendations of an independent assessment and in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government, to establish a public water utility company, Irish Water, to take over the operational and capital delivery functions of local authorities in the water services area. Following further analysis by my Department together with NewERA, the Government decided that Irish Water should be established as an independent State owned subsidiary within the Bord Gáis Éireann Group.

Liquor Licensing Laws

193. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he intends to provide statutory effect to section 9 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18026/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The position is that the Report of the Steering Group on a National Substance Misuse Strategy, which was published last year, contains a broad range of recommendations which seek to address the negative consequences of alcohol misuse and alcohol-related harm in this country. The Department of Health is currently developing an Action Plan for submission to the Government in response to the Report's recommendations. Future arrangements for the display and sale of alcohol in mixed trading outlets such as supermarkets and convenience stores will be considered by the Government in the context of that Action Plan.

Ground Rents Abolition

194. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he intends to introduce legislation to abolish ground rents during the 31st Dáil; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18033/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The position is that section 2 of the Landlord and Tenant (Ground Rents) Act 1978 introduced a prohibition on the creation of new leases reserving ground rents on dwellings. As regards existing ground rents, Part III of the Landlord and Tenant (Ground Rents) (No.2) Act 1978 contains a statutory scheme whereby a person may, at reasonable cost, acquire the fee simple in their dwelling. To date, over 80,000 applicants have acquired freehold title to their property under this scheme. In the case of property other than dwellings, the Landlord and Tenant (Ground Rents) Act 1967 contains provisions which facilitate acquisition of the fee simple in certain cases subject to agreed terms or on terms set out in an arbitration carried out by the County Registrar.

The position regarding ground rents was considered by the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution in their 2004 Report 'Private Property'. The Committee took the view that a ground landlord's ground rent is a form of property right which is constitutionally protected and that abolition of such rents would be unconstitutional in the absence of adequate monetary compensation. The Committee also noted that where leases were approaching expiry, any leg-

islation providing for the abolition of ground rents would have to provide for the payment of enhanced compensation by the ground tenant. In light of the foregoing, I have no immediate plans to introduce further legislation in this area. Operation of the existing law will, however, be kept under review by my Department.

Upward Only Rent Reviews

195. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he intends to address the issue of upward only rent reviews through a referendum and any statutory measures in the 31st Dáil; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18034/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 907 and 909 of 16 April 2013 in which I indicated that the decision made by Government in December 2011 not to proceed with the commitment in the Programme for Government to legislate to end upward only rent review clauses for leases entered into prior to 28 February 2010 was taken on foot of consultations with the Attorney General, which made it clear that the proposed legislation gave rise to significant constitutional difficulties. I also indicated that it was clear that any legislative proposal would require the payment of compensation to those whose property rights would be infringed if that proposal were to be compatible with Constitutional and European Court of Human Rights norms.

Against that background there are no plans to re-examine the decision which was taken in 2011 and there are no plans to have a referendum on this matter.

Divorce Process

196. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will outline the rationale for the current four year period required for divorce in Ireland; if the process will be amended to facilitate a single court process (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18058/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The basis for the four year period required for divorce is that it is mandated by Article 41.3.2.i of the Constitution. The Oireachtas cannot legislate to change this period unless the majority of voters approve such a change in a referendum.

Asylum Applications

197. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position in regard to determination of residency status and or eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18135/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned had a Deportation Order made against him, following the refusal of his asylum application and the subsequent consideration of his case under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). He lodged judicial review proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision to make a Deportation Order against him. These proceedings were 'settled'. Arising from this settlement, the Deportation Order was revoked and the person concerned was afforded the opportunity to submit, within a specified period, fresh representations pursuant to Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). Such representations have been submitted and will be

considered, along with all other information on file, before a final decision is taken in this case. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

The Deputy should note that as the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, he would not, at this time, be in a position to meet the lawful residency criteria applicable to persons applying to my Department for a Certificate of Naturalisation.

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.

Asylum Applications

198. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date in the matter of determination of eligibility for residency status/naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18138/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned had a Deportation Order made against him, following the refusal of his asylum application and his application for Subsidiary Protection and the subsequent consideration of his case under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). He lodged judicial review proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision to make a Deportation Order against him. These proceedings were 'settled' on the basis that the case would be re-considered by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service.

Should this lead to a new application for Subsidiary Protection being lodged and refused, the position in the State of the person concerned will then be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision and the consequences of the decision will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

The Deputy should note that as the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, he would not be in a position to meet the lawful residency criteria applicable to persons applying to my Department for a Certificate of Naturalisation.

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.

Asylum Applications

199. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress

made to date in the matter of evaluation and determination of eligibility for residency/naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18139/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned is a failed asylum applicant. Arising from the refusal of his asylum application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 28th December, 2007, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the then Minister setting out reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against him. In addition, he was notified of his entitlement to apply for subsidiary protection in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006.

The person concerned submitted an application for subsidiary protection. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome.

In the event that the application for subsidiary protection is refused, the position in the State of the person concerned will then be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

Given that the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, the issue of an application for naturalisation does not arise 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.

Deportation Orders Data

200. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will examine the case in respect of citizenship/eligibility for long-term residency/naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Sligo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18140/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned arrived in the State on 10 May, 2008 and applied for asylum. 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 that it was proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was also advised of her entitlement to submit an application for Subsidiary Protection in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006.

The person concerned submitted an application for Subsidiary Protection and also submitted representations pursuant to Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). Follow-

ing the consideration of her application for Subsidiary Protection, a decision was taken that the person concerned was not eligible for Subsidiary Protection. The case of the person concerned was then considered under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. Refoulement was not found to be an issue. In addition no issue arises under Section 4 of the Criminal Justice (UN Convention against Torture) Act, 2000. Consideration was also given under Article 3 and to private and family rights under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). A Deportation Order was signed on 15 March 2011.

On application for re-admittance to the Asylum process the person concerned had her case examined under Section 17(7) of the Refugee Act 1996. Following consideration of the information submitted, the application was refused.

I am satisfied that the asylum and immigration case of the person concerned was comprehensively examined under all of the relevant headings before a decision was taken to make a Deportation Order against her. I am equally satisfied that all representations submitted, including those of a medical nature, were fully considered in advance of a final decision being taken. As a result, I see no justification to re-visit the case of the person concerned.

However, if new information or circumstances have come to light, which have a direct bearing on her case and which has arisen since the original Deportation Order was made, there remains the option of applying to me for revocation of the Deportation Order pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 (11) of the Immigration Act, 1999, as amended. However I wish to make clear that such an application would require substantial grounds to be successful.

The person concerned remains the subject of a Deportation Order. As a result, she is legally obliged to comply with any reporting requirements placed on her by the Garda National Immigration Bureau. As the Deputy will be aware, the effect of a Deportation Order is that the person named on the Order must leave the State and remain thereafter out of the State.

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.

Residency Permits

201. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current position in regard to examination of eligibility for long-term residency/naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18141/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned was granted permission to remain in the State for an initial 2 year period on Stamp 4 conditions from 11 November, 2005, under the revised arrangements for the non-EEA national parents of children born in Ireland prior to January, 2005, commonly known as the IBC/05 Scheme. This permission to remain was renewed regularly and is currently valid until 15 February, 2014.

There is no record of an application for a Certificate of Naturalisation having been received from the person concerned. However, it is open to any individual to lodge such an application to the Citizenship Section of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) if and

when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended. Details on the criteria to be met by persons lodging such applications are available on the website of the INIS (www.inis.gov.ie).

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 this 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.

Naturalisation Applications

202. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current position in the matter of determination of eligibility for long-term residency/naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18142/13]

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 August, 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.

The person has currently permission to remain until 8 June 2016.

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.

Residency Permits

203. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current position in the matter of determination of eligibility for long-term residency/naturalisation in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18143/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The persons concerned have been granted leave to remain in the State for the three year period ending 15 October, 2015, following the consideration of their respective cases under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). These decisions were conveyed in writing to the persons concerned by individual letters dated 15 October, 2012.

It will be open to the persons concerned to apply to the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service for a Certificate of Naturalisation when they are in a position to meet the lawful residency criteria applicable to the lodgement of such applications. Details on the criteria to be met by persons lodging such applications are available from my Department's Website (www.justice.ie).

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Visa Applications

204. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 179 of 24 January 2013, wherein indication was given to the effect that documents were awaited from the applicant which it is understood has been replied to and complied with in full, if it is now possible to proceed with the determination of eligibility in respect of visa applications in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18144/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the application to which the Deputy refers is at an advanced stage of processing.

Necessary information from an outside agency, of which the family is aware, is awaited by INIS in order to make a decision.

Once this information is received a decision will be made without delay.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be directed 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.

Family Reunification Applications

205. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a family unification in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18147/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the person referred to by the Deputy is the subject of a Family Reunification application made on 26th November 2012.

The application was forwarded to the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) as required under Section 18 of the Refugee Act 1996. On completion of the investigation by ORAC a report of the findings will be provided by the Commissioner to INIS and the application will be considered.

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.

Crime Prevention

206. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality what exactly is Ireland's position on criminals from abroad operating here and are there restrictions on them. [18203/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am not clear from the Deputy's question whether he has a specific incident in mind but I can assure him that any person residing in or visiting the state who is alleged to have committed a criminal offence in the jurisdiction will be made amenable to and subject to the laws of the State.

I can also inform the Deputy that under section 4 of the Immigration Act 2004 an immigration officer may refuse to give permission to enter the State under certain circumstances, including where the non-national has been convicted of an offence that may be punished under the law of the place of conviction by imprisonment for a period of one year or by a more severe penalty. A non-national may also be refused permission to land or be in the State, if an immigration officer has reason to believe that the non-national's entry into, or presence in the State, could pose a threat to national security or be contrary to public policy and also where there is reason to believe that a non-national intends to enter the State for purposes other than that expressed by him/her.

Furthermore, where any person who is not a citizen of Ireland or the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, who is resident in the State, is known or suspected to have engaged in criminal activity, An Garda Síochána may provide relevant information to the Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service (INIS) for the purpose of consideration being given to initiating a process for the purpose of arranging for their removal from the State pursuant to section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 or, if the person is an EU national, pursuant to Regulation 20 of the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2006.

Magdalen Laundries Issues

207. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality in relation to Magdalen laundry survivors, if he will publicise at home and abroad to diaspora communities survivors' entitlements to register with the Magdalen fund/commission in order to maximise the number of potential applicants' awareness of the scheme; the consequences there are for a survivor who does not register with the Magdalen fund/commission during the three months of Mr. Justice Quirke's review; if that person will be excluded from further engagement in the justice process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18207/13]

208. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will make available to survivors and their families free independent advice and advocacy assistance in relation to the Magdalen fund/commission scheme; if Mr. Justice Quirke will be commissioned to implement the process that he recommends after the three month review period; and if he will establish a dedicated helpline for Magdalen survivors. [18208/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 207 and 208 together.

Mr. Justice Quirke has been asked to advise on the establishment of a Scheme for the benefit of those women who were admitted to and worked in a Magdalen Laundry and to examine how best to operate, as part of that Scheme, necessary supports for women who have been in a Magdalen Laundry. It is a matter for Judge Quirke to decide independently how he will carry out his examination. His terms of reference are as follows:

Taking into account the findings of the “Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries”

(i) to advise on the establishment of an ex gratia Scheme (to operate on a non-adversarial basis) including identifying the criteria and factors to be taken into account to facilitate the early establishment and effective conduct of an ex gratia Scheme for the benefit of those women who were admitted to and worked in a Magdalen Laundry and in the Laundry operated in the Training Centre at Stanhope Street, Dublin, taking into account criteria determined to be relevant, including work undertaken and other matters as considered appropriate, to contribute to a healing and reconciliation process;

(ii) to examine how best to operate (as part of that Scheme) an ex gratia Fund, of a sum sufficient to meet the recommendations of Mr Justice Quirke, the nature and amount of ex gratia payments to be made out of the Fund and on the determination of applications for payment in an effective and timely manner that ensures the monies in the Fund are directed only to the benefit of eligible applicants and not on legal fees and expenses;

(iii) to examine how the Government might best provide supports (including health services such as medical cards, mental health services and counselling services and other welfare needs) as part of the Scheme for women who require such supports as a result of their experiences in the Laundries;

(iv) to consider the approach to be taken in circumstances in which a payment has already been made by the Redress Board by way of redress to a former resident of an industrial school, where such payment included a sum specifically due to the direct transfer of that person from an industrial school to a relevant Laundry and their time or part of their time spent in a Laundry or Laundries;

(v) to examine the effect, if any, of the making of an ex gratia payment to a person who is resident in the UK and how best the making of any such payment should be structured so as not to adversely affect their existing entitlements to benefits and supports;

(vi) to advise as to what steps or measures are appropriate to ensure that ex gratia payments or supports or assistance provided are disregarded for the purposes of determining entitlement of Social Welfare payments and/or income tax liability;

(vii) to report back to Government within three months with recommendations.

No decision on advertising will be made until after the Government has received the recommendations of Judge Quirke and made a decision on how best to implement a scheme. There are no consequences for women not registering their interest during the three months Mr. Justice Quirke has been asked to conduct his examination. However registration will facilitate any consultation process undertaken to take women’s views into account and will also facilitate

such women being kept informed of any developments.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

209. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisers in his Department over the last two years. [18316/13]

210. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisers' pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisers for 2012 [18330/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 209 and 210 together.

The matter does not arise in respect of Ministers of State as none are remunerated by my Department. I have made no appointments of Special Advisors above Principal Officer level. In my capacity as Minister for Justice and Equality I have appointed Ms Jane Lehane and Mr Thomas Cooney as my Special Advisors. They are both paid at the Principal Officer standard scale (€80,051 - €98,424). I have made no requests for salary increases for either individual and the only changes to their salaries have been by way of normal incremental progression. The pay bill for 2012 was €181,716 which includes Employers PRSI.

Overseas Missions

211. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 3 of 14 March 2013, if he will explain further robust Chapter V11 missions/operations in relation to Irish troops serving abroad. [18204/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): UN peacekeeping operations are deployed on the basis of mandates from the United Nations Security Council. Over the years, the range of tasks assigned to UN peacekeeping operations has expanded significantly in response to shifting patterns of conflict and to best address threats to international peace and security.

Members of the Permanent Defence Force serve on missions under Chapter VI and Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Peacekeeping operations mounted under Chapter VI are of the traditional type where the UN acts as a monitoring, patrolling and observing force after peace has been established.

Chapter VII of the UN Charter is entitled "Action with respect to threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace and Acts of Aggression". Under this Chapter the UN Security Council is mandated to take whatever action "as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security". Peacekeeping operations mounted under this Chapter are commonly known as peace enforcement operations where the consent of the parties is not required.

In recent years in response to the requirement for a more robust mandate, there has been a significant increase in the deployment of peacekeeping troops under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. EU-led and UN led missions in Chad, UN led mission in Liberia, International Security Presence in Kosovo, EU-led Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan are recent examples.

It should be noted that any decision by Ireland to participate in an overseas operation, which may be led by the EU, UN or NATO would be subject to our national sovereign decision-making procedures - "Triple Lock", i.e. UN mandate, Government and Dáil approval, where appropriate.

Defence Forces Representation

212. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Defence the bodies representing ex-service men and women who served in the Defence Forces that are recognised by him; his plans to recognise any other organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18071/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Department of Defence provides annual subventions to support and encourage the two officially recognised veteran groups, the Organisation of National ex-Servicemen (O.N.E.) and the Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA). O.N.E. receives a subvention of €40,000 per annum and IUNVA receives a subvention of €10,000 per annum from my Department. Representatives of both organisations hold formal meetings with Departmental officials. While there is a range of other associations involving serving, retired and ex-Defence Forces personnel representing various interests at local, regional and national level, the Department has no plans to formally recognise any further veteran or other similar associations.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

213. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisers in his Department over the last two years. [18309/13]

214. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisers' pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisers for 2012. [18323/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 213 and 214 together.

I have not appointed any special advisers in my role as Minister for Defence. I have however engaged the services of a personal assistant who assists me in constituency matters. The annual salary attached to this post is €56,060 which is in accordance with Department of Public Expenditure & Reform guidelines concerning Ministerial appointments.

Similarly, no special advisers have been appointed by Mr. Paul Kehoe, T.D. in his role as Minister of State at the Department of Defence.

State Bodies Establishment

215. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Defence the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of his Department since February 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18337/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): My Department has not established any new

State bodies since February 2011 nor are there plans in place to establish any new public bodies at this time.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

216. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an agri-environment options scheme payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18040/13]

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 1st September 2011 and has received full payment totalling €312.58 in respect of 2011.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme, a comprehensive administrative check of all applications, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. Payments in respect of the 2012 Scheme year are subject to a similar administrative checking process which includes verification of capital investments through checks on receipts. During this checking process a number of issues were identified regarding the documentation submitted as part of the Capital Investment Claim of the person named. As a result of these issues the person named was deemed to have knowingly made a false or misleading statement resulting in the AEOS contract being terminated. The person named was notified of this and informed in writing that all money paid under the scheme should be reimbursed to the Department. Following an appeal by the person named this decision was upheld by my Department and a letter has issued to the person named informing him of this and giving him the option to appeal the decision to the Agriculture Appeals Office.

Compensation Awards

217. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the compensation available to farmers that have been badly affected by the gorse fires in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18008/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is not in a position to provide assistance to farmers who suffered losses during the recent gorse fires. Damage to property is a matter for individual land owners. It is the case that some farmers have insured their property e.g. forestry plantations against fire and I would encourage others to pursue this approach.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

218. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture; Food and the Marine his plans to provide support for farmers currently experiencing difficulties providing fodder for livestock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18009/13]

224. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture; Food and the Marine the proposals, if any, he has to assist farmers who are experiencing ongoing difficulties due to the poor weather conditions and severe fodder shortage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18122/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 218 and 224 together.

I am acutely aware of the difficulties being experienced by some farmers as a result of recent unseasonable weather. Difficult conditions experienced on farms last summer have been compounded by an extended winter.

It is also the case that farmers have increased the usage of concentrates to fill the fodder “gap”. Whilst addressing the fodder issue, this has, in some cases, resulted in problems with cash flow and access to working capital on farms.

Access to credit is crucial at this time and flexibility from both banks and merchants is vital. I have been speaking to banks to highlight the challenges facing farmers as a result of the weather, and insisting they take a flexible approach to dealing with short term credit issues. I will also be meeting with the Banking Federation and other banks next week. I have also been in contact with Co-Ops and grain and feed merchants to urge them to be flexible during this difficult time.

This is an occasion when solidarity is needed among the farming community. I would ask those that have fodder to be proactive in making it available to neighbouring farmers who are encountering severe problems. I am aware that the farm bodies are working locally to assess whether there are farmers who have surplus fodder in stock and I commend them for these efforts.

I am receiving daily updates from Teagasc on the situation and I have asked that for this crucial period, top priority is given to supporting farmers in need of assistance.

In relation to the measures which can be taken to alleviate the problems on farms, I would urge farmers to contact their local Teagasc advisor. Where winter fodder is limited, Teagasc is providing specific advice and assistance on how to cope with the consequences of the weather conditions experienced this Spring. Staff at all Teagasc offices are available to provide advice to farmers over the phone and the fodder situation is a constant topic of focus at Discussions group meetings and other farm walks and events. Agriculture advisers are equipped and ready to outline the options open to farmers facing difficulties and to make a plan that best suits their situation.

Teagasc has also made extensive use of national and local media to provide farmers with advice and has co-ordinated with farm organisations, marts, local authorities, co-ops and other suppliers to provide targeted advice to all who need it. Advice for farmers on coping with fodder shortages has also been published, including guidelines to dairy and drystock farmers with little or no grass on feeding this spring.

I have also announced an extension to 15 May, 2013 for closing off of Traditional Hay Meadow in Agri – Environment Options Scheme (AEOS) allowing a deferral of one month to the closing off date. This will help to maximise grass utilisation in this critical recovery period as the weather improves and grass growth resumes.

I fully appreciate and acknowledge that farmers are currently under financial pressure, however the outlook for our livestock sectors remains positive and that prices are relatively strong.

There is no doubt that the availability of forage on farms is an on-going challenge. The improvement in soil temperatures over the last week is very welcome and should see a return to more normal growth rates for grass and crops alike, and this, together with relatively positive market conditions should see a significant improvement in the situation on farms over the coming weeks. That said, the challenges facing farmers at this particular time should not be

underestimated and all available advice from public and private sources should be availed of on how best to manage individual situations being experienced.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

219. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a disadvantaged area grant application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and when payment will issue. [18039/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, the holdings of eligible applicants were required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of six consecutive months, in addition to maintaining an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. As the applicant has not as yet demonstrated that the holding satisfies the scheme minimum stocking density requirements, as of now, no payment is due in respect of the 2012 Scheme.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

220. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason payment under the single farm scheme or the disadvantaged area based scheme has not issued to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; if the horses owned by this person were included in the stocking density assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18081/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, the holdings of eligible applicants were required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of six consecutive months, in addition to maintaining an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. While initially the holding concerned could not be confirmed as having satisfied these requirements, following contact with the applicant, my Department understands that passports relating to donkeys on the holding will be submitted. On receipt, the matter can be progressed.

Full payment under the Single Payment Scheme issued on 10 January 2013.

An Scéim Limistéar Míbhuntáistiúla

221. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén uair a dhéanfar íocaíocht faoin Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste 2012 nó faoin íocaíocht aonair feirme le duine (sonraí tugtha), cén fáth go bhfuil moill leis an íocaíocht seo agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [18082/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Rinneadh íocaíocht i ndáil le Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste 2012 sa chás seo an 26/9/2012. Rinneadh an réamh-íocaíocht i ndáil le Scéim na hAoníocaíochta an 16/10/2012, agus íocadh an fuilleach an 3/12/2012.

Fuair scrúdú Tras-Chomhlíonta ina dhiaidh sin, áfach, sáruithe maidir le níotráití, eallaigh agus caoirigh a aithint agus a chlárú, agus riachtanais maidir le sláinteachas bia agus leas ai-

nmhithe. Mar thoradh air sin, tá pionós 5% cláraithe in aghaidh íocaíochtaí 2012 an iarrthóra. Táthar i mbun an méid sin a chur in iúl don iarrthóir, chomh maith leis an gceart atá aige/aici athbhreithniú a iarraidh agus an ceart achomharc a dhéanamh ar athbhreithniú den sórt sin, in am trátha, chuig an Oifig Achomharc Talmhaíochta neamhspleách.

Forestry Grants

222. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the range of grant aid available to the forestry sector, including pre and post harvest activity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18089/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The role of my Department in relation to forestry is to assist in the development of forestry to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to national economic and social well-being on a sustainable basis, and is compatible with the protection of the environment. The main means by which it fulfils this role is the provision of Afforestation Grant and Premium Schemes, which are operated by the Forest Service of my Department.

Grants are provided to cover the costs incurred in the establishment of a plantation. It is important to note that there is currently no grant assistance available for the replanting of forests following the commercial felling of trees. Forest road grants, provided by my Department to enable first thinning of plantations, and the broadleaf thinning grant, are important measures in supporting the delivery of forest-based biomass for energy use. In each case there is a pre-approval requirement and each application must be prepared and certified by a professional forestry contractor who is registered for that purpose with my Department.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

223. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon will receive their agri-environment options scheme 2 payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18097/13]

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 1st September 2011 and has received full payment totalling €470.35 in respect of 2011.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme, a comprehensive administrative check of all applications, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. Payments in respect of the 2012 Scheme year are subject to a similar administrative checking process which includes verification of capital investments through checks on receipts. These checks have been successfully completed and I expect payment to issue shortly.

Question No. 224 answered with Question No. 218.

Single Payment Scheme Applications

225. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide an update on a single farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in

County Mayo. [18123/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payments for the 2008 scheme year have issued to the legal personal representatives of the person named.

The herd number was then transferred to a son of the person named and another person and they have submitted the applications from the 2009 scheme year to date. No further payments became due to the person named because the applications were made by the current holders of the herd number.

The person named held single payment entitlements but they were not transferred to the current holders of the herd number.

An official from my department wrote to the current holders of the herd number on the 30th June 2009 advising them of the need to transfer the entitlements from the account of the person named to their account. The necessary form to make the application was also provided. The current holders did not make an application. As they hold no single payment entitlements they do not qualify for any single payments.

An official from my department wrote to the solicitors administering the estate of the person named on the 18th January 2011 cautioning that the single payment entitlements were at risk because of non usage. No response was received. The official wrote again on the 11th January 2012 advising that the entitlements had reverted to the National Reserve for non usage.

One of the current holders of the herd number wrote to my department on the 13th February 2012 appealing the reversion of the entitlements, but as the appeal did not disclose any force majeure case, the appeal was refused.

Question No. 226 withdrawn.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

227. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if interim funding will be made available to farmers in the Twelve Bens/Maam Turk area of Connemara, who left the REP scheme in 2012 and were paid interim funding until November 2012 and who have applied for agri environment options scheme 3, for the period from November 2012 to the commencement of the AEOS 3 programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18157/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has not made any interim payments to farmers in the Twelve Bens/Maam Turk area of Connemara who left the Rural Environment Protection Scheme in 2012 and I have no plans to provide for such payments. Applicants with designated land, including those in the areas mentioned will receive priority in the selection process for the Agri-environment Options Scheme. The processing of applications is nearing completion and I expect to be in a position to inform all applicants of the outcome in the next few weeks. Payments under the scheme will issue to successful AEOS III applicants from the commencement date of their AEOS contract.

Question No. 228 withdrawn.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

229. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if final payment under REP scheme 4 has been granted to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if not, when payment will issue. [18170/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person mentioned commenced REPS 4 in October 2007 and received payments for the first five 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. Administrative checks in respect of 2012 have been finalised and the Year 6 75% payment totalling €3,632.86 issued for payment on 22nd March 2013. The balancing Year 6 25% payment totalling €1,210.95 issued on 12th April 2013.

Single Payment Scheme Applications

230. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to concerns in the farming community in County Kerry that application forms for the single farm payment are no longer being accepted in the Tralee office of his Department and instead are being sent to Portlaoise; his views assuring the farming community in County Kerry that clerical work, that has been carried out in Tralee in the past, will continue to be carried out in the future therefore ensuring the future viability of his Department's offices in Tralee. [18197/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The closing date for receipt of applications under the 2013 Single Payment Scheme has been set as Wednesday, 15 May 2013 and, by way of further improving the service offered to farmers in 2013 and in recognition of the significant contribution of the Single Farm Payment to the incomes of farmers, it has been decided to individually acknowledge receipt of each application form, as soon as possible after receipt. Consequently, applications under the 2013 Single Payment Scheme must be posted/delivered to my Department's SPS Payments Unit in Portlaoise and can, therefore, no longer be lodged in Department Local Offices. This has been clearly stated in the information provided to the farming sector that SPS forms in respect of 2013 Single Payment Scheme. My Department will be emphasising this message through ads in the farming press next week.

With regard to clerical work in the Tralee local office, following on from the successful restructuring of my Department's local office network, which reduced the number of local offices from 58 to 16, my Department has reviewed the business processes and procedures and, in particular, the administrative support requirements, in its 16 Regional Offices. Arising from this review, the Department has recently introduced a number of significant changes to the procedures in relation to the implementation of controls in the context of the TB eradication programme. In light of this and having regard to the significant efficiencies which have already arisen as a result of the investment made by the Department in IT in recent years and the substantial reduction in the incidence of disease, the number of administrative staff required to deliver the service in the local offices has been considerably reduced. The review concluded that further substantial efficiencies would accrue from the centralisation of administrative functions and, in light of this, my Department has decided to centralise this support in one or more centralised office(s).

Centralising administrative procedures will enable my Department to reduce the number of administrative staff it requires to support Veterinary Office operations and, accordingly, the cost

of providing its services. This is in line with Government policy. In addition, the centralisation of administrative functions will facilitate the re-deployment of staff from the regional offices to other State agencies and, thereby, enable the Government to provide services more efficiently through these agencies.

I should emphasise that frontline services will be fully maintained and public access for all of the Department's stakeholders will continue to be available at the 16 regional offices. The Department vets, inspectors and technical officers will remain in place at these offices to service our clients across all of the schemes that are provided from our Regional Offices.

In line with my Department's decision to centralise administrative services, administrative functions have already been transferred out of a number of regional offices (notably, Clonakilty and Limerick), without any negative implications for the provision of services to farmer clients. The administrative staff in the Tipperary office will also be transferred to the Garda vetting office shortly. It is not possible for me at this stage to give any indication of the time-frame for the transfer of the administrative functions out of other regional offices, such as Tralee, because this will depend on the availability of opportunities to redeploy the staff concerned to support other critical public services. However, I can assure the Deputy that administrative support work in the local offices will not be transferred to a central office unless the staff concerned can be redeployed to other State services.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

231. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a rural environment protection scheme payment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18213/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person mentioned commenced REPS 4 in June 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. Administrative checks in respect of the 2012 payments have been finalised and the Year 5 75% payment totalling €8611.38 issued on 16th April 2013. The Year 5 25% balancing payment will issue shortly.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

232. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisers in his Department over the last two years. [18305/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In response to the Deputy's question, I have detailed below the information requested in respect of Special Advisors employed in my Department over the last two years.

Name	Title	Current Salary	Salary on appointment
Ross MacMathúna (from 16/01/2012 to date)	Special Advisor to Minister Coveney	€110,000	€110,000

Name	Title	Current Salary	Salary on appointment
Aine Kilroy (from 18/4/2011 – to date)	Special Advisor to Minister Coveney	€86,604	€80,051
Fergal Leamy (from 11/04/2011-09/09/2011)	Special Advisor to Minister Coveney	N/A	€130,000

Mr. MacMathúna was placed on a single point salary scale, while Ms Kilroy was placed on the Principal Officer standard scale in accordance with the Guidelines on Staffing of Ministerial Offices issued from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Since her appointment Ms Kilroy has progressed to the third point of this scale.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

233. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisers pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisers for 2012. [18319/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In response to the Deputy's question, I have detailed below the information requested in respect of Special Advisors employed in my Department and paid above Principal Officer standard scale.

Name	Title	Salary paid in 2012
Ross MacMathuna (from 16/01/2012 to date)	Special Advisor to Minister Coveney	€110,000

The total pay bill for Special Advisors in my Department for 2012 is €110,000.

State Bodies Establishment

234. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of his Department since February, 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18333/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): No new State Bodies have been established since February 2011.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

235. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisors in her Department over the last two years. [18307/13]

236. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide in a tabular format a list of all her special advisors pay and that of her Minister

of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if she will supply the total pay bill for all her special advisors for 2012 [18321/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 235 and 236 together.

As requested by the Deputy, details of the salaries for Special Advisors in my Department are set out in tabular form below. In accordance with Department of Finance instructions on Ministerial appointments, my Advisers were placed on the first point of the Principal Officer standard scale on appointment. The Principal Officer scale provides for annual increments, subject to satisfactory performance and attendance. One of my Advisers is in their third year of tenure and has recently moved to the third point of the scale. My other two advisers are on the second point of the Principal Officer standard scale. There have been no additional salary increases granted since their appointment. The gross cost for the three Special Advisors for 2012 totalled €178,736. This figure is based on gross salaries and Employer's PRSI.

Name	Applicable Salary Scale	WTE (Whole-time Equivalent)	Salary on appointment	Current Salary
Marion Man-nion	Principal Officer standard scale	1	€80,051	€83,337
Jennifer Carroll MacNeill	Principal Officer standard scale	0.5	€40,025	€43,302
William Lavelle	Principal Officer standard scale	0.5	€40,025	€41,669

State Bodies Establishment

237. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of her Department since February, 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned;; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18335/13]

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. Gaisce also comes under the remit of my Department. 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.

I can confirm that no new State Bodies or Agencies have been established within my Department since February, 2011.

As the Deputy may be aware, work is well underway on the establishment of the new Child and Family Agency including the drafting of the required legislation. This piece of important legislation provides for the subsuming of functions from three separate agencies; namely the HSE, and also the Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board which both currently come under the remit of my Department. The legislation will be published shortly and it is my intention that the CFA will assume statutory responsibility for services for children and families in 2013. Once legislation has been enacted, the Agency will formally come under the remit of my Department.

It should be noted that following enactment of the Child Care Amendment Act 2011 the Children's Act Advisory Board was subsequently dissolved by means of the commencement by the Minister of Health of Part 6 of the Child Amendment Act 2011.

Medicinal Products Availability

238. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Health the reason National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics has refused to fund the drug Pirfenidone on financial grounds in view of the fact that Pirfenidone is the only drug available to treat patients with idiopathic lung fibrosis, a progressive terminal lung disease of no known origin, and is therefore a vital life giving medication; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18006/13]

239. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health if he will make available the drug Pirfenidone (details supplied) to patients suffering from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18020/13]

243. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider including pirfenidone on the drug payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18066/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 238, 239 and 243 together.

Following a pharmacoeconomic evaluation of pirfenidone (Esbriet), the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics concluded that, at the submitted price, pirfenidone is not cost-effective for the treatment of patients with mild to moderate idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis.

The HSE is currently in negotiations with the manufacturers of pirfenidone (Esbriet) and therefore it would not be appropriate to comment further while these negotiations are ongoing.

The application to the HSE for the reimbursement of this product under the Community Drugs Schemes is being considered in line with the agreed procedures and timescales for the assessment of new medicines as per the 2012 agreement between the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association, the HSE and the Department of Health.

Hospital Closures

240. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will be announced in relation to the future of Abbeyleix Community Hospital and St. Brigid's Hospital, Shaen, Portlaoise, County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18029/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy is aware, this matter is now being considered within the Department and it is anticipated that an announcement will be made shortly in respect of both Abbeyleix Community Hospital and St Brigid's Hospital, Shaen, County Laois.

National Counselling Service

241. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Health the way the new National Counselling Service will operate; if it is going to be a 24/7 service; the location from which the service will operate; if it will be free; if it will be run by the Health Service Executive or his

Department; when the recruitment drive for new counsellors will start; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18032/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): In 2012, €5m was made available from the special allocation of €35m for mental health to initiate the provision of psychological and counselling services in primary care, specifically for people with mental health problems who are eligible under the General Medical Services Scheme. A further €2.5m was provided for this initiative from the additional €35m provided for mental health in 2013.

The HSE's National Service Plan 2012 provided for the replication nationally of the model operational in the HSE's North East Area, managed by the HSE National Counselling Service, as a way of meeting the requirement to improve access to psychological therapies in Primary Care.

To implement the model nationally, an additional Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) Counsellor Co-ordinator post was allocated to each of the ten HSE National Counselling Services. These Counsellors will be responsible for the set-up, roll out, management, monitoring and evaluation of the Model, including relationship development with GPs in their areas.

All of the Counsellor Co-Ordinator posts have been filled with start dates over the next number of weeks. It is expected that the start date for the service will vary according to when the Counsellor Co-Ordinator takes up the post but it is expected that the first services will be available from the end of the second quarter of this year.

In relation to the specific questions in relation to the Service, as this is a service matter, I have referred the question to the HSE for direct reply.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

242. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider including lung fibrosis on the long-term illness card scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18065/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Long Term Illness Scheme.

Under the Drug Payment Scheme, no individual or family pays more than €144 per calendar month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines. The scheme significantly reduces the cost burden for families and individuals incurring ongoing expenditure on medicines.

In addition, people who cannot, without undue hardship, arrange for the provision of medical services for themselves and their dependants may be entitled to a medical card. In the assessment process, the Health Service Executive can take into account medical costs incurred by an individual or a family. Those who are not eligible for a medical card may still be able to avail of a GP visit card, which covers the cost of general practice consultation.

Question No. 243 answered with Question No. 238.

Respite Care Services

244. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if, in the context of deter-

mination of eligibility for respite care/home help in respect of their child in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly consideration will be given on the basis of their residency within the administrative area of County Kildare as opposed to her postal address for this area of County Kildare; if provision will be made to ensure that investigation into her entitlement proceeds forthwith; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18070/13]

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.

Mobility Allowance Decision

245. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a progress report on the proposed alternative to the mobility aid grant. [18078/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): A special Project Group, which is independently chaired, has been established to seek an alternative method to provide for the priority transport needs of people in a manner that does not run counter to the Equal Status Acts. The Group, who will report to Government next month, have met four times, with the next meeting scheduled for 29th April. The results of the review will be presented to the Government before any final decisions are made on future arrangements. At this stage, I am not in a position to pre-empt the outcome of the review or the decision of the Government.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

246. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide details on the Health Service Executive plans to expand the Emergency Department at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18087/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Medical Card Applications

247. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 6w; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18129/13]

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.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

Health Services Provision

248. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the status of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18130/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Water Fluoridation

249. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the report prepared (details supplied) regarding findings and observations on fluoride by the US National Research Council, examined within the context of a comparison of population health and disease burdens, between the fluoridated Republic of Ireland and non-fluoridated Northern Ireland and Europe; and the steps he intends to take as a result of this research [18163/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The report to which the Deputy refers was not commissioned by the Government or the World Health Organisation. It was received by the Minister in 2012 and referred to the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health for examination. The Expert Body concluded that the report is not reliable. The Expert Body's Appraisal and an Executive Summary of the Appraisal are available on the Expert Body's website, *www.fluoridesandhealth.ie*. The Expert Body is satisfied that water fluoridation, at its optimal level, causes no ill effects to the health of adults or children. The effects of fluoridation on health and related matters are kept under constant review.

Cross-Border Projects

250. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Health his plans to develop the UP4It! project in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18171/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Up4It Programme was a research project funded by CAWT and delivered in four pilot sites of which Cavan and Monaghan under the Border Counties Child Care Network Agency were considered one site. CAWT (Cooperation And Working Together) is a partnership between the Health and Social Care Services in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland, which facilitates cross border collaborative working in health and social care. CAWT only fund programmes and projects within the border counties and therefore Meath was not included in the research phase.

The project is currently being evaluated to measure its effectiveness and examine programme delivery for best efficiency. The HSE is presently exploring whether the project can be sustained in existing areas within current HSE allocations. As the project model relies heavily on existing dietetic staff in both the Departments of Health Promotion and Primary Care, it needs to be further explored for possible adaptations to ensure best value for money whilst ensuring project outcomes. Given the current dietetic resources in Meath, dietetic input will prove difficult, however, other delivery options are being investigated.

The HSE Dublin North East offers a range of initiatives and projects which are targeted specifically at children. These include Smart Start, Be Active After Schools Activity Programme, Family-based Dietetic Clinics and Schools Health Promotion programmes.

Medical Card Applications

251. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card will be issued to a child (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [18194/13]

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.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

Water Fluoridation

252. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he has any major health concerns about unsafe mass medication through fluoridation of water in this State. [18205/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Water fluoridation is the adjustment of a naturally occurring element found in water in order to prevent tooth decay. In 2002 the Forum on Fluoridation, which was established to review this policy, concluded that the fluoridation of public piped water supplies should continue as a public health measure.

The Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health, established in 2004, monitors new and emerging issues on fluoride and its effects. It advises that the balance of scientific evidence worldwide confirms that water fluoridation, at the optimal level, does not cause any ill effects and is the safest and most cost effective method of protecting the oral health of the population. The opinion of the Expert Body is supported by the World Health Organisation, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, the Public Health Service and the Surgeon General of the United States, the World Dental Federation, the International Association for Dental Research, the Royal College of Physicians of England and by major international scientifically validated reviews in many countries. The effects of fluoridation on health and related matters are kept under constant review.

Medical Card Applications

253. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18211/13]

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.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

Medical Card Applications

254. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding medical cards in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18218/13]

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.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

255. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisers in his Department over the last two years. [18314/13]

256. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisers pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisers for 2012. [18328/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 255 and 256 together.

There have been no salary increases for Special Advisers in my Department in the last two years.

The information in respect of pay for 2012 is detailed below:

Minister	Advisor	Wholetime Equivalent	Salary paid in 2012 €
James Reilly	Mark Costigan	1	92,352
-	Maureen Windle	0.66	51,253
-	Sean Faughnan	0.33 *	23,231
Róisín Shortall	Maev-Ann Wren	0.5	33,367

* At date of leaving.

Total pay bill for advisors for 2012 was €221,354 (including severance pay and refund of PRSI).

State Bodies Establishment

257. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of his Department since February, 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18341/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): No new statutory bodies have been established under the aegis of my Department since February, 2011. With regard to bodies currently being planned, the Government is embarking on a major health reform programme which will impact on the number of health agencies overall. The reform programme is a significant undertaking that requires careful planning and sequencing and the final number and shape of health bodies in the health system will be determined by the reform process.

Roads Maintenance

258. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if Kerry County Council sought a specific grant to carry out restoration repair work to the surface of the road at the crossing at the Minish Gates on the N22 Killarney/Cork road in view of the fact that the surface of the crossing is extremely rough; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18210/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Dublin Bus Services

259. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for Dublin Bus to serve Kilcock, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18021/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for Dublin Bus in conjunction with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Taxi Regulations

260. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will review the regulations governing wheelchair accessible taxis; if his attention has been drawn to the implications of these changes for persons with a physical disability, particularly in rural communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18095/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan

Kelly): 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. In the circumstances, there is no change in the vehicle standards required for incumbent licence holders.

An upper age limit has been applied this year for all wheelchair accessible vehicles, along with all other taxis and hackneys. The rule states that all such vehicles exit the SPSV fleet on their 15th birthday. An upper age limit has been introduced for replacement vehicles entering the fleet, such vehicles must not have passed their 10th birthday which is in line and equitable with, all other taxis and hackneys.

New vehicle standards, not retrospectively applied to incumbent operators, have been in place for replacement vehicles since the 1st of January 2012. Single side access is not mandated. Indeed, two-sided access was never mandated either. The new standards allow for certain modern "rear entry" vehicles that would previously not have been capable of being licensed.

Road Projects Issues

261. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there are plans in place to provide funding for the continued upgrade of the N16/A4 route; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18200/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

262. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide details of all pay increases awarded to special advisers in his Department over the last two years. [18318/13]

263. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide in a tabular format a list of all his special advisers' pay and that of his Minister of State, to include each salary, name of employee above principal officer standard scale salary rate; and if he will supply the total pay bill for all his special advisers for 2012. [18332/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 262 and 263 together.

The details of the special advisers in my Department and their pay in 2012 and 2013 is set out in the table below:

Name	Position	Salary in 2012	Salary in 2013
Brian Murphy	Special Advisor	€ 105,837	€ 105,837
Nick Miller	Press Advisor	€ 83,337	€ 86,604
Total	-	€189,174	€ 192,441

There are two special advisers appointed in my Department, Mr Brian Murphy and Mr Nick Miller.

The remuneration of Mr Brian Murphy, who is my Special Advisor, is set at the single point indicated. This was granted on an exceptional basis as he came from a position in the private sector in which he was considerably better paid than now.

Mr Miller is on the incremental Principal Officer salary scale. He moved to the third point of this scale in March 2013.

As the Deputy will be aware, had the Croke Park II proposals been put in place, increments would have been frozen and both would have incurred a substantial pay cut this year as they earn more than €65,000. The Deputy's party actively campaign for a No vote.

Departmental Bodies

264. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of new State bodies that have been established under the aegis of his Department since February, 2011; the number of such bodies subject to a sunset clause; the number of new public bodies currently being planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18344/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): On 31st December 2012, the assets and business of Shannon Airport were transferred from the Dublin Airport Authority to the Shannon Airport Authority (SAA) to allow for the future merger of SAA with a restructured Shannon Development. It is planned to form a new integrated Shannon entity in public ownership at which point SAA will cease to exist as will Shannon Development. There have not been any other new bodies established under this Department's responsibility in the period since February 2011.

In addition, a number of Public Bodies have been merged. Dublin Tourism has been merged with its parent body - Fáilte Ireland. Coaching Ireland has been subsumed into the Irish Sports Council. The Government decided in May 2012 that Shannon Development's tourism functions should transfer to Fáilte Ireland and this process is underway.

Dundalk Port Company was merged with Dublin Port Company on 12 July 2011. Tralee and

18 April 2013

Fenit Harbour Authority transferred to the control of Kerry County Council with effect from 1 October 2011. Baltimore and Skibbereen Harbour and Kinsale Harbour transferred to the control of Cork County Council, while Arklow Harbour transferred to the control of Wicklow County Council, with effect from 1st January 2012. The Board of Harbour Commissioners ceased to exist in each case. The current intention is that the last remaining harbour under the auspices of my Department, Bantry Bay, will be transferred to a more appropriate governance framework over the course of the next year.

Further to the above, there are a number of agencies under the aegis of my Department that are planned to be merged or restructured under the Government's agency rationalisation programme. Details of these can be found on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's website <http://per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Rationalisation-Details.pdf>.