

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 13, inclusive, answered orally.

Commemorative Events

14. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the celebrations he has planned to recognise the centenary of the 1916 Rising; if he will include in the commemoration the events at the Four Courts, Boland's Mill, Beggars Bush, Kilmainham Gaol and other significant areas that need to be recognised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19155/13]

17. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress he has made on preparations for the 100th anniversary of 1916; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19256/13]

20. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the events that will be held to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Irish Volunteers this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19260/13]

28. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in view of the fact that he is chairman of the forthcoming celebrations to recognise the 1916 centenary, his plans to celebrate this date; if he has included in the commemorations the Four Courts, the GPO, the Custom House, Boland's Mill, Beggars Bush, Kilmainham Gaol and other significant areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19156/13]

42. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in the context of the decade of commemorations, his plans to restore Richmond Barracks; and if he will implement the recommendations in the proposal submitted to his office by Dublin City Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19366/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 14, 17, 20, 28 and 42 together.

The Centenary commemorative programme commenced with the anniversary of the 3rd Home Rule Bill in 1912 and, guided by the historic timeline, will continue to address the issues and events of the revolutionary age. The programme will be comprehensive, authentic and inclusive. Against the background of the developing Home Rule crisis, activities in the current year relate to the Centenary of 'The Lockout' and the formation of the Irish Volunteers. Largely organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, a very active programme of events will continue through the year relating to the living and working conditions in Dublin. The

ICTU programme is supported and complemented by initiatives of the national cultural institutions and Dublin City Council, including particularly a major exhibition to open in the National Library this August and the current ‘One City, One Book’ programme promoting the reading of ‘Strumpet City’.

The centenary of the founding of the Irish Volunteers will be marked by exhibitions, presentations, special commemorative issues and official ceremonies in November. The particular arrangements are under development and will be announced shortly.

The Easter Rising and the Proclamation of the Irish Republic will be at the centre of the commemorative programme and will be marked in 2016. In keeping with the development of an authentic programme, all the principal sites relating to the Rising and subsequent events will feature in the commemorations.

I am aware of the significance of Richmond Barracks, especially the former gymnasium used to accommodate prisoners after the Rising. The special opportunity for renewal arising from the commemorations and the contribution it could make to an area regeneration project have been described in meetings with community groups. The possibilities are under consideration in consultation with Dublin City Council.

I take this opportunity to express my appreciation of the support of the members of the Oireachtas Consultation Group on Commemorations and to invite any member of the House to contact me with suggestions or advice.

Irish Language

15. Deputy Seán Crowe asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide an update as to the progress that has been made as regards the commitment in the 20 year strategy to develop at least one physical literacy Irish-language venue or space in Dublin, including facilities such as a CD-DVD bookshop, a programme of literacy events and a coffee shop; if he proposes to ensure that such a venue is established; and if he will provide a timescale for any such initiatives. [19285/13]

39. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress that has been made as regards the proposal in the 20 year strategy to examine the feasibility of introducing a voluntary code for bilingual labelling and packaging of all goods sold here. [19282/13]

41. Deputy Dessie Ellis asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide an update as to the progress that has been made as regards the commitment in the 20 years strategy to develop a modern online stock and order management system, managed by the main distribution agency for CDs, DVDs, books in Irish, where orders may be placed electronically 24-7 and tracked by booksellers, Irish language publishers and individual purchasers awaiting orders; and if he will provide a timescale for the development of such a system. [19289/13]

43. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide an update as to the progress that has been made as regards the commitment in the 20 year strategy to develop initiatives to encourage writing in Irish by young persons in a range of media, including journalism, blogging, creative writing, drama and film scripts; and the supports that have been provided to encourage such writers. [19284/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Din-

ny McGinley: I propose to take Questions Nos. 15, 39, 41 and 43 together.

At the outset, I should remind the Deputies that my Department is charged with implementation of the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 in collaboration and partnership with relevant stakeholders, including agencies directly funded by my Department. In that context, Foras na Gaeilge, an agency of the North/South Language Body, An Foras Teanga, has a key statutory role in provision of resources and supports for the Irish language on an all-island basis.

In regard to the feasibility of introducing a voluntary code for bilingual labelling and packaging of goods, I am pleased to say that Foras na Gaeilge is currently compiling an e-book on best practice in bilingual packaging. The recommendations in this e-book - '*Pacáistíocht Bia agus Dátheangachas: Taighde ar Fhéidearachtaí*' - are based on research commissioned by Foras na Gaeilge and carried out by the Dublin Institute of Technology. The e-book is aimed primarily at private sector companies and will demonstrate how bilingual packaging can be used to a competitive advantage. It is envisaged that the e-book will be available by the end of the year.

In regard to initiatives to encourage young writers in Irish, Foras na Gaeilge funds a range of schemes and provides advice and assistance to young writers/script writers through the funding of workshops, the Irish Writers Centre, drama companies and arts centres. For example, the Blogging Scheme or *Scéim Blagála*, provides transition-year students with the opportunity to read an Irish language book and blog about it, giving rise to lively debates between young people in different geographical regions. This scheme is organised in various Gaeltacht regions under the auspices of Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne. Another example is the *Scriobh Leabhar* project, which provides an opportunity for children to write their own books through Irish and some of these have been published online. This project is run in conjunction with the Áisaonad in Northern Ireland and with Education Centres in this jurisdiction.

In regard to the provision of an Irish language venue, including a bookshop, I should point out that Conradh na Gaeilge, which is funded by Foras na Gaeilge, runs the 'Siopa Leabhar' on Harcourt Street. The venue also provides Irish language resources for teachers, learners and the general public in the same building.

In regard to the development of an online stock and order management system for Irish books and other media, 1980 Bord na Gaeilge established *An Áisíneacht Dáiliúchán Leabhar*, better known as ÁIS, to distribute Irish-language books on a wholesale basis, both nationally and internationally. Following completion of a recent review on the operations of ÁIS, major initiatives are underway to improve the service. These include development of a new web-based information service, in conjunction with Clár na Leabhar Gaeilge, which will be available on the URL 'www.leabhar.ie'. That service will include a trade-end online ordering facility and a facility for publishers to view sales figures. I understand that preparatory work began on this initiative in late 2012 and that the target date for project completion is October 2013.

National Monuments

16. Deputy Michael Moynihan asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the expected timeframe for his decision on the application for planning on 14-17 Moore Street, Dublin 1; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19270/13]

23. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will commission an independent battlefield site assessment to include the 1916 evacuation route and

the area encompassing Moore Street, Moore Lane, Henry Street, the GPO, Upper O'Connell Street and Parnell Street-Rotunda Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19242/13]

27. Deputy Michael Colreavy asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his plans regarding Moore Street and the national monument in view of the recent Dublin City Council report on the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19373/13]

45. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his views on the report of the Dublin City Council Moore Street advisory committee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19241/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 16, 23, 27 and 45 together.

I refer to the reply to Priority Question No. 3 on today's Order Paper.

Question No. 17 answered with Question No. 14.

Irish Language

18. Deputy Michael Colreavy asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in view of the recent criticisms of the conduct of members of An Garda Síochána by an Coimisiún Teanga, the progress that has been made as regards the commitment in the 20 year strategy on the Irish language to strengthen the position of Irish as an internal working language in Gaeltacht areas and among other Irish speaking units in services to the community; and the discussions he has had with the Department of Justice and Equality on same. [19287/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): At the outset, I should point out that the Coimisiún Teanga is independent in the performance of his functions. The Deputy will understand, therefore, that it would not be appropriate for me to express any view in relation to this area of the Coimisiún's work. The Deputy will understand, therefore, that it would not be appropriate for me to express any view in relation to this area of the Coimisiún's work. However, I should point out that the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* recognises the need for the development and strengthening of language awareness and language training programmes so that a higher proportion of public service staff, including members of An Garda Síochána, will have the ability to provide services in Irish to customers, including those located in Gaeltacht areas. In this context, the Strategy proposes that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Public Appointments Service should devise appropriate arrangements over time to increase the cohort of public servants who are functional bilinguals, having regard to the present constraints on public sector recruitment.

The Strategy also provides for these arrangements to be supported by the development, within the existing overall national qualifications framework, of an independent, standards-based accreditation system for Irish language competency within the public service so as to support the delivery of quality services to the public in both Irish and English.

Clearly, the implementation of initiatives such as these would significantly advance the objective of enhancing the delivery of public services in Irish in a satisfactory manner. My Department is in discussion with relevant stakeholders, including the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, with a view to progressing this objective, while taking account of the significant resource restraints at this time. As a first step, my Department recently signed a Ser-

vice Level Agreement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for the provision of Irish language training and proficiency testing for the civil service and certain public service organisations.. The purpose of this agreement is to support staff in developing their proficiency in the Irish language and to enhance the capacity of the civil service and other bodies to provide services in Irish to the public.

I should also point out that in the context of the overall implementation of the Strategy, officials of my Department have conducted bilateral meetings with their colleagues in relevant government departments, including the Department of Justice and Equality, in order to promote the language awareness agenda.

Arts Funding

19. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will publish the report of the working group set up to explore fund-raising opportunities following on from the commitment given in the programme for Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19365/13]

36. Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress that has been made in the implementation of the forum on philanthropy report's recommendations within his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19272/13]

44. Deputy Sandra McLellan asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his views on whether considering the size of the Irish market and the downturn in the economy the focus solely on philanthropy as a source of funding for the arts is realistic and his further views on whether a broad acknowledgement of multiple sources of public and private investment is vital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19363/13]

49. Deputy Seán Crowe asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in view of the commitment given in the programme for Government to work with stakeholders in the arts community to develop proposals aimed at building support of the arts if he will provide a detailed account of the progress made to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19364/13]

132. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which his Department or its subsidiary bodies have attracted private funding for the arts directly or by way of sponsorship; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19705/13]

138. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will outline his proposals to facilitate greater philanthropic funding of the arts and heritage here; if he has discussed any proposals with the Department of Finance to allow for taxation incentives for donations which may help bridge funding gaps in such areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19543/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 19, 36, 44, 49, 132 and 138 together.

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to “work with stakeholders in the Arts community to develop new proposals aimed at building private support of the Arts in Ireland exploring philanthropic, sponsorship or endowment fund opportunities”. To further this objective, in May 2012 I announced the introduction of a new philanthropic initiative on a pilot basis for arts and culture organisations. The initiative - the Philanthropic Leverage Initiative - was designed to encourage philanthropic sponsorship and endowment of the arts from

private sources. The initiative, established with funding of €230,000 for 2012, has provided an incentive to arts organisations to proactively seek new funding relationships with sponsors which deliver private sector financial support, thereby increasing overall funding available to the arts. The initiative was available across projects of varying scale, geography and art forms to not-for-profit organisations for arts programming projects.

The organisations approved for funding under the initiative were required to procure matching philanthropic funds and complete their drawdown from my Department in 2012. Matched funding could come from public funds or from any public sector organisation. At the outset, it was anticipated that a multiple of 2.5 on the pilot initiative funds of €230,000 would result in philanthropic funding of some €800,000 being raised for the arts. The scheme proved very successful with private sector philanthropic donations €4.26 being leveraged for every €1 of public funds. I recently launched a similar initiative for 2013. Full details including application forms are available on my Department's website.

The Philanthropic Leverage Initiative was run in parallel with a second initiative - the Arts Council's RAISE: Building Fundraising Capacity pilot initiative. That initiative will provide one-to-one professional support to eight selected organisations for two years through planning and implementing a tailored fundraising programme. This will help those art organisations build and resource their capacity to attract philanthropic giving. In developing this complementary programme, the Arts Council has identified that it is vital for art groups to develop, agree and implement an effective fundraising strategy and to properly resource that fundraising function.

My Department has also provided support to the Business to Arts organisation for a number of years and, in each of the last three years, this has been allocated to delivery of the New Stream Programme, which builds fundraising skills in the cultural sector in Ireland. The Bank of America Merrill Lynch investment in this project is €400k over three years. In 2010, my Department also awarded a €20,000 grant to Business to Arts for 'Fund it' in 2010 under the Cultural Technology Grants Scheme. Business to Arts initially matched this figure with private funding and since then has attracted additional foundation funds to this project.

There is not now nor has there been any intention that philanthropy could become the sole source of funding for the arts. The allocation to the National Gallery in 2013 is €7.677m. The allocation by my Department to the other National Cultural Institutions is €30.629m.

The State appreciates and values the contribution the arts sector makes to the internationally renowned artistic reputation of this country. As Minister with responsibility for the arts, I believe that, within the current economic constraints, investment in the arts, culture and creative sectors is more important than ever, having regard to the employment intensity and potential of the sector. The arts are a significant contributor and employer in their own right and they are also important building blocks for those economic policies the Government has identified as crucial for our economic recovery.

Government policy on the arts is set out in the Programme for Government. As Minister responsible for the arts and culture sectors, I am committed to securing the best possible funding provision for them during my term in office. Government policy is to promote and strengthen the arts in all its forms, increase access to and participation in the arts, to make the arts an integral and valued part of our national life, and maximise the potential for cultural tourism. Primary responsibility for the promotion of the arts at all levels throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council, which, under the Arts Acts, is independent in its funding decisions. In 2013, the Arts Council will receive an allocation of €60.7 million in current, capital and EU Presidency funding. The allocation to the Irish Film Board is €14.858m.

The Government appreciates the importance of the arts, culture and the creative industries to both our society and our economy. I am fully aware of the challenges for those involved in the arts and culture sectors and of the tremendous work they are doing I am committed to supporting the essential elements of the arts. I will consider publication of the report of the Informal Working Group.

Question No. 20 answered with Question No. 14.

Arts Council Funding

21. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if his attention has been drawn to the recent controversy surrounding the Cork Film Festival and the resignations that followed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19370/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): My Department has no role in funding the Cork Film Festival and I understand that the main funders are Cork City Council and the Arts Council. While the Arts Council receives its overall funding allocation from my Department, decisions on the expenditure of those funds are a matter for the Arts Council itself. Under the Arts Act 2003, I am precluded by law from intervening in the Council's decisions on funding. The allocation to the Arts Council in 2013 is €60.7m.

Arts Plan

22. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will commission a programme of research to identify practical policy goals in relation to the arts as suggested by the national campaign for the arts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19367/13]

26. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will commission a longitudinal study into the arts and the lives of individuals here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19368/13]

47. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will take steps to ensure that there is annual profiling of the funded arts sector and better use of existing and collected data; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19369/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 22, 26 and 47 together.

Government policy on the arts, which is set out in the *Programme for Government*, is to promote and strengthen the arts in all its forms, increase access to and participation in the arts, make the arts an integral and valued part of our national life, and maximise the potential for cultural tourism and job creation in this sector. Primary responsibility for the promotion of the arts at all levels throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council. In 2013, the Arts Council will receive an allocation from my Department of some €60.7 million in current, capital and EU Presidency funding.

The Arts Council's core functions under the Arts Act 2003 are to

- stimulate public interest in the arts;
- promote knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts;

- assist in improving standards in the arts; and
- advise the Minister and other public bodies on the arts.

The Council achieves this by

- providing financial assistance, mainly, but not exclusively, to artists and arts organisations; we also support others who develop and promote the arts;
- offering advice and information on the arts to Government and to others;
- publishing research and information as an advocate for the arts and artists; and undertaking a range of projects to promote and develop the arts, often in partnership with others.

The overview of the Arts Council's strategic approach to supporting the arts is contained in the policy document '*Developing the Arts in Ireland: Arts Council strategic overview 2011-2013*'. This document outlines the Arts Council's remit from Government and, building on the Council's professional expertise and knowledge in the arts, seeks to focus that expertise on the key opportunities and challenges for the arts into the future. The Arts Council's strategic approach has a dual focus on supporting artists and arts organisations and on seeking to increase public engagement and participation in the arts. The Council continues to conduct research into arts practice and participation and this research will inform the Council's strategic plans and its advice to me, as Minister. Full details of research papers are published on the website of the Arts Council at www.artscouncil.ie.

In making funding decisions, the Arts Council will have particular regard for value for money and sustainability, whether applied to a particular organisation, to a strand of work within an area of practice, or to a whole arts area. Value for money is determined according to a range of indicators. Some of these, such as audience numbers or the financial health of an organisation, lend themselves to relatively easy measurement. Others, such as quality of artistic direction or the significance of an organisation for provision in a particular art form, are no less important for being less amenable to measurement. In this way artists and arts organisations are profiled on an ongoing basis by the Arts Council. I have no plans at present to commission a longitudinal study as referred to.

Question No. 23 answered with Question No. 16.

Irish Language

24. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his views on the review of the Official Languages Act; if he will be publishing the submissions to the Act and arrange to have those submissions discussed; and if he will provide a timescale for the publishing of these submissions and the continuation of the review. [19281/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): The Deputy will be aware from the Government's Legislation Programme that it is intended to publish a Bill this year which will include statutory amendments arising from the review of the Official Languages Act 2003. Preparatory work in this regard is currently under way in my Department and I hope to bring the relevant draft Heads of Bill to Government before the summer recess. With regard to the public consultation process, my Department received a total of 1,446 survey responses and 262 submissions during the public consultation process. Analysis of this material has been completed and it is intended to publish the results when the draft Heads of the Bill are being published.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Issues

25. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will discuss the current functioning of the board of Údarás na Gaeltachta; if the board has met yet and in particular if he will make a statement to Dáil Éireann on the representation of Donegal County Council on the board of Údarás; and if he will provide a timescale as to when all places on the board of the Údarás are likely to be filled. [19291/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): I understand that the board of Údarás na Gaeltachta held its first meeting in December 2012 and that it has met on three occasions since then. The nomination of Donegal County Council of a person to be appointed as a member of Údarás na Gaeltachta has not been ratified pending the outcome of enquiries regarding certain allegations that have been made. The timescale for the filling of this vacancy is dependent on the result of the aforementioned enquiries.

Question No. 26 answered with Question No. 22.

Question No. 27 answered with Question No. 16.

Question No. 28 answered with Question No. 14.

Departmental Agencies Board Appointments

29. Deputy Charlie McConologue asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the time frame for the appointment of a director of the National Museum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19277/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The competition for the appointment of a director of the National Museum of Ireland is being managed by the Public Appointments Service. It is envisaged that the interviews for this post will take place in the coming weeks. The timeframe for the appointment by the Board of the National Museum is a function, *inter alia*, of that interview process, and it would not be appropriate to set out that timeline at this juncture in order to assure the integrity of the process.

Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

30. D'fhiografiaigh Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta mar gheall ar an Straitéis Fiche Bliain; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [19244/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Aithnítear sa *Straitéis 20-Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030* go bhfuil gá le cur chuige céimneach chun bearta éagsúla na Straitéise a chur i gcrích. I gcomhréir leis an gcur chuige seo, tá obair leanúnach ar siúl chun raon leathan gníomhaíochtaí faoin Straitéis a chur i bhfeidhm. Déanann mo Roinn é seo i gcomhar leis na páirtithe leasmhara éagsúla, ar a n-áirítear ach go háirithe, an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, Foras na Gaeilge agus Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Ós rud é go bhfuil an lárfhreagracht ar mo Roinn don Straitéis, tugadh faoi chéim an bhunaithe di a chur i gerích in 2011 nuair a díríodh ar dhaoine a chur ar an eolas faoin Straitéis agus

ar bhunú na struchtúr eagraíochtúil agus oibríochtúil. Tugadh túis áite do ghnóthaí reachtaíochta in 2012 le hachtú Acht na Gaeltachta a thugann bunús reachtúil do chóras pleánala teanga, taobh istigh agus taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht, agus a thugann ról lárnach sa phleanáil teanga d'Údarás na Gaeltachta agus d'Fhoras na Gaeilge.

Tá tosaíocht á tabhairt faoi láthair d'ullmhú na reachtaíochta tánaistí faoi Acht na Gaeltachta 2012. Is faoin reachtaíocht seo a shonrófar na critéir pleánala teanga a bheidh mar bhunús chun pleannana Gaeilge a cheadú do Limistéir Pleánala Teanga, Bailte Seirbhise Gaeltachta agus Líonraí Gaeilge. Chomh maith leis sin, tá céimeanna sa treis chun tuarascáil a fhoilsíú go luath a chuimseoidh an dul chun cinn atá déanta ag na páirtithe leasmhara éagsúla maidir le forfheidhmiú na Straitéis go dáta.

Waterways Ireland Remit

31. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will ensure that Waterways Ireland will respect the rights of citizens who have lived on residential barges in Lowtown, County Kildare, for more than a decade. [19163/13]

38. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the dealings he has had with Waterways Ireland in relation to the Lowtown Marina, County Kildare, with particular reference to safeguarding the homes of boat dwellers who have resided there for more than a decade. [19164/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 31 and 38 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the issues referred to relate to operational day to day matters for Waterways Ireland, for which I have no direct responsibility. However, the Deputy can be assured that Waterways Ireland respects the rights of all users of the navigations under its remit. I am advised by Waterways Ireland that it has carried out significant improvements in the Lowtown area over the last number of years. A new amenity block, including toilets and showers, has been provided, as well as new moorings and other facilities. Some of the moorings at Lowtown have access to electricity, water and lighting and Waterways Ireland would encourage all boat permit holders in the area to avail of these facilities. Boat dwellers can be accommodated on the new moorings under an Extended Mooring Permit.

Waterways Ireland has also endeavoured to regularise the ownership and lease arrangements at Lowtown Marina and it continues to work closely with the owners of the adjacent boat yard in that regard. I am informed that unsafe moorings currently in place there have to be removed, for health and safety reasons.

I am advised that throughout this period when works were planned and underway, Waterways Ireland communicated updates on developments by letter to all permit holders, including barge dwellers, with regard to mooring locations and extended mooring permits. It also responded to queries from a number of individual barge dwellers by email, letter, phone and onsite meetings. In addition, press releases were issued to local media. This approach to communicating with stakeholders will continue.

National Parks Closures

32. Deputy John Halligan asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will

provide a full list of national parks that are closed due to renovations or lack of funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19428/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): All national parks are open and operational. However, it should be noted that Killarney House, located within Killarney National Park, is currently closed for renovations. A major refurbishment programme for Killarney House and its ornamental grounds and gardens is underway. The House is being developed as the main visitor and interpretative centre for the National Park, while the gardens will be restored to their former glory. It is expected substantive works on both the House and Gardens will progress in the latter half of 2013, with completion planned for 2014.

Museum Projects

33. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in view of the growth in tourism from Asia and the fact that a world famous collection of Tibetan paintings is housed at Collins Barracks, and that Dublin also has the Chester Beatty Library, his plans to establish a museum of Asian art in Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19376/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): There are no plans to establish a Museum of Asian Art in Dublin as the collection of the Chester Beatty Library includes among its other material one of the finest Asian art collections in Europe and may not be disassembled. The Tibetan art in the important Albert Maurice Bender collection in the National Museum was donated to the Museum in 1932 by Bender in memory of his mother. It would be not be in keeping with the wishes of the donor to disassemble this collection either.

Irish Language

34. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of language plans that have been agreed as regards languages planning areas under the Gaeltacht Act 2012; if he will itemise these areas with agreed plans on a county basis; the resources being put in place to support the establishment and implementation of such plans; and his plans in relation to agreed language planning areas which have yet to put a plan in place. [19293/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): The Gaeltacht Act 2012 was enacted in July 2012. It is intended that the initial Orders and Regulations, associated with the language planning process prescribed in the Act, will be made by June 2013. It is at that stage that communities will be officially invited to prepare language plans under the Act. However, initial steps have been taken by Údarás na Gaeltachta with a view to commencing the language planning process with organisations and communities in the areas concerned. Among the main measures being implemented in this regard are:

- the classification of Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas; and
- the development of a system for selecting community organisations to draw up and implement language plans for the various Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas.

These language plans will be prepared in accordance with language planning criteria to be specified in the regulations. This approach puts the communities at the heart of the language planning process since it gives them the opportunity to take ownership of their own plan in

their own community. As regards funding, a sum of €3.4m has been allocated to Údarás na Gaeltachta for 2013 in relation to language-based activities in the Gaeltacht and the promotion of the language planning process in particular. An amount in excess of €8.2m has also been made available to my Department for 2013 to fund various Irish Language support schemes in the Gaeltacht.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Issues

35. D'fhiabhráigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cé mhéad plean teanga atá réitithe ag eagraíochtaí pobaíl, cé mhéad airgid atá curtha ar fáil chun na pleannána a chur i gcrích; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [19243/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Danny McGinley): Mar is eol don Teachta, is gá, chun críche alt 7(3) d'Acht na Gaeltachta 2012, na Limistéir Pleanála Teanga sa Ghaeltacht a fhógaírt go poiblí. Tá an réamhullmhúchán ina leith sin á dhéanamh faoi láthair i gcomhar le hÚdarás na Gaeltachta.

Tá ráite ag an Údarás nach foláir a bheith ag tabhairt túis áite don ghné teangeolaíoch sa dáileadh seo. Dá bhrí sin, beidh an dáileadh atá á mholadh bunaithe ar staid reatha na teanga agus ar shaineolas agus taithí feidhmeannaigh an Údarás a bhíonn ag plé le pobal na Gaeltachta ar an talamh, tar éis dóibh a bheith i dteagmháil leis na pobail atá i gceist.

Tá obair ullmhúcháin idir lámha ag an Údarás chomh maith chun córas cuí a aimsiú faoina roghnófar eagraíochtaí a thabharfaidh faoi phleananna teanga a ullmhú agus a fheidhmiú i gcomhar leis an phobal sna Limistéir Pleanála Teanga. Ní miste a rá go dtabharfar deis do gach uile ceantar Gaeltachta a bheith rannpháirteach sa phróiseas pleanála teanga.

Maidir le hacmhainní airgid, tá allúntas reatha de €3.4m ag Údarás na Gaeltachta i mbliana atá le caitheamh ar ghniomhaíochtaí teanga sa Ghaeltacht agus ar an bpróiseas pleanála teanga ach go háirithe. Ina theannta sin, tá soláthar reatha agus caipítil gur fiú os cionn €8.2m san ionlán ag mo Roinn féin le caitheamh sa Ghaeltacht i mbliana. Tá an soláthar airgid sin á chaitheamh ar raon beartas agus scéimeanna atá thíos ar an nGaeilge a neartú mar theanga pobail agus teaghlaigh sa Ghaeltacht.

Ar ndóigh, is Straitéis 20 Bliain ata i gceist agus is féidir leis an Teachta a bheith cinnte de go leanfar ag glacadh go córasach leis na céimeanna cuí chun cur i bhfeidhm ionlán an Acharta a chinntíú, lena n-áirítear gach gné a bhaineann leis an bpleanáil teanga sa Ghaeltacht, agus go leanfar ag féachaint chuige go bhfaightear an luach is fearr is féidir ar airgead don Státhiste.

Question No. 36 answered with Question No. 19.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Relocation Options

37. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of bog relocations that have been completed; the number where an alternative location has been sourced that will meet the demand for relocation; the number where alternatives have yet to be sourced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19166/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Arrangements for the relocation of turf cutters to non-designated bogs have been made as regards a group from Clara Bog special area of conservation in County Offaly and a group from Car-

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rownagappul Bog and Curraghlehanagh Bog special areas of conservation in County Galway. The group from Clara Bog commenced turf cutting at the relocation site in Killeranny, County Offaly, in June last, where 23 qualifying turf cutters have now been accommodated.

Progress has been made with a view to the relocation of turf cutters from Ballynafagh Bog special area of conservation in County Kildare to Timahoe North, County Kildare, which is in the ownership of Bord na Móna. My Department envisages that qualifying turf cutters from Ballynafagh Bog will be able to commence cutting in the relocation site during this turf cutting season provided that final agreement is reached with relevant cutters.

I am advised that of the remaining 49 raised bog special areas of conservation, potential relocation sites have been identified for a further 32 bogs and work is ongoing on identifying and investigating sites. Relocation is unlikely to be required, or is likely to be small-scale, for another 16 raised bog special areas of conservation due, for example, to the small number that had been cutting turf on these sites during the relevant five year period and would qualify for the relocation option available under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme.

A payment of €1,500, index-linked, or a supply of 15 tonnes of cut turf per annum is available under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme to applicants while awaiting relocation to non-designated bogs.

Question No. 38 answered with Question No. 31.

Question No. 39 answered with Question No. 15.

Coillte Teoranta Harvesting Rights Sale

40. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he is concerned and if he is being consulted on the possible implications in terms of our national heritage of the sale of public forests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19427/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As the Deputy will appreciate, general responsibility for matters relating to publicly owned forestry rests with my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food. As Minister with responsibility for heritage matters, I have an interest in relation to afforestation and impacts on, inter alia, archaeological remains, biodiversity and landscape issues. I make my views known on proposals in which I have an interest in the appropriate way as a member of the Government.

Question No. 41 answered with Question No. 15.

Question No. 42 answered with Question No. 14.

Question No. 43 answered with Question No. 15.

Question No. 44 answered with Question No. 19.

Question No. 45 answered with Question No. 16.

Líomhaintí Drochúsáide

46. D'fhiabhráigh **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** den Aire Ealaón, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an ndearna sé aon fhiosrú faoi na líomhaintí in aghaidh duine (sonraí tugtha) agus faoin éifeacht atá ag an scéal sin ar na coláistí Gaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [19246/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Dírím aird an Teachta ar an bhfreagra a thug mé inniu ar Cheist Tosaíochta Uimh 2.

Maidir leis an éifeacht a bheidh ag an scéal seo ar thinreamh na gcúrsaí i mbliana, tá mo Roinn ag plé le hiarratais ar aitheantas do na cúrsaí óna Coláistí Gaeilge faoi láthair agus ní léir go bhfuil aon laghdú ar na hiarratais sin ó bhliain ar bith eile. Ar ndóigh, ní bheidh figiúirí ar fáil ar an lín foghlaimeoirí a fhreastalóidh go dtí níos déanaí sa bhliain ach beidh mo Roinnse ar fáil le cuidiú leis na Coláistí nó le CONCOS ar aon bhealach gur féidir.

Question No. 47 answered with Question No. 22.

Tourism Promotion

48. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the steps he is taking to promote the potential of genealogy tourism; his views that a more centralised approach to record keeping would assist its development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19165/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Genealogy is an important way of connecting with those abroad who wish to trace their roots and also permitting those here in Ireland to establish their family history. It is also an important element of the country's cultural tourism product as a means of encouraging the Irish diaspora to visit the land of their ancestors. The Government, at my instigation and cognisant of its commitments under the Programme for Government, recently agreed a national genealogy policy.

In Ireland, the situation regarding genealogical research is complicated for historical reasons. Few records have survived compared to other countries. The fire in the Public Record Office complex in the Four Courts during the Irish Civil War (1922-1923) resulted in the severe damage and destruction of many records and impaired the range of records available for genealogical purposes. It is very important that the genealogy records which exist are presented in a way that is easy to use and understand and readily accessible. The national genealogy policy aims to bring some coherence to this area.

As part of the policy, I have recently launched the updated website www.irishgenealogy.ie incorporating a web portal. The new web portal will enable visitors to the site to search genealogy records from a number of online sources particularly in the State sector. A link will then bring the user directly to the results of the search. Now for the first time, one search on www.irishgenealogy.ie will inform the user whether relevant records are available in a number of online sources such as the Church Records currently available on www.irishgenealogy.ie, Tithe Appointments, Griffiths Valuations and the 1901 and 1911 Census records. The improved search capabilities of this website are part of my Department's contribution to the Government's Gathering Initiative. It is hoped that this site will contribute to genealogical tourism by making easier for the Diaspora to connect with their heritage. It is also hoped that the enhanced website will help to simplify the way that the State presents genealogy records.

As the Deputy may be aware, there are a wide variety of organisations that already provide valuable services to those seeking information on their ancestry. My Department would be happy to discuss the provision of a searched link from the webportal on www.irishgenealogy.ie to allow users to search the websites of those organisations. I believe that this would benefit all users and bodies by simplifying the genealogy landscape.

Question No. 49 answered with Question No. 19.

The Gathering Initiatives

50. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which he has availed of The Gathering as a vehicle for the encouragement, promotion and development of the arts here and Irish arts and culture worldwide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19239/13]

130. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if any particular emphasis has been placed on offering assistance towards local based community groups involved in various productions associated with The Gathering; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19703/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 50 and 130 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, The Gathering initiative undertaken by my colleague, Leo Varadkar TD, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, has the support of my Department and the agencies under my Department's remit.

A range of actions being taken to support The Gathering were outlined in my replies to Questions No. 117 and 120 of 13 March 2013, No. 13 of 30 January 2013 and Question No 16 of 28 November 2012.

The national cultural institutions under the auspices of my Department have prepared a comprehensive response to The Gathering. As outlined previously, the Arts Council is playing an ongoing key role in funding and developing arts events around the country during 2013. In terms of the Gaeltacht, Údarás na Gaeltachta has a dedicated scheme to support traditional festivals in the Gaeltacht and this year placed particular emphasis on activities aimed at attracting visitors to Ireland as part of The Gathering. Tourists arriving as part of The Gathering, particularly those from amongst the 70 million people abroad who claim Irish ancestry, will be particularly interested in heritage sites.

Culture Ireland operates as part of my Department, promoting Irish arts worldwide. For 2013 Culture Ireland has worked with Irish artists to promote The Gathering, while highlighting the excellence of Irish arts and creativity. It was a condition of funding imposed by my Department's Culture Ireland Division that all artists travelling abroad this year encourage their audiences to embrace The Gathering initiative.

I am committed to availing of every possible opportunity to project a positive global image for Ireland and am particularly conscious in the context of 2013 being the year of The Gathering initiative. In summary, therefore, I consider that a substantial contribution to The Gathering is underway in both the cultural and heritage areas.

European Council Meetings

51. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the issues discussed at the most recent European Union Foreign Affairs Council meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19663/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I attended the most recent meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 22 April.

In her opening remarks, High Representative Ashton provided an update on the latest round

of the Serbia/Kosovo dialogue which took place on 17-18 April. She welcomed the agreement reached between the two parties on a number of outstanding issues which – it is hoped – will facilitate the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina and which goes a long way towards fulfilling the conditions for progress on their respective European paths. The High Representative also updated Ministers on the latest round of the E3+3 talks on Iran, held in Almaty on 5-6 April, and gave a brief overview of recent developments in DPRK. In addition, she referred briefly to the situation in Mali, noting the progress made with regard to the EU training mission (EUTM Mali) which has been up and running since 2 April and in which eight members of the Defence Forces are participating. The Council adopted comprehensive conclusions on Mali which, inter alia, welcomed the Malian Government's commitment to implementing the “roadmap” for the transition and organising free, credible and transparent elections in July.

Under the Southern Neighbourhood heading, the Council had a comprehensive exchange of views on the situation in Syria. I and other colleagues reiterated the urgent need to arrive at a political settlement to the two-year old crisis and expressed our full support for Special Envoy Brahimi in his efforts to promote this. The Council agreed to ease certain EU sanctions against Syria including the oil embargo, with a view both to helping the civilian population and supporting the opposition. Ministers also briefly discussed the difficulties faced by neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan in the context of the ongoing crisis in Syria and its humanitarian consequences. In my own intervention I highlighted the predicament of the rapidly growing Syrian refugee population and mentioned in this regard my visit to a Syrian refugee camp during my recent visit to Turkey. High Representative Ashton also gave a short debriefing on a visit she paid recently to Egypt, where growing political and social tensions are a source of serious concern.

Under the Eastern Partnership heading, the Council took stock of preparations for an Eastern Partnership Ministerial meeting which is scheduled for Brussels in July and which will prepare the ground for the Eastern Partnership Summit in November in Vilnius.

Finally, the Council discussed Myanmar/Burma. Ministers welcomed the advances being made so far towards democracy and congratulated the Government on this progress. In recognition of reforms already implemented, the Council agreed to lift all sanctions against Myanmar/Burma with the exception of the arms embargo, which has been extended for one year. This decision is just one step in our developing relationship with Burma/Myanmar as it pursues democracy and reform. We recognise the significant challenges that remain, not least with regard to political prisoners, inter-communal violence and humanitarian access. Ireland and its EU partners stand ready to assist Myanmar/Burma as it continues with the efforts it is making towards political, economic and social transition.

European Council Meetings

52. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if any new initiatives were discussed at the most recent European Union Foreign Affairs Council meeting in relation to Syria, particularly in relation to humanitarian issues in that region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19664/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Syria was the major issue discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg on 22 April, which I attended. The focus was on the rapidly deteriorating situation in the country and on what further steps the EU can take to support the ongoing efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict and mitigate its impact on the civilian population. Against the background of relentless fighting between the Syrian army and opposition groups, it is increasingly evident

that a negotiated solution is the only realistic option to bring about an end to the appalling violence and daily atrocities (which have so far cost well over 70,000 lives) and to start a genuine process of political transition. These objectives remain central to the mission of the UN/Arab League Joint Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi who made clear, when he briefed the UN Security Council on 19 April, that the choice faced by Syria is either a destructive fight to the finish or a negotiated political resolution.

The Foreign Affairs Council on 22 April reiterated its full support for Mr. Brahimi's efforts as well as for the initiative taken by the former President of the National Syrian Coalition, Dr Al Khatib, to bring about political dialogue among all Syrians leading to a peaceful transition.

EU sanctions are essential in maintaining strong pressure on the Syrian authorities so as to persuade them to stop their campaign of repression and brutality against the Syrian people. Over recent weeks, including at the informal Ministerial meeting I co-hosted with High Representative Ashton in Dublin on 22/23 March, the Council has been discussing these sanctions in detail. Consideration has also been given to other, non-military ways in which the secular and moderate opposition can be supported and much needed relief and basic services provided to the population. In this regard, I welcome the decision by the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 April to ease a series of economic restrictive measures, notably in the oil sector, so as to allow for possible trade in this sector with areas now controlled by the Syrian National Coalition.

The humanitarian situation in Syria is reaching catastrophic levels, with the United Nations now estimating that 6.8 million people within Syria are in urgent need of assistance, 4.25 million of whom are displaced inside the country. The widespread and indiscriminate violence has also forced an additional 1.3 million people to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. After over two years of conflict, the coping mechanisms of those affected by the crisis are severely depleted and the ability of neighbouring countries to absorb further refugees is close to breaking point.

In this context, Ireland is making its voice heard. Earlier this month, I saw first-hand the terrible suffering being endured by people who are forced to flee the violence when I visited Syrian refugee camps in Turkey. My colleague, Minister of State Joe Costello, had previously visited refugee camps in Jordan last August. I briefed my colleagues on the Council this week on my impressions and, in discussion around the table, we voiced shared concerns about the overall humanitarian situation, including the issue of humanitarian access. I have insisted that aid organisations must be immediately granted safe and unimpeded access to those in need in all areas of Syria and that all parties to the conflict must also desist from attacking medical and educational facilities and personnel.

In line with the UN Security Council's call on 19 April, Ireland is also urging member States to fulfil pledges made at the International Humanitarian Pledging Conference in Kuwait in January without delay, as the current shortfall in funding severely undermines the humanitarian response. Ireland has already contributed some €8.15 million in emergency assistance in response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

The conflict in Syria will remain a major priority for us at all levels of our international engagement. We will use the influence available to us in our current EU Presidency role to support European and UN efforts and initiatives towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Northern Ireland Issues

53. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

if he will outline the most recent discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Secretary of State and members of the Northern Ireland Executive in relation to parades during 2013, particularly in view of the difficulties in December and January with non-notified parades; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19662/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I have discussed the upcoming marching season, including the role of the Parades Commission, in the context of non-notified parades, with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Theresa Villiers on a number of occasions. I have also discussed these issues in regular ongoing contacts with the party leaders in Northern Ireland, and most recently in Washington DC with the First and Deputy First Ministers. I will be raising this issue when I meet with the Northern Ireland Secretary of State and members of the Northern Ireland Executive next Monday 29 April. In addition, officials in my Department are in contact with the Northern Ireland Office regarding parades on an ongoing basis. I think it is important to put right the view that there is a legislative vacuum around non-notified parades, as has been suggested in the context of the flags protest. This is not the case, as is illustrated by the fact that over 200 people have been charged with a variety of offences since those protests began.

There is however an ongoing debate regarding the extent, if any, to which existing legislation needs to be strengthened to enhance the remit of the Parades Commission in these matters. There is no cross community consensus on this matter. Indeed, some unionist community representatives, far from wanting the Commission's role extended, want it abolished completely. What is important at present is that where the Parades Commission has jurisdiction, all parties cooperate with it and respect its determinations. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I are fully in agreement on this issue. Furthermore, we are agreed that the police should be fully supported in their attempts to maintain public order.

Property Taxation Exemptions

54. Deputy Michael Creed asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm that the exemption from the local property tax for properties purchased by first-time buyers between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2013 extends to those who build their own home during this period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19562/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the exemption from Local Property Tax under section 8 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, for properties purchased between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2013, which relates to first time buyers, would apply to an individual who built his or her own home during this period, provided the person meets the qualifying conditions, including that s/he occupies the property as a sole or main residence. I am also advised that where construction of the residential property is not completed by 1 May 2013, i.e., it is at a stage that the property is not suitable for use as a dwelling, the property in question would not be liable for Local Property Tax until 2017.

Tax Code

55. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Finance if a person in receipt of maternity benefit, but no other top-up payment from their employer, will have their maternity benefit taxed as a result of recent changes implemented by the Government. [19639/13]

63. Deputy Ciarán Lynch asked the Minister for Finance if it his intention to tax maternity

benefit payments; if mothers who are not in receipt of full employer top-up payments will be disproportionately affected (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19623/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 55 and 63 together.

It is a general principle of taxation that, as far as possible, income from all sources should be subject to taxation. In line with this principle, the majority of social welfare payments are reckonable as income for tax purposes. These include long-term payments such as Disablement Benefit, the State Pension, Widows, Invalidity and Blind Pensions, Carers Allowance and the One Parent Family Payment, as well as short term benefits such as Job Seekers Benefit. Treating these payments as income for tax purposes is essentially a matter of equity.

As a result of maternity benefit payments becoming liable to income tax for all claimants, from 1 July 2013, a number of possible tax outcomes could arise:

1. An individual may pay no income tax on their maternity benefit payment as their tax credits will be sufficient to reduce their tax liability to zero.
2. An individual may pay income tax on some or all of their maternity benefit payment solely at the standard rate.
3. An individual may pay income tax at the standard rate on a portion of the maternity benefit and the higher rate on the balance of the maternity benefit payment.
4. An individual may pay income tax on all of their maternity benefit payment at the higher rate.

I am fully aware that some employers do not pay a top up payment to their employees whilst on maternity leave. However, in such circumstances many mothers will not be subject to income tax on their maternity benefit payments as their personal credits will ensure that no tax arises on the social welfare income itself. Of course, the extent, if any, to which taxation actually arises in a given case depends on the level of income that a recipient has in a tax year. Accordingly, the tax liability on maternity benefit payments will ultimately depend on the total income of the individual or couple concerned in the tax year or years concerned.

There are situations currently where an employee continues to be paid by her employer, while on maternity leave and, based on her PRSI contributions, is entitled to Maternity Benefit from the Department of Social Protection. The non-taxation of such benefit currently results in an employee having a greater net take-home pay for the period of maternity benefit, than if she was at work.

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

I would point out though, that maternity benefit payments will remain exempt from Universal Social Charge and PRSI.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

56. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide in tab-

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ular form the number of civil/public servants under the remit of his Department who earn more than €500,000, between €400,000 and €500,000, €300,000 and €400,000, €250,000 and €300,000, €200,000 and €250,000, €150,000 and €200,000, €100,000 and €150,000, €80,000 and €100,000, €60,000 and €80,000, €40,000 and €60,000, €30,000 and €40,000, and less than €30,000. [19498/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The following table sets out the salary bands in respect of my Department.

Earnings Band	Number of employees
0-10K	26
10-20K	19
20-30K	72
30-40K	72
40-50K	40
50-60K	36
60-70K	3
70-80K	34
80-90K	33
90-100K	10
100-115K	9
125-150K	6
150K-200K	2
200K-250K	1
> 250K	0

The Revenue Commissioners have provided me with the following information in relation to the earnings of Revenue staff serving on 31/12/2012. The figures are net of any voluntary surrender of salary under Section 483 of the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997.

Earnings band in 2012 (€k)	Number of employees
> 200	0
150-200	3
100-150	74
80-100	179
60-80	600
40-60	2,383
30-40	1,546
<30	1,335

The table for the Appeals Commissioners is as follows:

Earnings band in 2012 (€k)	Number of employees
> 200	0
150-200	2
100-150	0
80-100	0
60-80	0
40-60	1
30-40	0
<30	2

Details for the **Disabled Drivers Scheme** are as follows:

1 WTE earns between €150,000 - €200,000

1 WTE earns between €40,000 - € 60,000

Details for the **Irish Fiscal Advisory Council** are as follows:

Number of persons between €100,000 – €80,000: 1 person

Number of persons between €60,000 – €40,000: 2 people

National Treasury Management Agency

The National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) provides asset and liability management services to Government. Businesses managed by the NTMA include borrowing for the Exchequer and management of the National Debt, the State Claims Agency, the New Economy and Recovery Authority, the National Pensions Reserve Fund and the National Development Finance Agency. It assigns staff to the National Asset Management Agency and also provides it with business and support services and systems. All NAMA staff are employees of the NTMA.

The NTMA business model is specifically designed to carry out commercial and market-facing functions while being funded from the Exchequer (except in the case of NAMA which reimburses the NTMA from income generated). Under the NTMA business model, its remuneration structure is such that there are no general pay grades and no pay scales and all staff are on individually-negotiated contracts.

The NTMA publishes information on salaries by salary band in its Annual Report. The 2012 Annual Report is scheduled for publication in July 2013. Salary band information was updated by the NTMA in information provided to the Dail Public Accounts Committee last December. That information is set out below

NTMA Salaries by Salary Band 31 October 2012

-	NTMA (excluding NAMA)	NAMA	Total
Up to €50,000	92	26	118
€50,001 to €100,00	122	108	230
€100,001 to €150,000	34	71	105
€150,001 to €200,000	14	18	32
€200,001 to €250,000	3	1	4
€250,001 to €300,000	5	1	6
€300,001 to €400,000	2	2	4
€400,001 to €500,000	1	0	1
Total	273	227	500

Notes: The public service pension deduction is applied to NTMA employees.

All fifteen NTMA employees whose salaries exceeded €200,000 agreed to the Minister for Finance's request of December 2011 that they waive 15% of salary or such amount of salary as exceeds €200,000 if application of the full 15% reduction would bring their salary to below €200,000. These reductions are reflected in the above table.

Vehicle Registration Tax

57. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance the grounds on which a person (details supplied) in County Donegal was fined €1,500 for release of a seized car on 25 February 2011; if those grounds are still valid; and if they have the right to reclaim this money in view of the fact that they were not given due notice. [19558/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that this vehicle was detained by a member of an Garda Síochána under the provisions of Section 140(3) Finance Act, 2001, as it was being driven by a State resident and there was reasonable suspicion that an offence had been committed. An authorised Officer of the Revenue Commissioners questioned the driver who admitted having possession of the vehicle for one year and failing to register the vehicle in the State on payment of Vehicle Registration Tax. The vehicle was subsequently seized under the provisions of Section 141 Finance Act, 2001. It is an offence, under Section 139 of the Finance Act, 1992 to be in possession of an unregistered vehicle in the State unless the person found in possession of it is a person whose normal residence is outside the State or the vehicle is the subject of an exemption. A person who is not an authorised person who brings a non-State registered vehicle into the State, which is not exempt, is required to complete the registration of the vehicle not later than 30 days following its arrival in the State.

The authority to levy penalties in relation to seized vehicles is provided for under the provisions of Section 144 of the Finance Act, 2001. The penalty normally applied is 10% of the *open market selling price* (OMSP) of the vehicle where the vehicle has remained in the State as unregistered for a period up to 6 months. If the period is greater, then an additional penalty is applied i.e. 5% of the previous penalty for each month or part of a month that the vehicle has remained unregistered since registration was due. In this case, the Revenue official confirmed that the OMSP of the vehicle was €15,166. The Officer, using discretion, applied the 10% compromise penalty only and called for €1,500 to secure the release of the seized vehicle. It was correctly seized and the compromise penalty paid was accepted in lieu of forfeiture of the vehicle and institution of legal proceedings.

Due notice of seizure is not required and the Revenue Commissioners are satisfied that the seizure was correct.

Carbon Tax Implementation

58. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Finance his views on carbon tax (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19582/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The carbon tax has been in place for all fuels other than solid fuels since 2010. As I was aware of the potential impact on lower income households, I chose not to introduce the carbon tax on solid fuels until after this winter period and I opted to introduce the tax in two phases i.e. €10 per tonne of CO₂ from 1 May 2013 and a further €10 per tonne of CO₂ from 1 May 2014 thus bringing the carbon tax on solid fuels in line with that on all other fossil fuels i.e. at €20 per tonne of CO₂. The net effect of the €10

carbon tax from 1 May 2013 will be approximately €1.20 on a 40kg bag of coal and 26 cents on a bale of briquettes.

Data Protection

59. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 354 of 16 April 2013, if he make available a copy of the submission from a person (details supplied) stating their disapproval of a provision in the 2011 Finance Act, section 77, paragraphs 4 to 6. [19594/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As I stated in my previous reply to the Deputy on this matter I am aware of the issue raised. It has been under discussion between my officials, Revenue and the ODCE who are cooperating to implement an appropriate solution. Apart from direct contact between staff of the ODCE and my Department, the matter has also been noted in the 2011 Annual Report of the ODCE (page 15), available on their website. Therefore the issue, and the concerns of the former Director, are already in the public domain.

My Department does not have a record of a communication on this subject sent directly from Mr. Appleby to myself. Should the Deputy have any information that she wishes to make available to me I would be pleased to receive it.

Property Taxation Exemptions

60. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the method by which home owners with pyrite may secure an exemption from payment of the local property tax. [19595/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As I advised in response to Parliamentary Question No. 85 on 17 April, Section 10A of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) provides for a temporary exemption of at least three consecutive years from the charge to Local Property Tax (LPT) for residential properties that have been certified as having “significant pyritic damage”. The methodology for the assessment of dwellings to establish significant pyritic damage will be prescribed in regulations to be made by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. I understand that the regulations are currently being finalised and will be published shortly.

I am advised by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government that homeowners will be required to demonstrate significant pyritic damage in accordance with the recently published standard by the National Standards Authority of Ireland, *IS 398 – Reactive Pyrite in sub-floor hardcore material – Part 1*. This standard provides guidance on the building condition assessment, sampling and testing to be carried out to establish the presence of significant pyritic damage. To be eligible for an exemption from the LPT, a homeowner must obtain a certificate, from a competent person, confirming the presence of significant pyritic damage on the basis of a building condition assessment and having regard to the outcome of the testing and classification of the sub-floor hardcore material carried out in accordance with I.S. 398. Eligibility for an exemption will be determined by reference to the presence of significant pyritic damage in the relevant property concerned. Conscious of the need to reduce costs to affected homeowners, I understand that provision will be made in the Regulations being made by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government for the use, where feasible, of test results from sampling and testing undertaken to classify the sub-floor hardcore material prior to the publication of I.S. 398. Such testing results must be validated by a competent person as being in accordance with, or equivalent to, I.S. 398. A building condition assessment

will be required to be carried out by a competent person irrespective of when such testing is, or was, carried out.

A homeowner cannot claim the exemption until the relevant certificate has been issued. He or she should notify Revenue at that stage to claim the exemption. Special arrangements will apply in respect of 2013 and 2014 to facilitate homeowners in claiming an exemption. While homeowners who do not have the relevant certificate on the first liability date of 1 May 2013 (liability date for 2013), or by 1 November 2013 (liability date for 2014), will be required to pay LPT for those periods, they will be able to reclaim the tax paid if they obtain the certificate by 31 December 2013 and notify the Revenue Commissioners in writing on or before 31 January 2014. As an alternative to such retrospective treatment, they can opt to start the period of exemption from the liability date following the issue of the certificate.

Property Taxation Collection

61. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Finance the way persons with more than one property who do not have access to a facility or know the way to pay online can pay the local property tax; if it can be paid manually; if he will advise on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19612/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): For property owners for whom e-filing is not practical, I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the legislation provides that another person may file on their behalf, and they can visit their local Revenue office where computers and assistance to e-file will be available. In addition, Revenue has made arrangements for property owners to pay and file by telephone via the LPT helpline 1890 200 255. To avail of this option, the caller needs to have her or his property details, PPSN and details of the bank account or other source from which she or he wishes the payment to be deducted. Although it will not be possible for multiple property owners to pay their LPT liability manually (by cash payments through approved payment service providers), there are a variety of other options available to pay their LPT liability in full or by phased payment. I am satisfied that the range of payment options available to these owners provide a great amount of flexibility in paying the tax. The Commissioners further advise that the LPT Helpline will advise the customer on the payment option that best suits her/his particular circumstances.

IBRC Liquidation

62. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide, on a county basis, the number of insurance bond products that the insurance policy a developer has to have in place by condition of local authority, taken out by developers with Anglo Irish Bank-Irish Bank Resolution Corporation which are part of the liquidation process; if a local authority should seek to call in any of these bonds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19613/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised that the Special Liquidators are not in a position to provide this information at present but that they are in the process of establishing the level of bonds/guarantees and indemnities entered into by IBRC (prior to liquidation) in favour of County Councils. I have been further advised that it is likely that any liabilities arising under those bonds, guarantees and indemnities are contingent claims against IBRC. Such claims, if called upon by the County Councils, will most likely rank as unsecured claims in the liquidation of IBRC. The Special Liquidators will be assessing on a case by case basis whether bonds should be renewed in order to protect, maintain or enhance the value of a

loan or development as the key objective of the Special Liquidators is to maximise the value of IBRC's assets.

Question No. 63 answered with Question No. 55.

Bank Charges

64. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of changes made to bank fees and charges which were notified to the Director of Consumer Affairs prior to the enactment of the Consumer Credit Act 1995 and which the banks have yet to implement. [19634/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I, as Minister for Finance, have no statutory role in relation to the issues raised by the Deputy. I have been advised by the Central Bank that the information requested by the Deputy is not readily available. The Bank also informed me that they received this specific question from the Deputy at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform hearing on Wednesday 10 April 2013. The Bank is currently preparing and compiling the required information which requires significant work to compile. The information will be provided by the Central Bank to the Deputy in the coming days.

Tax Collection Forecast

65. Deputy Eric Byrne asked the Minister for Finance the revenue raised from an increase in capital gains tax from 33% to 35%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19656/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the full year yield to the Exchequer, estimated in terms of expected 2013 gains, from increasing the CGT tax rate from 33% to 35% could be in the region of €31 million. This figure includes corporate gains. However, this estimate assumes no behavioural changes on the part of taxpayers, and increases in rates may have a significant behavioural impact and may not produce a corresponding increase in tax yield. In current economic conditions any estimate of additional yield must be treated with caution. In addition, increasing the rate could, in theory, lead to a reduction in yield from the tax.

Universal Social Charge Yield

66. Deputy Eric Byrne asked the Minister for Finance the revenue raised from the extension of the 10% rate of universal social charge and PAYE taxpayers on incomes of more than €100,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19657/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the full year yield, estimated by reference to 2013 incomes, from extending the additional universal social charge of 3%, which is currently applicable to self-employed income in excess of €100,000, to all income earners at this level of income would be of the order of €71 million. The Universal Social Charge is an individualised charge and as such, the estimate of yield is based on individual incomes of more than €100,000. The estimated yield is based on confining the extension of the 3% rate to the portion of income which is in excess of €100,000, that is, the increase is not applied to the portion of total income earned up to €100,000.

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

Tax Collection Forecast

67. Deputy Eric Byrne asked the Minister for Finance the revenue raised from the introduction of a third rate of income tax of 48% on income of more than €100,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19658/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): It is assumed that the threshold for the proposed new tax rate mentioned by the Deputy would not alter the existing standard rate band structure applying to single and widowed persons, to lone parents and married couples. On that basis, I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the estimated full year yield to the Exchequer, estimated by reference to 2013 incomes, of the introduction of a new 48% income tax rate would be of the order of €365 million. However, given the current band structures, major issues would need to be resolved as to how in practice such a new rate could be integrated into the current system and how this would affect the relative position of different types of income earners.

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

Tax Collection Forecast

68. Deputy Eric Byrne asked the Minister for Finance the revenue raised from an increase in DIRT for payments made annually from 33% to 35%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19659/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the estimated yield to the Exchequer from increasing the Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT) rate from 33% to 35% would be of the order of €40 million in a full year. This projection assumes no significant behavioural change by depositors or a change in interest rates applied by financial institutions to savings.

Property Taxation Administration

69. Deputy Willie Penrose asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline the deferral arrangements that are in place for persons who have less than €25,000 per year in income, mainly comprised of invalidity or disability payments and who wish to defer the payment of the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19691/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that for individuals on low incomes or those whose only income source is from the Department of Social Protection, the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) provides for a system of deferral arrangements for owner-occupiers where there is an inability to pay the tax and certain specified conditions are met. A person who qualifies for full deferral can opt to defer 100% of the LPT liability. A person who qualifies for part deferral can opt to defer 50% of the liability and must pay the balance of LPT.

Deferral based on income threshold is available as follows:

-	Condition Number	Condition
Full Deferral	1	Gross income for the year is unlikely to exceed €15,000 (single or widow(er) and €25,000 (couple)
Full Deferral	2	Gross income for the year is unlikely to exceed the adjusted income limit. This adjusted income limit is calculated by increasing the thresholds of €15,000 (single or widow(er) and €25,000 (couple) by 80% of the expected mortgage interest payments for the year 2013. This applies until 31 December 2017.
Partial Deferral	3	Gross income for the year is unlikely to exceed €25,000 (single or widow(er) and €35,000 (couple).
Partial Deferral	4	Gross income for the year is unlikely to exceed the adjusted income limit. This adjusted income limit is calculated by increasing the thresholds of €25,000 (single or widow(er) and €35,000 (couple) by 80% of the expected mortgage interest payments for the year 2013. This applies until 31 December 2017.

To determine whether they qualify for deferral for 2013, liable persons are required to estimate on 1 May 2013 what their total gross income for 2013 is likely to be. Gross income from all sources consists of the total income before any deductions, allowances or reliefs that may be taken into account for income tax purposes and includes income that is exempt from income tax and income received from the Department of Social Protection but excludes Child Benefit. Where a deferral is being claimed on this basis, the LPT1 Return must be completed and the relevant deferral selected.

Interest will be charged on LPT amounts deferred at a rate of 4% per annum. The deferred amount, including interest, will attach to the property and will have to be paid before the property is sold or transferred. I am advised by the Commissioners that full details of all deferral options are outlined in the Guidelines on Deferral or Part Deferral of Local Property Tax, which are available on Revenue's website www.revenue.ie.

IBRC Liquidation

70. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance if the European Central Bank has requested that his Department not release any documentation concerning the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation liquidation under the Freedom of Information Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19693/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy will appreciate the commercially sensitive nature of the discussions with the ECB in relation to the promissory notes and the liquidation of the IBRC and that such discussions are part of a wider deliberative and

confidential process. Throughout the period of the discussions between the Irish Authorities and the ECB the confidentiality of matters discussed was emphasised between the parties. However, the ECB has not been approached in relation to documentation requested under specific FOI requests relating to the liquidation of IBRC nor has the ECB requested the Department not to release any such documentation. The ECB has informed my Department that they will not be releasing any information in relation to these discussions.

In normal course my Department will examine all requests received for information under the FOI Acts and assess whether specific information can be released. While the overall aim is to release the information requested the FOI Acts do list specific provisions under which records can be deemed to be “exempt records” for the purposes of the Acts. The decisions of the Department/public body, in this regard, are subject to a right of appeal by the requester. One such exemption [section 24(2)(e) 1997 Act] refers specifically to information communicated in confidence from, to, or within an international organisation, including an organisation or an institution or body of the European Union. Other exemptions provided in the legislation include; meetings of Government; information received in confidence; commercially sensitive information; deliberations of public bodies; functions and negotiations of public bodies; financial and economic interests of the State; etc.

As part of this process my Department will communicate with third parties if consideration is being given to releasing information/documentation received from those parties. In the event that third parties object to information being released the Department will take a view on the nature of the information, the basis on which the information was received or acquired and the views of the third party etc. The Department will then decide whether the information should be released under the FOI Acts having regard to particular circumstances and the requirements of the public interest. Any decision, therefore as to whether information is released or not by Irish authorities under Freedom of Information legislation enacted in this jurisdiction is a matter for the Irish authorities. While the ECB or other third parties may have a view on the release of particular information the ECB has not and would not seek to influence the proper operation of national legislation.

My Department is committed to the spirit and proper operation of the Freedom of Information Acts 1997-2003.

National Pensions Reserve Fund Plans

71. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the value of the discretionary portfolio in the National Pension Reserve Fund; his plans for its use; the timetable over which this will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19694/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the National Treasury Management Agency, as manager of the National Pensions Reserve Fund (NPRF), that as at 29 March 2013 the Fund’s total value stood at €15.2 billion, of which the Discretionary Portfolio comprises €6.4 billion. With regard to the future plans for the NPRF, the Cabinet agreed at its meeting of 16 April to the drafting of a Bill to reorient the National Pensions Reserve Fund into the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund which will invest in the Irish economy on commercial terms in support of jobs and economic growth. It is my intention that the details of the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund will be announced shortly.

Central Bank of Ireland Issues

72. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the rules governing employees who leave the Central Bank to take up employment in financial institutions regulated by the bank are adequate to protect the public interest; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19695/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed that the Central Bank has relevant policies and procedures in place to deal with this potential matter and the Bank believes that its current policies and procedures are appropriate. Specifically, this potential issue is taken into account when drafting new contracts for certain roles or reassigning staff to other duties if a potential for conflict arises.

The Central Bank Code of Ethics requires that in the event of an employee intending to leave the employment of the Central Bank to take up alternative employment, self-employment or business, there is an obligation to provide early notification to line management when a conflict of interest exists, or perceived to exist, between those duties held in the Central Bank and those to be undertaken with the new employer, self-employment or business. In such circumstances, the Central Bank may assign alternative tasks to the individual while their notice period is being served. The notice period may be lengthened in excess of the contractual or statutory notice period, by mutual agreement, where it is considered to be in the best interests of the Central Bank and the employee.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

73. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in tabular form the number of civil and public servants under the remit of his Department who earn more than €500,000, between €400,000 and €500,000, €300,000 and €400,000, €250,000 and €300,000, €200,000 and €250,000, €150,000 and €200,000, €100,000 and €150,000, €80,000 and €100,000, €60,000 and €80,000, €40,000 and €60,000, €30,000 and €40,000 and less than €30,000. [19496/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information requested by the Deputy is not readily available on an up to date basis and I have asked my officials to compile the data and will provide it as soon as possible.

State Examinations Fee Exemptions

74. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason medical card holders are exempt from paying exam fees in secondary schools; if he is considering amending this to include persons with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19533/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations. In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

75. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline the approach taken by his Department regarding special needs units in both new and existing

secondary schools in an area (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19550/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the policy of my Department is to ensure that a continuum of special educational provision is made available, as required, for children with special educational needs, including those attending secondary schools. This includes making provision for special school placements and special class places where required.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for the planning and provision of a range of educational services at local and national level for students with special educational needs. The NCSE, through the local special educational needs organisers (SENOs), co-ordinates special needs education provision, including the establishment of special needs units in various geographical areas as required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support. The NCSE is currently liaising with schools to establish new special classes for the coming school year, taking into account the requirement for such classes in any given area. All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

Teachers' Remuneration

76. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question of 11 March 2013, the position regarding a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19575/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The introduction of the new salary scale and its impact on people with previous service has proven to be a complex task which has required a detailed implementation process. My Department, in consultation with VECs and the teacher unions, has been working through the operational aspects of these changes as they affect existing teachers and their pay. That process is almost concluded and I expect my Department to be in a position to respond to this query in the very near future.

FÁS Training Programmes

77. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that FÁS has commenced a tendering process for vocational training services for persons with disabilities; if his further attention has been drawn to the fact that most European countries have excluded these services from the public procurement process in order to meet the support needs of persons with disabilities who are very distant from the labour market; if he supports this decision by FÁS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19591/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Tendering guideline documents for specialist training provision are currently being developed by FÁS to enable a procurement pilot to take place. The pilot is being undertaken as a result of a policy decision in 2010, on foot of legal advice from the Office of the Attorney General that in view of the large value of the contracts involved, they should be advertised and a public tendering process should be put in place.

International Education Strategy

78. Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh asked the Minister for Education and Skills his approach to attracting foreign students to Ireland; the estimated monetary benefit to third level institutions and the State's economy of that sector. [19644/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Enterprise Ireland estimates that the international education sector is worth €1.025 billion annually to the Irish economy. The Government is pursuing a range of actions to implement the International Education Strategy and to position Ireland as a top-quality destination for study. At present around 32,000 students are registered in Irish higher education institutions, including 7,000 studying on Irish programmes overseas. Around 100,000 students come to Ireland to study English every year.

Recent progress on implementation of the strategy includes:

- Continued development of the Education in Ireland brand in our priority markets including the USA, China, India, Brazil and the Gulf. This has included a particular focus on social media, and the use of student ambassadors and alumni.
- The launch last week of a new Government of Ireland International Scholarships aimed at attracting top students from priority and emerging markets.
- The strengthening of inter-governmental relationships, including Ministerial-level contacts. In recent months, I led a significant education mission to the People's Republic of China and the United Arab Emirates and Minister of State Ciarán Cannon has visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, India, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Ongoing progress on the strategy is monitored by the High Level Group on International Education which is chaired by my Department

Schools Building Projects Status

79. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the proposed building project at a school (details supplied) in County Cavan; when this project will proceed to the next stage; the likely timescale for construction work to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19682/13]

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 completion of stage 2(b) which includes the preparation of tender documents. Due to competing demands on the Department's capital budget imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of additional school accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements it was not possible to include this project in the 5 year construction programme announced in March 2012.

School building projects, including the project referred to by the Deputy, which have not been included in the five year construction programme, but which were previously initiated will continue to be progressed to final planning stages in anticipation of the possibility of further funds being available to the Department in future years. However, in light of current competing demands on the Department's capital budget, it is not possible to indicate at this time, the timeframe for the progression of this project to construction stage.

Questions - Written Answers
Departmental Properties

80. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of certain vacant properties (details supplied) in County Cork; if he will confirm the number that are in the ownership of the State; if any maintenance works are planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19665/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Brian Hayes): There are nine former Coastguard cottages in Crosshaven in State ownership, three of which are currently being used. The Office Of Public Works is currently exploring the possibility of disposing of the remaining six properties and it is envisaged that these properties will form part of a State Property disposal programme.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

81. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the cost of the provision of tour guides and the expenses incurred in providing this service at a location (details supplied) in County Kerry for the 2012 season; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19491/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Brian Hayes): The cost of mounting the Guide Service at Skellig Michael during the 2012 season was €129,793.47. This includes Guide pay, Travel and Subsistence, Personal Protective Equipment and specialist Safety Training.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

82. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide in tabular form the number of civil and public servants under the remit of his Department who earn more than €500,000, between €400,000 and €500,000, €300,000 and €400,000, €250,000 and €300,000, €200,000 and €250,000, €150,000 and €200,000, €100,000 and €150,000, €80,000 and €100,000, €60,000 and €80,000, €40,000 and €60,000, €30,000 and €40,000 and less than €30,000. [19502/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question there are seven organisations within the Public Expenditure Vote Group including the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Office of Public Works, Public Appointments Service, Ombudsman, Valuation Office, State Laboratory and the new Shared Services. Because of the way the information is compiled the initial earning brackets can only begin from zero to €20,000 and then from €20,000 to €40,000. The following table outlines the number of Civil and Public Servants under the remit of my Department at end March 2013 and their respective earnings.

Earning Bracket	Public Expenditure & Reform	Office of Public Works	Shared Services	Public Appointments Service	Ombudsman	Valuation Office	State Laboratory
Less than €20,000	8	42	31	5			2
Less than €40,000	66	1,370	64	39	31	27	18

Earning Bracket	Public Expenditure & Reform	Office of Public Works	Shared Services	Public Appointments Service	Ombudsman	Valuation Office	State Laboratory
€40,000 - €60,000	119	406	27	30	23	71	30
€60,000 - €80,000	48	92	2	4	20	21	28
€80,000 - €100,000	61	63	1	5	13	10	6
€100,000 - €150,000	24	7		3	4	2	
€150,000 - €200,000	2	2					
Total	328	1,982	125	86	91	131	84

I have no staff earning more than €200,000.

Departmental Staff Deployment

83. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding the Irish delegation to the World Trade Organisation; the allocation of staff and other resources that are given by his Department to the delegation; the number of meetings the delegation were required or requested to attend in 2012; the number of meetings that were attended; his views on whether member states of the European Union still require their own national delegations to the WTO in view of the EU's competence in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19515/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation allocates three staff to the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations (PMUN) in Geneva to cover WTO and other matters relevant to the Department, including the development of international rules and standards in labour and intellectual property affairs. The Department's staff are the official national representatives interfacing with the International Labour Office (ILO) and World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) as well as the WTO.

In addition to WTO related duties, the Department's Geneva officials represent Ireland at the WIPO and ILO when officials from Dublin are unable to attend or where it would be more cost effective for Geneva based personnel to service meetings. In the case of ILO there are significant time commitments during meetings of the Governing Body (Spring and Autumn) and the International Labour Conference (three weeks each June).

The staff complement servicing the national interest at these three organisations comprises 1 Principal Officer (PO), 1 Higher Executive Officer (HEO) and 1 Clerical Officer. Offices and other facilities are shared with the PMUN. During 2012 there was considerable work involved in preparing for the current Irish Presidency of the European Council. To assist with the additional obligations that Ireland is required to meet, in the latter half of 2012 two additional staff were seconded to Geneva until July 2013.

In 2012 over 550 WTO related meetings were attended by the Department's officials. These included EU coordination and related meetings, as well as numerous WTO working sessions. These working sessions include key themes of trade liberalisation (Non Agricultural Market Access, Services and Agriculture) under the current Round of global trade talks known as the

Doha Round and the broader WTO's work involving Trade Facilitation, Technical Barriers to Trade, Trade Policy Reviews, Disputes, and the international Technology Agreement as well as the start of talks on a new international agreement covering trade in international services. Furthermore this year also sees a significant increase in WTO activity as a range of items are advanced for consideration at the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference in December.

In total there are about 40 different working groups and specialist thematic sub groups that Ireland is required to service where possible. In addition, senior staff are required to participate in extensive networking and interaction outside the EU group in Geneva and to actively promote the Department's interests in both the ILO and WIPO.

All EU Member States maintain Permanent Missions in Geneva with dedicated WTO teams and will continue to do so.

On the matter of competence, the EU Commission does not have exclusive competence across the broad span of WTO trade activity/negotiations. In addition, like all other EU MS, Ireland is a WTO member in its own right, unlike the EU, which is not a WTO Member. Furthermore, the issue of competence is not clearcut in either the ILO or WIPO where a mixture of arrangements are in place. I believe therefore that it is vital that our presence is maintained in Geneva to ensure that Ireland's particular interests in the International Institutions that set global rules for trade, intellectual property and labour law are both promoted and protected; and that Ireland can play its part along with other Member States in forming EU Trade Policy.

In 2012 Ireland's contribution to the operating costs of the WTO is CHF 2,205,826 or approximately €1,823,000, calculated by reference to the proportion of Irish trade to global trade.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

84. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide in tabular form the number of civil and public servants under the remit of his Department who earn more than €500,000, between €400,000 and €500,000, €300,000 and €400,000, €250,000 and €300,000, €200,000 and €250,000, €150,000 and €200,000, €100,000 and €150,000, €80,000 and €100,000, €60,000 and €80,000, €40,000 and €60,000, €30,000 and €40,000 and less than €30,000. [19500/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The following table identifies the persons employed in my Department broken down by the salary bands supplied. The numbers include departmental staff in the following Offices of the Department:

- The Companies Registration Office
- The Registry of Friendly Societies
- The Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement
- The Labour Court
- The Labour Relations Commission
- The National Employment Rights Authority
- The Employment Appeals Tribunal

Salary Bands	Total Employed
Under €30,000	257
€30-40,000	213
€40-60,000	298
€60-80,000	66
€80-100,000	49
€100-150,000	25
€150-200,000	5
€200-250,000	0
€250-300,000	0
€300-400,000	0
€400-500,000	0
Over €500,000	0

Information regarding the employees of the Agencies whose gross salary is in each of the bands listed above is a day to day matter for the Agencies and I have asked them to respond to the Deputy directly.

Job Statistics

85. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the level of employment, job losses and job creation in companies supported by the Industrial Development Agency in County Wicklow from 2008 to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19506/13]

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 Ireland client companies in Co. Wicklow in each year from 2008 to 2012 are set out in the attached tabular statement.

At present there are 17 IDA supported companies in Wicklow employing over 2,000 people in full and part time posts. Co Wicklow forms part of IDA's East region together with counties Dublin, Meath and Kildare. In the region as a whole IDA client companies account for direct job numbers of 67,860.

In addition to promoting county Wicklow as suitable location for new investment, IDA Ireland works with its existing client companies in the county to encourage the growth and expansion of their Irish based operations. An example of the success of this approach was the announcement, last December, by Nypro Healthcare that it is to further expand its medical device operations in Bray, Co. Wicklow with the opening of a new medical device development centre and the creation of 100 new high quality jobs.

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). While, globally, the outlook for foreign direct investment (FDI) continues to be challenging, IDA has assured me that it will continue to work towards achieving its target of creating a further 12,000 jobs in 2013 as set out in the Action Plan for Jobs 2013.

Table showing the total employment as well as the number of jobs gained and lost in

IDA client companies in county Wicklow in each of the years 2008 to 2012.

-	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Permanent Employment	2,559	2,328	2,167	1,986	1,936
New Jobs Created	53	39	13	66	60
Job Losses	327	270	174	247	110

Job Statistics

86. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the level of employment, job losses and job creation in companies supported by Enterprise Ireland in County Wicklow from 2008 to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19507/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Details of the number of full time jobs existing, gained and lost in Enterprise Ireland (EI) client companies in Co. Wicklow, which are drawn from the Forfás Annual Employment Survey, are set out in the tabular statement accompanying this reply.

I am pleased to say that the Agency's End of Year Statement indicates that 2012 was a good year for job creation in EI-supported companies. Nationally, clients of Enterprise Ireland created 12,861 gross new jobs (3,338 net new jobs – the highest net gain for Irish companies since 2006). In 2012, 410 new jobs were created in Co. Wicklow, an increase of 206 over 2011.

Jobs in Enterprise Ireland-supported Companies in Co. Wicklow

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Permanent Full time Jobs Existing	3,928	3,263	3,137	3,122	3,339
Permanent Full time Job Gains	265	91	215	204	410
Permanent Full time Job Losses	663	756	341	219	193

Enterprise Support Services Provision

87. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will detail the supports available to small and medium enterprises involved in the service industry who wish to develop a website and an online market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19520/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): A key component of the Action Plan for Jobs 2013 is to increase the number of businesses trading online for the first time, particularly small businesses. It aims to help Irish business gain competitiveness and grow by having access to new markets and a wider customer base. The objective is to target 2,000 small businesses with a view to them commencing trading online in 2013 and 2014. The

net jobs gain envisaged under this programme will be 3,200.

The programme will be overseen by a Working Group, led by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and whose membership will include the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Forfás, Enterprise Ireland, the Irish Payment Services Organisation (IPSO) and other key stakeholders from the public and private sectors. The trial initiatives will be evaluated on an on-going basis with a view to any necessary adaptation for a significant scaling up of the programme in 2014.

The vision is to develop, in collaboration with industry partners, a series of actions which will stimulate growth in Irish-based small businesses by supporting them to trade on-line, informed by past interventions and engagement with digital market participants. The actions, as set out in the Action Plan for Jobs 2013, include the following:

- Consult with representatives of the digital industry in Ireland to establish the contribution which those companies can make to the design and implementation of the Trading On-Line initiative;
- Design the detailed operational arrangements for the Business On-Line voucher scheme to be applied to the pilot phase of the initiative;
- Agree an approach, including plans for a promotional campaign, for pilot projects that will maximise the outcomes and learnings from this initial trial phase. Identify suitable projects at regional and/or sectoral level with a target of engaging companies for inclusion in the trial phase of the initiative in 2013;
- Commence the first phase of the pilot(s) and monitor progress with a view to a significant scaling up of the initiative in 2014.

This programme has the capacity to support and transform jobs in Irish-based companies, improve their competitiveness and open their access to a wider customer base, both domestically and internationally. The programme will also support jobs indirectly in businesses supplying expertise, training, hosting and logistics services to companies that are adapting to trading on-line.

Local Enterprise Offices Establishment

88. Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation with regards to the proposed local enterprise offices that local authority rates will not be deducted from grant awards before payment to businesses under the new structures; if he will confirm that all local authority staff to be transferred to new local enterprise offices will have the relevant business expertise to add value to the espoused objectives of job creation, business support and overall economic development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19535/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Currently, the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) provide both financial and non-financial assistance to a project subject to certain eligibility criteria and an evaluation and approvals process. Upon the dissolution of the CEBs this function will be delivered by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) within the Local Authority, on behalf of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and overseen by Enterprise Ireland. The LEOs will form a stand-alone unit within the local authority structure, and through a Framework Service Level Agreement (SLA) between EI and the Local Authorities will be answerable to me for all enterprise policy and budgetary matters.

There is no connection between grants for enterprise and local authority rates and therefore there will be no provision for the deduction of local authority rates from grant awards.

Local Authorities have been working with business to support investment and business development at local level, and to the extent that it has been part of their remit hitherto, promoting and fostering entrepreneurship. They deliver essential services to business and can respond to the needs of local businesses speedily and efficiently. Their wide reach in the community makes them an ideal partner and a potential important source of business and growth for micro and small enterprise. The new structures will bring in Local Authorities as direct partners in promoting entrepreneurship and supporting small and micro businesses. Staff currently deployed in Business Support Units of the Local Authorities will be assigned to the LEOs to work alongside existing CEB staff who will be ring-fenced in order to preserve the valuable range of skills and expertise necessary to ensure continuity of service to the CEB/LEO client base.

Job Creation Issues

89. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding a facility (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19655/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The facility in Killorglin has been in operation since its establishment in 1970 by a German company, and manufactured safety and anchor bolts used in the construction industry. Peak employment at the factory was in the early 1980's when it employed 95 people. The business was acquired in 2008 by a California based manufacturer of metal fixings and hangers used in construction of wooden frame housing. Employment had gradually declined to approximately 30 by 2011. By this time, the plant was consistently loss making and on a 3 day week. In former years, only about 20% of the company's output was sold on the Irish market but latterly this increased as total sales declined.

In 2012, IDA Ireland was informed that the US based parent company had decided to exit this particular market in Europe and to consolidate their business units and concentrate on traditional products particularly for the timber frame sector. The decision was influenced by the construction downturn, both in the US and Europe. The company was marketed as a going concern in mid-2012 without success. The Killorglin product line and rights to production for Europe was sold to a Finnish company in late 2012 and this company plan to manufacture the products in their own plant in Finland.

The premises are still owned by the US parent company and this company, with the 7 remaining staff, are in the process of overseeing the sale and disposal of the remaining equipment. This work is likely to be concluded by May/June 2013, at which stage the plant will be finally closed. The factory and lands have now been offered for sale. The IDA has worked with the company in a search for a new owner and Enterprise Ireland has also been made aware of its availability as a possible location for one of that Agency's client companies.

Unfortunately, given the combination of various circumstances including the fact that the facility dates from the early 1970s, it has not proven possible to date to secure a new occupier. It is, of course, very disappointing that this factory, which provided employment for several decades in Killorglin, is now closing, due to external market factors and changes in the industry worldwide. I have, however, asked the development agencies to continue to do all they can to find a replacement company for the Killorglin plant.

Trade Agreements

90. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding the proposed European Union-United States trade agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19677/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The report of the High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth was published on 11 February this year. The Group recommended significantly closer trade relations between the two economies of the EU and the US. It reported on the opportunities for mutually beneficial job creation, economic growth and international competitiveness that would follow from a comprehensive EU-US trade and investment agreement. These opportunities are truly significant, leading to an increase in EU GDP of up to 0.5% for an ambitious and comprehensive final agreement.

I recently chaired an Informal meeting of the EU Trade Council in Dublin. At that meeting there was unanimous support from all EU trade ministers for such an agreement because of the clear and advantageous benefits it would bring to the EU economy, businesses, employees and consumers. The EU Council is currently considering a draft negotiating mandate that will enable the EU Commission to open negotiations on a new, historic and unique trade and investment agreement with the United States. Negotiations on this mandate will continue for some while yet.

I hope, however, that they will be satisfactorily concluded under the Irish Presidency of the EU, so that no time can be lost in moving to start negotiations on a trade and investment agreement that will set the standards for other ambitious agreements and also one that will have global significance.

Beef Sector

91. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will outline the proposals he has tabled to protect the beef sector within the European Union in the event of a EU-US trade agreement being formalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19678/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The report of the EU-US High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth was published on 11 February this year. The Group recommended significantly closer trade relations between the two economies of the EU and the US. It reported on the opportunities for mutually beneficial job creation, economic growth and international competitiveness that would follow from a comprehensive EU – US trade and investment agreement. These opportunities are truly significant, leading to an increase in EU GDP of up to 0.5% for an ambitious and comprehensive final agreement.

The proposed Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement between the EU and the U.S. promises significant opportunities to better integrate the transatlantic marketplace and deliver improved market access opportunities for our exporters. As an open economy that already has extensive trade and investment links with the US, these trade benefits will deliver important benefits for the Irish economy. At this stage, it is the mandate to be given to the Commission that is under consideration at EU level, negotiations on a trade agreement have not commenced. Consequently it is not possible to quantify either the extent of any US requests for access to the EU market and the necessary trade off involved in respect of market access in the agriculture sector more broadly or the beef segment in particular.

The High Level Working Group recommended the phasing out of substantially all tariffs for all but the most sensitive tariffs. I have supported my colleague the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in recognising the beef sector as a sensitive sector of importance for Ireland. As I have done previously in other trade negotiations, I will continue to look for the most advantageous outcome from this trade and investment agreement with the US that promotes our vital economic interests, and that includes the special interests of the beef sector.

Civil Registration

92. Deputy Seán Kenny asked the Minister for Social Protection the qualifications for the registration of a death (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19527/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I understand that the Registrar General has no knowledge of this specific case. The provisions for the registration of a death are set out in Part 5 of the Civil Registration Act 2004. Under these provisions, where a death occurs, a registered medical practitioner must provide a relative of the deceased with a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death; the relative then brings the certificate to a registrar, provides the registrar with any additional particulars required to register the death and then signs the entry in the register of deaths. Where no Medical Certificate can be obtained, or where a death occurs in certain circumstances, the matter is referred to a Coroner, who will, following necessary enquiries, arrange for the registration of the death.

The provisions for the registration of births and stillbirths are set out in Part 3 of the Act. The registration of stillbirths is a voluntary option for parents and the stillbirth may be registered provided that the child, at birth, weighed not less than 500 grammes or had a gestational age of not less than 24 weeks and showed no sign of life. Qualifications such as weight and gestational age apply only in the case of stillbirths and do not apply in the registration of births or infant deaths. The person (details supplied) should contact their local registrar (contact details available via www.hse.ie) who will be able to assist with information pertaining to the registration of births, deaths and stillbirths, as applicable in this particular case.

Departmental Investigations

93. Deputy Finian McGrath asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on a lone parent allowance (details supplied). [19547/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information that the Deputy has provided is insufficient for the Department to identify the particular case to which he refers. It is open to the Deputy at any stage to provide further more detailed information to enable my Department to examine more specifically the issues raised in order to determine what action, if any, is warranted in the particular circumstances. It is important, in the interests of all concerned, that any alleged impropriety on the part of any staff member is brought to our attention with sufficient detail to enable the matter to be fully investigated.

The Department provides both a dedicated phone number and a facility on the Department's website for this purpose. Persons are asked to provide as much detail as possible about the case they are reporting and they can do so anonymously.

All anonymous or confidential reports are examined and, where relevant, are referred to the relevant sections for follow-up action. In relation to alleged fraudulent behaviour by a custom-

er, while a payment is not suspended or stopped solely on the basis of an anonymous report, it may “trigger” the instigation of a review of a customer’s entitlement. A Social Welfare Inspector may then deem it appropriate to carry out a full review of the circumstances and means of the customer in order to determine on-going entitlement to the relevant payment. The Inspector will then submit their report to a Deciding Officer for decision regarding on-going entitlement to the social welfare payment. The Deciding Officer’s decision will be based on the full facts and circumstances of the case, including the report of the review by the Inspector.

It is the view of my Department that this process provides a clear mechanism for investigating allegations of fraud without prejudice to the customer. In any case where the customer is not satisfied with the decision of a Deciding Officer, it is open to them to lodge an appeal with the Social Welfare Appeals Office within twenty one days.

The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour sets out a clear framework within which civil servants must work and outlines the principles which should govern the behaviour of civil servants and the values which the Civil Service espouses. Where a member of staff of my Department is alleged to have breached the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour; Departmental policies; or engaged in inappropriate behaviour; the matter is dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Disciplinary Code.

Services for People with Disabilities

94. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will ensure that an accessible transport service will continue to be available to persons with mobility impairments in Cork city arising from the expiration of the contract between Cork Accessible Transport Limited and POBAL in June 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19593/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Access to transport services for persons with mobility impairments is primarily a matter for the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sports and the Health Services Executive. In a number of instances nationally, my Department, through the Community Services Programme has been able to support the provision of services by community companies. Cork Accessible Transport Limited has provided services to people with mobility impairment for a number of years and has been supported under the Community Services Programme, now funded and operated under the aegis of my Department. I have recently become aware that the company plans to terminate the provision of services in Cork City from the middle of 2013. Should another community based organisation come forward to provide this service, my Department will be happy to work with them and the other agencies mentioned to support the operations.

Guardian’s Payment Applications

95. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Social Protection if eligibility for guardian’s payment will be reviewed in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19489/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The position remains unchanged since my reply to Question Number 620 on 16 April 2013. The Guardian’s Payment was awarded to the person concerned in June 2008 as the qualifying conditions for the payment were satisfied. Following a review of the payment, the Deciding Officer found that the conditions for receipt of Guardians payment were no longer being met, as the child concerned no longer

meets the definition of “orphan” under current legislation. Consequently, the Guardians payment was disallowed from 22 February 2013. The Deciding Officer will review the additional material provided and will advise the person concerned as soon as possible of the outcome of that review. The person concerned has been advised of their right to appeal the decision of the Deciding Officer to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

Question No. 96 withdrawn.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

97. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form the number of civil and public servants under the remit of his Department who earn more than €500,000, between €400,000 and €500,000, €300,000 and €400,000, €250,000 and €300,000, €200,000 and €250,000, €150,000 and €200,000, €100,000 and €150,000, €80,000 and €100,000, €60,000 and €80,000, €40,000 and €60,000, €30,000 and €40,000 and less than €30,000. [19503/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I provided the information requested by the Deputy in reply to his previous question on the matter. Question No. 387 was answered on 23rd April 2013.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

98. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will outline the pension rights for a person who started work in 1967 and will be 66 years old in July 207, with the new changes introduced will they only receive €207 per week due to the pension being calculated on 50 years’ working life; her views on whether the average number of years required to work to receive a full pension is 40 throughout Europe, this person currently has more than 1,600 contributions here but because it is calculated on 50 years they lose a lot of money; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19504/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In order to qualify for a State pension contributory, a person must satisfy a number of qualifying conditions which include; commencing insurable employment at least 10 years before pension age, payment of a minimum of 520 qualifying contributions and achieving a yearly average of at least 10 qualifying contributions, paid or credited, over their working life.

Qualification for a pension is calculated on an averaging system based on the PRSI contributions paid over a working life. The individual’s yearly average number of contributions determines the amount of pension paid. This is generally calculated from the date on which paid employment commenced to pension age, therefore it varies depending on each individual’s working life. Time taken out of the paid workforce may result in gaps in contribution records, which may result in a lower rate of pension being paid.

The average contributions test has been in existence since 1961 and was designed with a view to ensuring that people could move in and out of PRSI coverage. A move away from the averaging system to a total contributions system is planned. This will mean that the total number of years contributions paid will be considered when assessing entitlement to a pension. The level of pension paid will then be directly proportionate to the number of social insurance contributions made by a person over his or her working life. The proposed change is supported in the OECD Review of the Irish Pension System launched on the 22 April 2013.

The State pension is a very valuable asset and it is important, for sustainability reasons that those who receive it have made a significant contribution towards it during a working life.

Exceptional Needs Payment Applications

99. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 152 of 18 April 2013, if she will review the decision to refuse exceptional needs payment in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19505/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned submitted an application for an exceptional needs payment on the 08 April 2013 which was refused. It is open to the person concerned to seek a review of this decision from the relevant supplementary welfare allowance review officer.

Departmental Staff Numbers

100. Deputy Noel Harrington asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of medical assessors at present in the Department; if there are plans to increase this number to alleviate the backlog of medically based reviews and appeals that the Department is experiencing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19509/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are currently 23 Medical Assessors employed in my Department, including the Chief Medical Adviser and the Deputy Chief Medical Adviser. All of the staff in question serve on a full time basis. As an exception to the current moratorium in the civil and public service, my Department received sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to hold a competition to appoint Medical Assessors, with a view to filling critical vacancies that had arisen following the retirement of a number of serving Medical Assessors.

A public competition, administered on behalf of my Department by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) was held in 2012. Fourteen people were placed on the panel that was established following completion of the competitive process. There are four remaining candidates on this panel and my Department has continued to liaise with the Public Appointments Service with a view to appointing the four remaining candidates at the earliest opportunity.

The Department is committed to ensuring that all claims are examined as expeditiously as possible and the appointment of additional Medical Assessors will help to enable my Department to deliver a quality service to our customers.

Question No. 101 withdrawn.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Eligibility

102. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) in County Cork has been cut off from receiving domiciliary care allowance; the criteria that changed that meant they were no longer eligible; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19531/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department has been accept-

ing new claims for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) since 1 April 2009. The person concerned has not been in receipt of DCA at any time since the scheme transferred to the Department. There have been no changes made to the qualification criteria since the Department took over the administration of the scheme.

Information relating to any application that may have been submitted or paid prior to April 2009 is a matter for the HSE, the previous administrators of the scheme. An application for DCA was received from the person concerned in my Department on the 30th April 2010. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who found that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. A letter issued on the 16th July 2010 advising of the decision not to allow the application. The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against this decision and she was informed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 6th January 2012 that the appeal had not been allowed.

The decision/appeal process for this application is now complete. If the person concerned has additional information which was not available to the deciding and appeals officers when they made their decisions, or if circumstances have changed in the intervening period, it is open to her to re-apply for the allowance at any time.

Disability Allowance Scheme Criteria

103. Deputy Charlie McConologue asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason persons who are currently in receipt of disability allowance are not allowed to pursue schemes under Tús; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19532/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Tús - the community work placement initiative - came into operation in mid-2011 and to date some 7,824 people have completed or are currently serving in work placements provided by community organisations. The purpose of Tús is to support the work-readiness of people who are unemployed for a year or more. For this reason, eligibility is confined to those in receipt of a job seekers payment from the Department of Social Protection. These provisions are to ensure a highly targeted approach on those at danger of falling into long term unemployment. A person cannot apply for a Tús supported position and all selection is undertaken by random processes undertaken by the Department of Social Protection.

Persons in receipt of disability allowance are eligible for a range of other job activation initiatives, including community employment. The Deputy should note that I increased the range of options available to persons in receipt of disability allowance by announcing that with effect from the 28th of May 2012 the eligibility for JobBridge - the national internship scheme – was broadened to include people in receipt of disability allowance.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

104. Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will approve an application for domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19554/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received from the person concerned on the 17th April 2013. This application has been forwarded to one of the Department's Medical Assessors for their medical opinion. Upon receipt of this opinion, a decision will issue to the person concerned. It can take

up to 8 weeks to process an application for DCA.

Question No. 105 withdrawn.

Illness Benefit Appeals

106. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an illness benefit appeal will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19561/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that a Disability Allowance appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 6 March 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

National Carers Strategy

107. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views that family carer's provide an invaluable service and save the Government money by providing unpaid care to family members; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19587/13]

108. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her Department is considering any other options to support carers who are experiencing difficulties as a result of cuts to the respite care grant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19588/13]

110. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she has concerns that recent cuts to family carers will prevent persons from being cared for and growing old in their own homes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19609/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 107, 108 and 110 together.

The contribution that people provide in caring for members of their own family is critical for society. It was for that reason that the Government last year adopted the National Carers' Strategy with a view to giving greater public recognition to carers and their work. Carers receive significant income supports from my Department so that people can continue living at home. Expenditure on carers has increased significantly in recent years. In 2013 it is estimated to be €776 million compared with an estimated outturn of €771 million in 2012. The expenditure on carers in 2012 included: €509 million on carer's allowance; €24 million on carer's benefit; €135 million on the respite care grant and; €103 million on domiciliary care allowance. Carers also receive a free travel pass at an annual cost of €6 million and carers who reside with the care recipient are eligible for the household benefits package at an annual cost of approximately €30 million. The revised rate of the respite care grant of €1,375 will still be more than what it was in 2006 when the rate was €1,200.

The respite care grant is paid to more than 70,000 people each year, with some 5,000 people in receipt of more than one grant as they care for more than one person. Almost 54,000 people

are in receipt of the carer's allowance and 27,000 in receipt of the domiciliary care allowance. There are also 1,700 in receipt of carer's benefit. Some 5,000 carers not in receipt of a carer's payment also receive the grant.

The supports to carers from my Department are among the highest rates of income support in Europe. A person getting certain qualifying payments and also providing full-time care and attention to another person can keep their main social welfare payment and receive a half-rate carer's allowance as well. The half-rate carer's allowance was protected in Budget 2013. The respite care grant is available to all full-time carers regardless of their means while the income disregard and means test for carers allowance is the most generous in the social welfare system. A couple under 66 with two children, earning a joint annual income of up to €35,400 can qualify for the maximum rate of carer's allowance while a couple earning €59,300 will still qualify for the minimum rate. Carers are entitled to an extra half-rate carer's allowance if they care for more than one person and a respite care grant for each care recipient.

Question No. 109 withdrawn.

Question No. 110 answered with Question No. 107.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

111. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Social Protection if rent support is payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19618/13]

119. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Social Protection if rent support is payable in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin who has accumulated considerable rent arrears and is in danger of being evicted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19713/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 111 and 119 together.

The Rent Supplement claim in this case was suspended, pending establishment of entitlement to a primary social welfare payment. The person concerned made a repeat claim for Jobseekers Allowance in December 2012, following suspension of an earlier Jobseekers Allowance claim that was disallowed in August 2011 which was upheld on appeal in September 2012. The current Jobseekers Allowance claim has now been disallowed on the basis that the person concerned failed to provide evidence of the circumstances and means. As it has been decided that there is no entitlement to a primary social welfare payment, the person concerned is not entitled to Rent Supplement. The person concerned has a right of appeal in relation to the disallowance of the Jobseekers Allowance claim.

Free Travel Scheme Applications

112. Deputy Pat Breen asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a companion travel pass will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19646/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned's application for a Companion Free Travel Pass was medically assessed by a Medical Assessor on 24 April 2013. The medical opinion has been conveyed to Household Benefits Section, Sligo and

the person will be contacted shortly regarding the decision on his application.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

113. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on an appeal for domiciliary care allowance and carer's benefit in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19652/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that a revised decision favourable to the person concerned was made by the Department of Social Protection in respect of her Domiciliary Care Allowance claim. The person concerned has been notified of this decision. With regard to the Carer's Benefit appeal of the person concerned, I am advised that an Appeals Officer having fully considered all the available evidence allowed the appeal by way of summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's 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.

National Internship Scheme Administration

114. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will consider amending the eligibility criteria for the JobBridge scheme to allow a person complete more than one internship beyond the current limit of nine months to facilitate those who have not yet secured employment and who wish to improve their employment prospects by gaining more experience. [19667/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Since it commenced on 1 July, 2011, Jobbridge has made exceptional progress. At 18 April, 2013, 16,545 had commenced internships, 5,947 individuals were on internships and 2,452 internship opportunities were advertised. The recent independent evaluation of the Scheme found that 61% of interns have progressed into employment on within five months of completing their internship. This represents very significant progress in a short period of time and compares very favourably with outcomes of similar schemes across Europe.

JobBridge is a short-term and targeted intervention. It has been launched in a targeted way to allocate scarce exchequer resources to make maximum impact for long term unemployment while ensuring that it does not replace or displace the normal operation of the labour market, which is an essential element of Ireland's economic recovery. It is essential to strike a balance between our commitments to combat unemployment through the up-skilling opportunities provided by quality internship placements that offer real workplace experience, on the one hand, and the potential to destabilise the normal functioning of the labour market and a consequent reduction of opportunities for permanent employment, on the other.

The Department of Social Protection does not allow for exceptions in the nine-month limit at present. Currently, a jobseeker may partake in a maximum of two internships to a maximum cumulative time period of 9 months. However, the independent evaluation of the Scheme is currently being finalised by Indecon International Economic Consultants. Part of its remit includes recommendations on how the Scheme might be improved or expanded. The final report will be published at the beginning of May. At that stage, I will give further consideration to amending the terms and conditions of the Scheme.

Questions - Written Answers
Disability Allowance Appeals

115. Deputy Michael Creed asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will advise on the status of a disability allowance appeal application by a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19676/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 31 January 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Pension Provisions

116. Deputy Dan Neville asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on a pension scheme (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19681/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Labour Court recommended in July 2008 that an agreed pension scheme should be introduced for community employment (CE) scheme supervisors and assistant supervisors, and that such a scheme should be adequately funded by FÁS. Notwithstanding the positions of the Department (who now has responsibility for CE) in rejecting that liability for these costs to be met from public funds, this matter has been the subject of discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the unions representing CE supervisors. In the event that funding was required from the Department of Social Protection, the implementation of the claim is not considered sustainable in light of the current and ongoing fiscal environment and the requirement to contain and reduce public expenditure. The costs of the introduction of any scheme are likely to be of the order of €3m per annum with retrospective costs of the order of at least €30m.

It should also note that the Department of Social Protection is not the employer of CE supervisors and such employees are not public servants. Neither was FÁS or the Department of Social Protection a party to the Labour Court dispute on this matter. The responsibilities of the sponsoring organisations and the individuals concerned must also be recognised when considering pension provision arrangements.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

117. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Social Protection the position in regard to the determination of eligibility for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19711/13]

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 30 October 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

118. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for jobseeker's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19712/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned made a repeat claim for Jobseeker's Allowance in December 2012, following disallowance of an earlier claim in August 2011 which was upheld on appeal in September 2012. Following investigation, the current Jobseekers Allowance claim has been disallowed as the person concerned failed to provide evidence of their circumstances and means. The person concerned has a right to appeal this decision.

Question No. 119 answered with Question No. 111.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

120. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the availability of rent support in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 2; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19714/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): According to our records, no claim for rent allowance has been received from the person concerned. She should contact her local Community Welfare Officer if she wishes to make such a claim.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

121. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if and when rent support will be made payable in respect of a person details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19715/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is currently in receipt of a rent supplement payment.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

122. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide in tabular form the number of civil and public servants under the remit of his Department who earn more than €500,000, between €400,000 and €500,000, €300,000 and €400,000, €250,000 and €300,000, €200,000 and €250,000, €150,000 and €200,000, €100,000 and €150,000, €80,000 and €100,000, €60,000 and €80,000, €40,000 and €60,000, €30,000 and €40,000 and less than €30,000. [19494/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I would refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 407 of 23 April 2013.

Grant Payments

123. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Questions - Written Answers

the number of grants allocated for the purpose of a kitchen for a club (details supplied); the value of these grants over the period of the past 13 years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19572/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): I have been informed by Údarás na Gaeltachta that 2 grants in total, as detailed in the table below, were approved and paid to the club referred to by the Deputy in respect of the construction and refurbishment of a day care centre in the period 2005 - 2008.

Type of grant	Approved	Amount Paid
Capital	€83,385	€78,013
Capital	€57,159	€53,749
Total	€140,544	€131,762

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Payments

124. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when persons approved and paid in previous years under the turf compensation scheme will be issued with their 2013 payment; when deliveries of turf will commence for those that have taken up this offer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19607/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Some 2,668 applications for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme have been received and acknowledged by my Department. A total of 2,192 payments and 205 deliveries of turf have been made in respect of the applications received. Payments and turf deliveries have been made on the basis that applicants have indicated in their application forms that they fulfil all the qualifying criteria of the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme. My Department has been checking, and is continuing to check, that all such criteria have been met in each case. Applications are currently being assessed with a view to beginning to issue payments in respect of 2013 in the coming weeks. An additional once-off payment of €500 will also be provided where legal agreements are signed with me, as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. My Department has begun to send out legal agreements to applicants. It will take some time for the Department's contractor to have turf, suitable for domestic use, ready for delivery. I expect that such deliveries will begin in July or August next.

Offshore Islands

125. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will outline the funding, both the amount and source, provided to Inishboffin from his Department in 2012. [19672/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): The following table illustrates for the Deputy, the amount expended by my Department in relation to Inishbofin in 2012:

Grantee	Type of Expenditure	Amount
Inishbofin Island Discovery Ltd	Passenger Ferry & Bus Service for Inishbofin	€258,098
Blackshell Farm Ltd	Cargo Ferry Service for Inishbofin	€340,000

Grantee	Type of Expenditure	Amount
Brennan Fencing Ltd	Fencing at Inishbofin Aerodrome	€35,115
Galway Co Council	Construction of passenger shelter at Cleggan	€15,000
TOTAL		€648,213

Arts Funding

126. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the full extent of grant aid made available for the promotion of the arts in 2012; the extent to which he expects to be in a position to continue such support in the current year notwithstanding the economic situation inherited from his predecessors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19699/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The Revised Estimates Volume was published last week by my colleague the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. This contains full details of all funding to the Arts in 2012 along with allocations for 2013. Funding for the Arts Council in 2013 is €60.7m. These details are available at <http://per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/REVISED-ESTIMATES-VOLUME-2013-final.pdf>.

Arts Funding

127. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which he and his Department or subsidiary bodies have, in the past two years, supported local community groups involved in musical or theatrical productions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19700/13]

128. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will indicate, on the examination of applications for grant aid from local community based musical or theatrical groups, if the existence of some such groups who have never received such assistance has come to attention; if any evaluation can be done with a view to addressing such issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19701/13]

131. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which his support for the arts sector continues to result in continued activity and employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19704/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 127, 128 and 131 together.

The Government's policy on the arts is to promote and strengthen the arts in all its forms, to increase access to and participation in the arts, and to make the arts an integral and valued part of our national life. I am continuing to work towards this goal with my Department and the agencies within its remit and I remain committed to securing the best possible level of funding for the arts sector.

Primary responsibility for funding for the arts rests with the Arts Council. The Council is independent in its decision-making process. Details of the Council's successful applicants are available on the Council's website at www.artscouncil.ie, as well as the decision-making panel and statistics on applications. In 2013, the Arts Council will receive an allocation of some €60.7 million in current, capital and EU Presidency funding. Under the Arts Act, 2003, the provision

of funding is a matter in the sole remit of the Arts Council. I am precluded by statute from intervening in the Arts Council's decisions on funding. I recently announced a new Philanthropy Initiative for 2013. This year, €210,000 will be available to arts organisations under the scheme. The application form is available on my Department's website and applications are dealt with on a first-come-first-served basis.

The State appreciates and values the contribution the arts sector makes to the internationally renowned artistic reputation of this country. Within the current economic constraints, that investment in the arts, culture and creative sectors is more important than ever, having regard to the employment intensity of the sector. In October 2012, the Arts Council published its latest update of the Assessment of the Economic Impact of the Arts in Ireland and it is available at http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/publications/research_publications.aspx.

Question No. 129 answered with Question No. 10.

Question No. 130 answered with Question No. 50.

Question No. 131 answered with Question No. 127.

Question No. 132 answered with Question No. 19.

Film Industry Development

133. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which his Department continues to support the film industry here; the degree to which external film interest continues to engage in the sector in this country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19706/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Primary responsibility for the support and promotion of film-making in Ireland in respect of both the indigenous sector and inward productions is a matter for the Irish Film Board (IFB). The IFB is the statutorily independent agency responsible for the promotion and development of the Irish film industry and I have no responsibility in relation to its day-to-day operational matters, including policies and the allocation of resources to different support programmes and schemes.

My Department's operational role in supporting the film sector relates to the administration of elements of Section 481 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 that provides tax relief for investments in qualifying films. This involves the administration of certain elements of the scheme regarding satisfying cultural criteria. The types of film eligible for certification are feature film, television drama, creative documentary and animation. As Deputies will be aware, the benefits of film and television production in Ireland include not only job creation in the industry itself but also hugely positive spin-off effects for promoting Ireland as a tourist destination and as an industrial location for all aspects of creative endeavours.

Tourism Promotion

134. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which the oldest historical and heritage sites in this country are promoted internationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19707/13]

135. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which his Department works in unison with the authorities in Northern Ireland in

the promotion of heritage sites of Irish culture; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19708/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 134 and 135 together.

Promotion of Ireland as a tourist designation is primarily a matter for Tourism Ireland, which as all-island body, promotes Irish heritage abroad from both North and South. The unique qualities of Ireland's national heritage play a significant role in enhancing and projecting Ireland's image abroad, and in supporting economic renewal through cultural and heritage tourism and in downstream opportunities, such as in the retail, catering and accommodation sectors. For example, according to Fáilte Ireland, some 3.5 million overseas visitors engaged in cultural activities while in Ireland in 2011. Over 2.5 million tourists visited historic houses or castles, while 2 million visited our archaeological monuments, with over 3.7 million visitors to heritage sites where the Office of Public Works provides a guide service. My Department's network of National Parks and Reserves are also a major part of Ireland's tourism attractions.

I am committed to availing of every possible opportunity to project a positive global image for Ireland and to this aim I recently met with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to enhance co-operation between my Department and both Toursim bodies in promoting heritage and tourism. I am particularly conscious in the context of 2013 being the year of The Gathering initiative. My Department is actively engaged in a wide range of activities to this end, both in co-operation with bodies such as Fáilte Ireland and the Office of Public Works, and in promoting its own initiatives such as our 'Places to See' and 'Monuments to Visit' websites, which provide directions to lesser known heritage sites and details of what the visitor can expect to find on arrival. In addition, my Department provides core funding for the Heritage Council, which supports a range of initiatives, including National Heritage Week.

This year, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, my Department is also initiating a pilot programme, the Historic Towns Initiative, in Youghal, Westport and Listowel with the Heritage Council and the local authorities in each town. This initiative is intended to promote heritage-led regeneration with the objective of harnessing cultural heritage to create desirable places to live, do business and visit. The redevelopment of Killarney House in Killarney National Park will also be a major tourism asset in years to come. These are but a sample of the overall range of initiatives and programmes my Department is helping to promote, support or guide as a means of preserving the quality and diversity of our heritage, which in turn, is basis for positively promoting that heritage abroad.

On the broader issue of North/South cooperation, my Department's remit includes the Waterways Ireland and the Language Body (encompassing Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster Scots Agency) which have a key role in tourism and cultural development and my Department also works on a range of issues across the area of built heritage, arts and culture and the natural heritage with public agencies in Northern Ireland where opportunities for co-operation arise.

Cultural and Historical Sites

136. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which his Department is engaged in the restoration of major historical or cultural sites throughout the country at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19709/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The information requested is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Questions - Written Answers
Cultural and Historical Sites

137. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which he and his Department have identified buildings or sites or cultural or historical significance deemed to be at risk for whatever reason; the action in hand or planned to address such issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19710/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): My Department has a comprehensive suite of tools, both legislative and advisory, at its disposal to address reports of actual damage or threats of damage to protected structures and monuments. All known archaeological monuments, of which there are in excess of 130,000, are entitled to protection under the National Monuments Acts. The National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 allow me to make a preservation order where I consider a national monument to be at risk. Protection may be extended to previously unrecorded monuments by entering them in the Register of Historic Monuments or the Record of Monuments and Places. Prosecutions in respect of damage to recorded monuments are initiated where warranted.

Under section 53 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2011, I may make recommendations to a planning authority concerning the inclusion in its record of protected structures any structures which I consider would merit such inclusion and the attendant planning restrictions which would apply to protect the structures' special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. My Department has been and is currently involved in various actions which aim to address specific issues such as the endangerment of our national heritage. These include the work of an expert advisory committee, set up in 2011 and representing key stakeholders, to review the operation of Part IV of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2011 in respect of protection and management of architectural heritage.

Additionally I provide funding through a Structures at Risk Fund to assist with works to safeguard structures protected under Part IV and, in certain cases, works to safeguard structures within Architectural Conservation Areas, where an urgent need for works to such structures has arisen and has been demonstrated. Comprehensive statistics are not available in respect of the numbers of reports of actual damage or threats of damage to protected structures and monuments.

Question No. 138 answered with Question No. 19.

Television Licence Fee Collection

139. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of television licences issued in the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [19490/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): An Post is charged with the role of "issuing agent" in respect of the collection and administration of television licence fees in accordance with the provisions of section 145 of the Broadcasting Act 2009. The number of licences issued in any particular year is a combination of direct sales by An Post and 'free licences' issued by the Department of Social Protection. The number of TV licences issued on behalf of Social Welfare recipients varies according to the number of people eligible for the Household Benefits Package, and this can change from month to month.

The table below provides (i) the total number of licences sold by An Post in the year in question and (ii) the number of "free licences" recorded on the Department of Social Protection's

database at the end of the year in question, which is a reflection of the number of free licences in existence at that point in time.

-	2013	2012	2011	2010
Number of TV Licences sold directly by An Post	227,813 (to end Mar)	1,003,860	1,021,443	1,038,665
Number of TV Licences issued by the Department of Social Protection	410,414 (Mar figure)	407,927	403,815	393,051
Total Licences	638,227	1,411,787	1,425,258	1,431,716

Departmental Staff Remuneration

140. Deputy Finian McGrath asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide in tabular form the number of civil and public servants under the remit of his Department who earn more than €500,000, between €400,000 and €500,000, €300,000 and €400,000, €250,000 and €300,000, €200,000 and €250,000, €150,000 and €200,000, €100,000 and €150,000, €80,000 and €100,000, €60,000 and €80,000, €40,000 and €60,000, €30,000 and €40,000 and less than €30,000. [19495/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):
The information requested by the Deputy, in respect of my Department, is outlined below:

Salary Band	Number of Staff
0 – 30K	47
30K - 40K	47
40K - 60K	95
60K - 80K	41
80K - 100K	28
100K - 150K	9
150K - 200K	1

No member of staff in my Department is paid a salary greater than €200,000.

Information in respect of bodies and agencies under the aegis of my Department is a day to day matter for those organisations and my Department does not have the information sought by the Deputy.

Mobile Telephone Chargers

141. Deputy Finian McGrath asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to seek agreement during the EU Presidency to expedite the abolition of roaming charges here and in Europe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19548/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):
EU Regulation No. 531/2012 of the European Parliament and the Council of 13 June 2012 on

roaming on public mobile communications networks within the Union regulates the maximum retail charges which can be imposed for mobile roaming services in the EU. It is the third in a series of such Regulations, each of which has reduced the maximum permitted roaming charges.

The current EU Regulation, which commenced on 1 July 2012, imposes further reductions to retail roaming charges to be implemented by 1 July 2013 and a further reduction required by 1 July 2014. The Regulation also provides for a review of its effectiveness, including a review of the availability of offers providing a single tariff for national and roaming services, to be undertaken by the EU Commission and a report to be submitted to the European Parliament and Council by 30 June 2016. It is within this timeframe that any additional steps to further reduce the maximum permitted retail roaming charges will be considered.

While roaming is not part of the list of new legislative and non-legislative files being dealt with by the Irish Presidency, there is a clear EU timetable for reducing the maximum permitted roaming rates, which will include further reductions from 1 July 2013. The review mechanism is also designed to ensure that the impact of these measures is closely monitored and that new measures can be introduced if necessary.

VAT Payments

142. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding VAT registration (details supplied). [19580/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 182 of 24 April 2013 which sets out the position in the matter.

Local Authority Housing Issues

143. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the local councils have the right to refuse tenants the right to put in gas meters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19518/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Under Section 58 of the Housing Act 1966, the management and maintenance of the local authority housing stock, is the responsibility of the relevant housing authority. As owners of their social rented properties decisions in relation to the installation of fittings and equipment, including gas meters, are a matter for individual housing authorities.

Local Authority Housing Issues

144. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if local councils have the authority to amend the tenants handbook and change terms and conditions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19519/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The management and maintenance of local authority dwellings is a matter for the authority concerned and one in which I have no function. The tenancy agreement is the legal basis for the relationship between the housing authority and its

tenant and can be amended by agreement between the parties. Where a tenant's consent is not forthcoming to an amendment considered necessary by an authority, it is a matter for the authority to determine how to proceed having regard to its powers under the Housing Acts and the tenancy agreement concerned.

Pyrite Remediation Programme Implementation

145. Deputy Seán Kenny asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the services the Pyrite Resolution Board can offer to householders who are affected by pyrite; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19551/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I set up the Pyrite Resolution Board (PRB) to oversee and ensure the effective implementation of a pyrite remediation scheme for homeowners who have no other viable option to have pyrite remediation works undertaken. The Board is currently drawing up the precise scope and detail of a pyrite remediation scheme including the eligibility criteria, priorities, procedures and assessment /testing requirements etc. It is also in the process of developing a website where all relevant documentation in relation to the remediation scheme will be made available. It will take some time for the necessary structures to be put in place, including funding, to enable the Resolution Board to begin accepting applications.

The not-for-profit entity, being established by the construction stakeholders, will operate the remediation scheme and the PRB will work closely with it to ensure delivery of the maximum possible progress in remediating dwellings which are affected by significant damage due to pyritic heave within defined priorities. It will receive and assess applications for remediation under the terms and conditions of the scheme and will have oversight of the various stages of the remediation process to ensure that works are carried out in accordance with I.S. 398 -2:2013 - *Reactive pyrite in sub-floor hardcore material – Methodology for remediation works*. The Chairman and members of the PRB are committed to ensuring that an efficient and effective remediation process is delivered and that the public interest and the interest of affected homeowners are well served.

Environmental Protection Agency Investigations

146. Deputy Anthony Lawlor asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update with regard to the detailed site investigation under way at a location (details supplied) in County Kildare; when he expects the detailed design of the full remediation works programme to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19556/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Environmental Protection Agency is currently managing the site concerned, including works such as leachate and odour management. My Department continues to provide funding to support this work from the Environment Fund.

I understand that contracts were signed on 27 February, 2013 for the provision of site management services and for the development of an options report for the future remediation of the site. This report will be vital to ensuring that the best technical, environmental and most cost-effective solution for the site is chosen. It is anticipated that the report will be completed in May and this will then inform the approach to remediation.

Questions - Written Answers
Water and Sewerage Schemes Status

147. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding a sewage scheme (details supplied) in County Cork; when he expects the project works to commence; the expected timetable for its completion; if he will confirm that funding will be provided by his Department to complete the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19637/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013 provides for the development of a comprehensive range of new water services infrastructure in County Cork. The Programme includes contracts under construction and to commence to the value of some €230 million in the county during the period of the Programme. The Castletownbere Sewerage Scheme is included in the Programme as a scheme to advance through planning during the life of the Programme. My Department is awaiting the submission by Cork County Council of a revised Preliminary Report for the scheme.

Offshore Islands

148. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline the funding, both the amount and source, provided to Inishbofin from his Department in 2012. [19671/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In 2012 the Community Division of my Department provided funding for Inishbofin under the Local and Community Development Programme (€116,907.00) and the Rural Development Programme (€23,422.73). The funding was channelled through Comhar na nOileán, the Local Development Company with responsibility for Programme delivery on the offshore islands.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding

149. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the funding that will be provided by his Department under the rural water programme to Cavan County Council for 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19679/13]

150. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the funding that will be provided by his Department under the rural water programme to Monaghan County Council for 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19680/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 149 and 150 together.

Responsibility for the administration of the Rural Water Programme has been devolved to local authorities since 1997. The selection and approval of individual scheme proposals for advancement and funding under the programme, within the overall priorities set by my Department and subject to the block grant allocations provided, is therefore a matter for the water services authorities.

The following table sets out the total capital block grant allocations notified in March 2013 to Cavan County Council and Monaghan County Council under the 2013 Rural Water Programme.

-	Group Water Schemes	Small Public Schemes
Cavan County Council	€500,000	€82,500
Monaghan County Council	€150,000	€18,750

Funding will also be available to both authorities for drawdown from the Local Government Fund for subsidies towards the operational costs of group water schemes. Such funding is provided on a demand led basis rather than by way of block grant allocations.

Local Authority Charges Application

151. Deputy Heather Humphreys asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if, as part of the Valuation Bill, he will consider instructing local authorities to ring-fence the moneys received from pay parking and use these funds to provide a rebate to ratepayers in order to ease the financial burden on businesses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19686/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Valuation (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2012 is a matter for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. However, it is up to every local authority to determine its own spending priorities in the context of the annual budgetary process, having regard to both locally identified needs and available resources, including moneys received from paid parking. I have no plans at present to issue instructions with regard to income derived from parking fees.

Household Charge Exemptions

152. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will list the estates in County Cavan that were exempt from payment of the household charge; if any of these estates are now liable for payment of the property tax; the reason for such exemptions being removed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19688/13]

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.

The list of estates exempted from payment of the household charge, as well as the list of estates which are entitled to a waiver from the local property tax, are both available on my Department's website, www.environ.ie.

Coroners Service

153. Deputy Terence Flanagan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide a breakdown of fees paid to experts in an inquest (details supplied) listing the names of the experts, their qualifications and the amount being paid to them to date; the amount that is expected to be paid to them in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19557/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Under the Coroners Act, 1962, a Coroner is a statutory officer exercising quasi-judicial functions in relation to which he/she is independent and neither I nor my Department has any role in the conduct of any inquest, including the calling of any witnesses. I understand that the Coroner, Dr. Ciarán MacLoughlin, called a number of expert witnesses to assist the inquest in the case referred to by the Deputy. The Local Authority, in consultation with the coroner, is responsible for paying fees and expenses relating to inquests. A breakdown of the fees is not yet available, but I will arrange to have details forwarded to the Deputy in due course.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

154. Deputy Finian McGrath asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide in tabular form the number of civil and public servants under the remit of his Department who earn more than €500,000, between €400,000 and €500,000, €300,000 and €400,000, €250,000 and €300,000, €200,000 and €250,000, €150,000 and €200,000, €100,000 and €150,000, €80,000 and €100,000, €60,000 and €80,000, €40,000 and €60,000, €30,000 and €40,000 and less than €30,000. [19501/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The information sought by the Deputy in respect of staff of my Department and agencies under its aegis is set out in the following table. The figures are based on annual gross salary and do not include allowances or overtime. The salary bands include staff employed on both a full-time and a work-sharing basis.

Salary Bands	Number of persons
over €500,000	0
€200,001 - €500,000	0
€150,001 - €200,000	9
€100,001 - €150,000	116
€80,001 - €100,000	212
€60,001 - €80,000	538
€40,001 - €60,000	3406
€30,001 - €40,000	1896
less than €30,000	1418

The figures above represent staff of my Department, agencies staffed by my Department and agencies that are responsible for their own recruitment such as the Legal Aid Board, Property

Registration Authority, Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, Irish Prison Service, Irish Human Rights Commission, Courts Service and the National Disability Authority. Information on the salary band breakdown for An Garda Síochána is not to hand and will be forwarded to the Deputy separately.

Proposed Legislation

155. Deputy Andrew Doyle asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a draft of the mental capacity Bill will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19537/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Drafting of the Bill is currently being finalised so that it can shortly be submitted to Government to approve its publication in this session. The Bill will implement the commitment in the Programme for Government to introduce a Bill that is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It will offer a statutory framework to support people with impaired capacity to make decisions, to retain autonomy over their decisions to the greatest extent possible and to exercise their basic rights. The revised title of the Bill - Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Bill reflects this approach.

UN Conventions Ratification

156. Deputy Andrew Doyle asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on the steps he and his Department have taken towards ratifying the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; if he will outline the remaining legislative work that is required by his Department before it is ratified by Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19539/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): At my Department one of the key requirements is the enactment of capacity legislation. Drafting of the Bill is being finalised with a view to meeting the commitment in the Government Legislation Programme which indicates that the Bill is expected to be published in the current session. The Programme for Government contains a commitment to introduce a Bill that is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Work is being completed to properly align the provisions of the Bill with the principles contained in the UN Convention on supporting people with impaired capacity in making decisions and exercising their basic rights. I envisage that the revised title of the Bill, The Assisted Decision - Making (Capacity) Bill, will reflect this approach.

The ongoing implementation of our National Disability Strategy in many respects comprehends many of the provisions of the Convention. In addition, the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Convention chaired by my Department monitors the remaining legislative and administrative actions required to enable ratification. The committee has identified as part of its work programme, issues to be considered by various Government Departments including my Department. At the Committee's request, the National Disability Authority, the lead statutory agency for the sector, is in the process of assisting it to assess the remaining requirements for ratification so as to ensure conclusively that all such issues will be addressed.

It is the Government's intention to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to ensure that all necessary legislative and administrative requirements under the Convention are being met. As the Deputy may be aware, Ireland does not become party to treaties until it is first in a position to comply with the obligations imposed by the treaty in question, including by amending domestic law as

necessary.

Garda Vetting Applications

157. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the delay in a person receiving a Garda vetting clearance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19569/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) provides employment vetting for approximately 20,000 organisations in Ireland, registered with the Unit for this purpose, which employ personnel to work in a full-time, part time, voluntary or student capacity with children and / or vulnerable adults. The Unit processed approximately 328,000 vetting applications on behalf of these organisations in 2012.

The current average processing time for applications is approximately 12 weeks from date of receipt. However, seasonal fluctuations and the necessity to seek additional information on particular applications can result in this processing time being exceeded on occasion. All organisations registered for Garda Vetting are aware of the processing time-frames for the receipt of Garda vetting and have been advised to factor this into their recruitment and selection process.

Following discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, sanction was granted for an additional 25 staff to be re-deployed from the Department of Agriculture to the Garda Central Vetting Unit. I am pleased to announce that these personnel transferred to the GCVU on 22 April 2013. When these staff have been fully trained on the vetting process I expect there will be a positive effect on vetting times. Since I became Minister, it has been a priority for me that processing times should be kept to a minimum consistent with maintaining the overall integrity of the vetting system. This is an absolute necessity given the very important role of the vetting system.

Refugee Status Applications

158. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed to make an application for subsidiary protection in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 8; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19596/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): A person who is refused a declaration of refugee status by the Minister for Justice and Equality is, in addition to other options, notified of their entitlement to apply for subsidiary protection in the State. The details in this regard are set out in the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 (Statutory Instrument No. 518 of 2006).

The Deputy might wish to note that I am proposing to introduce new arrangements for the processing of subsidiary protection applications with a view to improving processing in the area of international protection and in light of recent judgments in the Superior Courts. My Department, in consultation with the Attorney General's Office, is developing a new legislative and administrative framework for the processing of current and future subsidiary protection applications. This work is being given high priority and applicants will be advised of the new arrangements as soon as possible.

If an application for refugee status has been made by the person concerned, the Deputy will

be aware that it is not the practice to comment on applications which have not completed this process.

Alcohol Sales Legislation

159. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of test purchases which have been undertaken by An Garda Síochána under section 14 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008 since the launch of the guidelines on 1 October 2010; the number of successful convictions which have arisen from test purchases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19599/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Section 14 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008 makes provision for the test purchasing of alcohol products. The primary objective of the scheme, which entered into force on 1 October 2010, is to enable An Garda Síochána to target those licensed premises which are suspected of engaging in illegal sales of alcohol to young people. I am informed by the Garda authorities that, up to 23 April 2013, section 14 of the 2008 Act has been invoked on 937 occasions with 120 proceedings commenced and 12 convictions recorded arising from test purchasing operations. The figures provided are operational and liable to change.

Garda Transport Provision

160. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the 213 extra Garda vehicles that were purchased last year have been delivered to their divisions; if not, the number of vehicles that remain outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19600/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda vehicles are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the context of his identified operational demands and in the light of available resources. I am informed by the Garda authorities that all of the patrol vehicles procured in 2012 have been rolled out at this stage. In that connection I would draw the attention of the Deputy to the details I provided to him in my reply to Question No. 967 on 16th April 2013 (Ref: 17638/13).

Garda Strength

161. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of promotions at the rank of sergeants, inspectors, superintendents and chief superintendents that have been approved and filled since 1 December 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19601/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the strengths of those ranks referred to by the Deputy on 31 March 2013 were Sergeant 1,933, Inspector 294, Superintendent, 153, Chief Superintendent, 41 and Assistant Commissioner 9. These figures include promotions approved and made since 1 December 2012 to ranks of Inspector (34) and Sergeant (82) on 28 March 2013 but do not include appointments to the rank of Superintendent (14) and Chief Superintendent (4) which are expected in the very near future.

Garda Forms

162. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the PSNI road collision report is being examined in the context of the current review of the CT68 form; if the revised CT68 form will record the incidents of hit and run collisions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19608/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy is aware, An Garda Síochána is currently examining the C(T)68 Form and the information captured on it. I understand from the Garda authorities that the review process is being carried out in consultation with the Road Safety Authority and the National Roads Authority. At this stage it is not possible to indicate what the outcome will be and, in the overall context, the Deputy will appreciate that the specific items provided for in the Form are determined by the Garda Commissioner.

Residency Permits

163. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if, in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare, it is permissible to seek an update of their stamp 4 or if further provisions are required to facilitate their efforts to obtain a national passport from their homeland which can only be done through the relevant embassy in the UK, having particular regard to the fact that their mother is an Irish citizen, with whom they arrived here in 2003; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19615/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned is the sibling of an Irish born child of non-EEA parents born in the State prior to 1 January, 2005. She was granted temporary permission to remain in the State by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) in April, 2008 on the basis of family dependency. This permission was renewed subsequently on 24 March, 2010 until 23 March, 2013. As this person is now currently out of permission, she should make a formal written renewal request to the INIS, PO Box 10003, Dublin 1. Upon receipt of such request, her case will be examined and a decision made on her future status in the State.

The purpose of a national passport is to establish a person's citizenship and identity so that international travel and residence may be facilitated. Given the importance of ensuring that an immigration permission be availed of only by the person for whom it is intended, it is a fundamental requirement in immigration regimes around the world that foreign national visitors or residents must be in possession of a valid passport so a person's identity can be verified and so that the appropriate immigration permission may be placed within it.

While I am aware that people can encounter difficulties in this area, the conditions under which a national passport is issued or renewed is essentially a matter between the citizen and their national government.

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.

Deportation Orders

164. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position in regard to submissions made following the issue of a deportation order against a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19617/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned arrived in the State in March, 2011. Given that she did not have any legal basis to remain in the State, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), she was notified, by letter dated 26th November, 2012, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why she should not have a Deportation Order made against her. Representations have been submitted by and on behalf of the person concerned.

The position in the State of the person concerned will now be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Prison Accommodation

165. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the costs for staffed prison space, all prisons, which amounted to €65,359 per space in 2011 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19629/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The information requested by the Deputy, is set out in the following table.

Accommodation - Related Variable Costs	Cost Per Staffed Prison Space - 2011
Utilities	2,303
Maintenance, Repairs & Small Works	1,906
-	4,209
Prisoner - Related Variable Costs	-
Healthcare	1,937
Catering	1,875
Gratuities	861
Prisoner Clothing, Laundry & Bedding	480
Work Training, Education & Recreation	461
Motor Vehicles & Related Costs	130

Accommodation - Related Variable Costs	Cost Per Staffed Prison Space - 2011
Other	54
	5,798
Prisoner - Related Fixed Costs	-
Direct Salary Costs	43,238
Staff Related Costs	370
Other Administration Costs	235
Travel & Subsistence	194
	44,037
Non-Custodial Costs (Incl. Prisoner Escorts)	-
Non Direct Salary Costs	4,981
PSEC Staffing, Operational and Administration Costs	2,508
Non Direct IT / Telephone Costs	1,333
Non Direct Legal / Compensation Costs	658
Non Direct Variable Costs	650
Non Direct Staff Related Costs	607
Non Direct Maintenance, Repairs & Small Works	295
Non Direct Utility Costs	183
Non Direct Other Administration Costs	100
-	11,315
Total	65,359

Offences Against the State Act

166. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the rationale for the annual review mechanism provided for in section 18 of the Offences Against the State (Amendment) Act 1998, as amended by section 37 of the Criminal Justice Act 1999; if he will list any other similar review mechanisms which exist in legislation here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19631/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy will be aware the Offences Against the State (Amendment) Act 1998 was enacted by the Oireachtas in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing of August 1998. This atrocity which took the lives of 28 innocent men, women and children was carried out by terrorists opposed to peace on this island. The purpose of the Act was to strengthen the powers of An Garda Síochána in tackling these criminal terrorists.

Section 18 of the 1998 Act, as amended by section 37 of the Criminal Justice Act 1999, provides that certain sections of the 1998 Act must be reviewed annually and would cease to operate unless a resolution had been passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas confirming the continuation of the sections. I presume the rational behind the annual review mechanism is to ensure transparency in the application of the Act and to enable members of the Oireachtas to consider whether the security threat which gave rise to the powers in question remains. With regard to the areas for which I have responsibility as Minister, a similar review mechanism is in place with regard to section 8 of the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 which provides for the trial in the Special Criminal Court of certain organised crime offences.

Garda Vetting Applications

167. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the long processing time, 15 to 16 weeks, regarding Garda vetting (details supplied). [19632/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) provides employment vetting for approximately 20,000 organisations in Ireland, registered with the Unit for this purpose, which employ personnel to work in a full-time, part time, voluntary or student capacity with children and/or vulnerable adults. The Unit processed approximately 328,000 vetting applications on behalf of these organisations in 2012.

The current average processing time for applications is approximately 12 weeks from date of receipt. However, seasonal fluctuations and the necessity to seek additional information on particular applications can result in this processing time being exceeded on occasion. All organisations registered for Garda Vetting are aware of the processing time-frames for the receipt of Garda vetting and have been advised to factor this into their recruitment and selection process.

Following discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, sanction was granted for an additional 25 staff to be re-deployed from the Department of Agriculture to the Garda Central Vetting Unit. I am pleased to announce that these personnel transferred to the GCVU on 22 April 2013. When these staff have been fully trained on the vetting process I expect there will be a positive effect on vetting times. Since I became Minister, it has been a priority for me that processing times should be kept to a minimum consistent with maintaining the overall integrity of the vetting system. This is an absolute necessity given the very important role of the vetting system.

Naturalisation Applications

168. Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if time spent here as a foreign student studying is taken into account when a foreign national applies for residency and-or subsequently for naturalisation. [19642/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Residence in Ireland for the purposes of pursuing education is not reckonable for other immigration permissions such as long term residence and is specifically excluded from consideration in naturalisation applications by Section 16A(1)(b) of the the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 (as amended).

Student Visas

169. Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons who have student visas here at present; their country of origin; the number of years they are here for; and the number or percentage who applied to remain having completed their studies. [19643/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The number of non-EEA nationals who are currently registered in accordance with section 9 of the Immigration Act, 2004 and who have permission to remain as students (on immigration permission stamp No. 2) is approximately 32,900. This figure does not include non-EEA students who are in the State to engage in studies for a period of less than 3 months or who have permission to remain in the State in a different category (for example as a dependant of an Irish or EEA national).

The main country of origin for the persons concerned are the following: Brazil: 21%; China: 15%; USA: 7%; Malaysia: 5%; India: 5% and Saudi Arabia: 5%. In 2011 a New Student Regime was introduced which limits the time a person can remain in the State as a student to an aggregate maximum of seven years; the amount of time that each student is given permission to remain in the state is based on each individual application.

Due to the varied paths open to students it is not possible to readily identify the number who have applied to remain after completing studies. I would point out that students who are eligible may avail of the Graduate scheme which allows them to apply for a work permit to the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

Garda Vetting Applications

170. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a vetting application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly will be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19654/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that a vetting application on behalf of the person concerned was received by the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) on 31 January 2013. The application is being processed and will be returned to the registered organisation once completed.

Deportation Orders

171. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will defer deportation pending a full investigation into the circumstances whereby a deportation order issued in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow, who understood during their seven years employment here that their stamp 4 had been authorised and was fully up to date, notwithstanding his reply to previous parliamentary questions wherein it was indicated to the contrary; to ensure that no exploitation of such persons takes place and that persons in such employment are not deprived of their human rights, he will take immediate steps to have the matter fully investigated and the applicant's full entitlements restored; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19696/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): In the light of the new information supplied by the Deputy I have asked my officials to review this case as soon as possible. The outcome of that review will then be communicated to the person concerned.

Naturalisation Applications

172. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date in determination of eligibility for residency-naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19716/13]

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 October, 2012. The application is at an advanced stage of processing and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. 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.

Citizenship Applications

173. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date in determination of eligibility for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if an update of stamp 4 is required; if the person will be facilitated in the interim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19717/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in June, 2012. The application is currently being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation. Further information was requested from the person concerned in a letter issued on 23 April 2013. Once the requested information has been received and assessed the case will be finalised and submitted to me for decision. The person has currently permission to remain until 28 May 2013. He should ensure that his registration with the Garda National Immigration Bureau is kept up to date at all times during his residency in the State.

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.

Citizenship Applications

174. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made in determination of eligibility for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19718/13]

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 January, 2013. The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory condi-

tions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

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.

Deportation Orders

175. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will re-examine the deportation order in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; if the deportation order can be revoked pending a full investigation notwithstanding the previous assessment of the case and keeping in mind the considerable change in circumstances that has taken place since 2004; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19720/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to the Reply given to his Parliamentary Question Number 18674/13 of the 23 April, 2013. The status of the person concerned is as set out in that reply.

However, if new information or circumstances have come to light, which have a direct bearing on his 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 nor would it be considered until such time as the person concerned complies with the terms of the Deportation Order.

The person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 11th March 2005 following a comprehensive and thorough examination of his asylum claim and of his application to remain in the State. He has been evading his deportation since 19 May 2005 and should he come to the notice of the Gardai, he would be liable to arrest and detention. He should, therefore, present himself to the Garda National Immigration Bureau without any further delay.

As a matter of policy, I do not intend to reward persons who have failed a very fair, thorough and comprehensive asylum process, and who have then proceeded to evade their deportation for several years.

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

176. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 199 of 28 March 2013, if he will take into account in the determination of a case in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 20, if, given that change of circumstances since the making of the deportation order, this may be cited as sufficient change of circumstances to merit the withdrawal of the order; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19721/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that representations were recently received from the person's legal representative asking that this Deportation Order be revoked, in accordance with the provisions of Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act, 1999, (as amended). When a decision has been made on that application, the decision will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

The person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 20 April 2010, following a comprehensive and thorough examination of his asylum claim and his application for subsidiary protection, and a detailed examination of the representations he submitted for consideration under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). The effect of the Deportation Order is that the person concerned must leave the state and remain thereafter outside the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

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

177. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the entitlement in respect of residency/naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19722/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned applied for asylum in the State on 2 December, 2009 which refused by the Office of Refugee Applications Commissioner and on appeal by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. The case of the person concerned was then considered in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 and a Deportation Order was made in respect of them on 27 July, 2010. Judicial Review proceedings were instituted on 11 August, 2011. Accordingly, as the matter is sub judice, I do not propose to comment further.

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.

Questions - Written Answers
Departmental Staff Remuneration

178. Deputy Andrew Doyle asked the Minister for Defence the number people who are on the payroll in his Department and in the Irish Defence Forces; the number of physical payslips that his Department and the Irish Defence Force process each month; the percentage of these sent to payees in the post; if he will provide the breakdown in the overall cost of physical payslips and postage per year for the years 2008 to 2012; if payees have the option of switching to online payslips; if he and his Department will implement online payslips in the near future; if he has considered the savings this would make; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19511/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The numbers of people who are on the payroll of the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces are set out in the table.

Civil Servants	Civilian Employees	Defence Forces*	Defence Forces Pensioners
371	582	11,669	11,950

*Defence Forces include Enlisted Personnel; Officers and Reservists

The total number of payslips processed each month is 48,621 of which approximately 98% (47,725) are paper payslips which are issued through the post.

The table gives the overall cost of physical payslips and postage per annum for the years 2008 to 2012.

Year	Postage	Stationery and Production Costs	Overall Cost per annum
2008	€113,355.77	€41,543.25	€154,899.02
2009	€113,280.93	€36,978.00	€150,258.93
2010	€120,260.91	€29,148.71	€149,409.62
2011	€122,502.61	€29,492.00	€151,994.61
2012	€119,171.82	€32,416.43	€151,588.25

The Department currently has an online payslip facility which is currently limited to Departmental civil servants. The Department has considered the potential savings, the associated costs and security concerns associated with the extension of this facility to all employees and the matter is under active consideration.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

179. Deputy Noel Harrington asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the 2011 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. [19492/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1 September 2011. Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. During these checks a discrepancy was identified regarding information submitted on the AEOS

application form and the farm maps which accompanied the AEOS application. My Department has contacted the Agricultural Advisor of the person named regarding this matter. Upon receipt of a satisfactory response to this matter, the file will be further processed with the intention of issuing payment at the earliest opportunity. Payments in respect of the 2012 Scheme year are subject to a similar administrative checking process which includes verification of capital investments through checks on receipts. These checks have now been completed and following the payment for 2011, the payment in respect of 2012 will be finalised.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Payments

180. Deputy Noel Coonan asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment for the suckler cow welfare scheme will be finalised in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19516/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named registered 77 animals in the Suckler Welfare Scheme in 2011 and payment amounting to €2,050 issued in respect of 50 of these animals on 15 December 2011. Eligibility of a further 18 animals has since been established and payment will issue as soon as possible. My Department is in the course of contacting the applicant to outline the position in relation to the remaining animals. 67 animals were registered in the Scheme in 2012. 47 animals have been approved for payment which will issue shortly, including 1 animal of a set of twins. A letter has issued to the applicant on 23 April 2013 in relation to an error identified with 1 of the remaining animals. Details to be supplied by the applicant of the measures required under the Scheme in respect of the remaining 18 animals, including another set of twins, remain outstanding.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

181. Deputy Jim Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an appeal for 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. [19538/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1 September 2011 and full payment totalling €312.58 issued in respect of 2011. Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. 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 these checks issues were identified in relation to the documentation submitted which resulted in the termination of the AEOS contract of the person named. A letter issued to the person named setting out this decision and providing the option to submit an appeal. Two appeals were received in AEOS Section of my Department, however the original decision was upheld on both occasions. The person named was informed of his right of appeal to the Agriculture Appeals Office.

Animal Diseases Issues

182. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on BVD payments (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[19552/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The cost of BVD to the farming industry is in excess of €100 million per annum. The provision of funding for compensation in the context of the compulsory phase of the BVD programme must be placed in the context of the economic benefits accruing to farmers arising from the eradication of this disease and, particularly, the short payback time involved for individual farmers as well as the scarce budgetary resources available to my Department. It has been estimated that the overall benefit for the eradication of this disease is beneficial to farmers. I should also emphasise that the strategy of my Department is to concentrate its scarce resources in continuing to support Animal Health Ireland in its ongoing work in establishing control.

Single Payment Scheme Eligibility

183. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will grant all outstanding 2012 direct payments to farmers as a matter of urgency (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19568/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the EU Regulations governing all area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check of all applications, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue.

Successive EU audits have made it absolutely clear that compliance with the Regulations must be strictly adhered to and that all administrative checks must be passed and eligibility conditions met before payment issues. As a result, my Department is obliged to ensure that individual payments will not issue until all aspects of a farmer's application are in order, all outstanding documentation provided and all queries resolved. In most instances where payments are outstanding there remains an outstanding query on the application. These queries are being resolved on an ongoing basis and officials in my Department will have contacted the applicants concerned with the intention of issuing payment as soon as possible. I am of course conscious of the difficulties facing the farming community at present and this is why I am prioritising outstanding payments, including AEOS and DAS, and ensuring that they issue as soon as possible.

I am conscious that farmers are experiencing difficulties given the current fodder shortage. Payments are being processed as promptly as possible. €2.5 million will be paid out in payments over the coming weeks.

Forestry Grants

184. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a forestry payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19573/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The application for grant payment was submitted to my Department on 10 April 2013. The application is currently being processed.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

185. Deputy Patrick O'Donovan asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to base the single farm payment using activity in year ending 2011 rather than 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19610/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the original Commission proposals, existing payment entitlements in Member States such as Ireland that applied the Single Payment historic model will expire on 31 December of the year before the first implementation of the new CAP regime. It is now recognised that the first year of the new regime will be 2015. Farmers will apply in that year for an allocation of new payment entitlements. The Commission proposals have been the subject of negotiations at official and political level in the Council of Ministers over the past 18 months, culminating in an agreed Council position which was reached at the Council on 18 and 19 March.

Under the proposals agreed by the Council of Ministers, the number of entitlements to be allocated in the first year of the new regime can either be based on the total number of eligible hectares declared in that year or, alternatively, a Member State may decide that the number of entitlements will be confined to the number of eligible hectares declared in either 2012 or 2013. Member States are also allowed to confine the allocation of payment entitlements to those farmers who received a payment under the existing Single Payment Scheme in either 2010 or 2011. Where a Member State exercises this option, the European Commission is empowered to adopt delegated acts to determine how entitlements are to be allocated to farmers who apply in the first year of the new regime but who did not receive payment in either 2010 or 2011. Again, it is too early to say whether Ireland will exercise this particular option. I should also point out that the next step in the negotiations involves reaching agreement between the three European Institutions - the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the Commission. Therefore, it is too early to speculate on how the final outcome will affect individual farmers.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

186. Deputy Arthur Spring asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay with agri-environment options scheme payments; if his attention has been drawn to the conditions that farmers are facing after the unfavourable weather that has been experienced; and the way he is going to rectify this. [19621/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the EU Regulations governing the scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check of all applications, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. Successive EU audits have made it absolutely clear that compliance with the Regulations must be strictly adhered to and that all administrative checks must be passed and eligibility conditions met before payment issues. As a result, my Department is obliged to ensure individual payments will not issue until all aspects of a farmer's application are in order, all outstanding documentation provided and all queries resolved.

Outstanding payments under AEOS I and AEOS II are largely due to unresolved queries associated with applications. In most instances, officials in my Department will have contacted the applicants concerned with the intention of issuing payment as soon as possible. There is a specific issue delaying payments under AEOS 2 related to non-productive capital investments. In order to facilitate the 2012 payment, applicants must have submitted a valid claim form if they have selected a non-productive capital investment action. However, a significant number of applicants have either not submitted a claim form or have outstanding queries associated with submitted forms. Officials in my Department have been in contact with all these farmers

and are dealing with the responses received with the intention of clearing any backlog as soon as possible.

I am conscious of the importance of these payments to farmers' incomes, especially at this difficult time. My Department is making every effort to assist farmers in regularising their applications and claims for payment. Additional resources have been assigned to dealing with all outstanding queries. Payments will continue to issue on an ongoing basis as outstanding issues are resolved. I am also conscious that farmers are experiencing difficulties given the current fodder shortage. Payments are being processed as promptly as possible. Some €2.5 million will be paid out in payments over the coming weeks.

Afforestation Programme

187. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will take cognisance of the fact that the private forestry sector is experiencing long delays in getting sites approved for planting; that planting can only occur in the dormant season therefore the operating season is very short and the delays that are having a detrimental effect on the work of the private forestry and nursery sector; if key personnel involved in the planting approval process have been transferred to other roles within his Department and have not been replaced; the action he plans to take to address the problem of long delays; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19622/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Deputy may note that there has been a significant increase in interest in afforestation this year. To the beginning of April there has been a 34% increase in the number of applications received by my Department for technical approval for planting as against the same period last year. Despite this increased workload, the applications are processed as quickly as possible and the number of applications approved has also increased over the same period last year. To date, an additional 800 hectares have been technically approved for planting in 2013 as compared to 2012. While there have been some issues associated with the availability of personnel, the matter has been addressed and all the relevant outstanding afforestation files are being cleared.

Single Payment Scheme Applications

188. Deputy Brian Walsh asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will be made on an application for a single farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19624/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As no land parcels were declared, no payment can issue in respect of this 2012 Single Payment application. Following an internal review, which confirmed the position, the applicant subsequently lodged an appeal which is currently being processed in the Agriculture Appeals Office. The Appeals Office will advise the applicant of the outcome of the process.

Milk Supply

189. Deputy Ciarán Lynch asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an unusual demand for powdered milk has been recorded here due to a shortage in China; if such a development has implications, good or bad, for milk producers here; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [19635/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland is the largest exporter of infant formula in Europe. It is estimated that Ireland produces 10% of global exports of powdered infant formula and has world class manufacturing facilities producing for the domestic, European and international markets.

There has been an increase in enquiries to my Department about exporting infant formula to China, following recent media coverage about a shortage in that market. Dairy produce exported from Ireland to non EU countries is manufactured in accordance with the relevant national and EU regulations, and approved establishments that manufacture dairy produce are monitored and audited by the Department. Importing countries apply their own standards for imported product and exporting companies manufacture the product accordingly.

Fluctuations in demand from third countries have no direct implications for milk producers but, of course, increased global demand for dairy products will ultimately benefit milk processors and producers. Indeed, it is this increased demand that *Food Harvest 2020* aims to capitalise on with a target of a 50% increase in Irish milk production over the next several years.

Departmental Bodies Reports

190. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on a report (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19647/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The report to which the Deputy refers is currently being examined by my Department in conjunction with the Marine Institute to which it has been forwarded for observations. I can confirm that my Department's policy on sea lice management is strictly evidence based. The control protocols are operated by the Marine Institute on behalf of the State and are more advanced than those operated in other jurisdictions for the following reasons:- the inspection regime is totally independent of the industry; data obtained as a result of inspections is published; treatment trigger levels are set at a low level. The control protocols have been the subject of detailed investigation and testing by the EU Commission which has confirmed that it regards the sea lice protocols operated in Ireland as representing best practice internationally.

In relation to the application by BIM for an Aquaculture Licence for the cultivation of fin fish in Galway Bay, the application and its accompanying Environmental Impact Statement is being considered under the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act which provide for extensive consultation with stakeholders, including Inland Fisheries Ireland, which has responsibility for wild salmon stocks. The legislation also provides for a period of general public consultation. All matters associated with the application including the impact, if any, on wild salmon stocks, will be given very careful consideration by my Department. It would not be appropriate for me to comment further on this application which is under active consideration as part of a statutory process.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Appeals

191. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Offaly will have to repay all moneys they received through REP scheme 4 on lands which they had been leasing 14.35ha, said lands having now been sold in recent months; if an appeal will be allowed in this case; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [19653/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in June 2008 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. Under a REPS contract all participants undertake to implement, for a minimum period of 5 years, the measures detailed in their agri-environmental plan. However in the case of the person named following the administrative check, an area discrepancy was discovered between the Single Farm Payment Scheme application for 2010 and the REPS Agri-Environmental Plan due to a reduction in the contracted area.

A letter issued to the person named in May 2011 informing him of the reduced contract area for payment of 62.96 ha, the impending clawback of previous overpayments and the ‘right of appeal’. An appeal was not received by my Department. As the time limit for lodging an appeal has elapsed I wish to advise the person named of the ‘right of appeal’ to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Milk Quota Applications

192. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an application will be granted for a new entrant for free quota by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; if this matter will be expedited in view of the circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19660/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I recently announced details of the 2013 Scheme for the Allocation of Milk Quota to New Entrants to Dairy-ing. This scheme has a closing date of 7 June 2013. All applications received by that deadline will be processed by officials in my Department to ensure compliance with the eligibility criteria as set out in the Detailed Rules of the Scheme. Applications that satisfy the eligibility criteria will be presented to an independent panel for assessment. Given the limited amount of quota available, the panel will conduct its assessment of all applications in an objective manner and, following a thorough examination of the information presented, the panel will recommend a list of applicants who best demonstrate evidence of a viable and sustainable enterprise. I expect to be in a position to announce the results of the Scheme in mid August 2013.

Animal Welfare Issues

193. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps that he is taking to assist with the sourcing, importation and stockpiling of roughage for farm animals; if an assessment has been made as to the amount of roughage that would be required in the State if the summer weather conditions replicated the conditions experienced last summer, in view of the fact that all possible sources of roughage in the country have now been exhausted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19666/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The unusually wet weather in 2012 resulted in reduced fodder being available on many farms for last winter. The cold and wet weather in the early part of 2013 led to greatly reduced grass growth this Spring, culminating in an acute shortage of fodder currently.

Once fodder shortage became a reality I took a number of steps to aid the farming sector

on this issue and have now put a comprehensive package of measures in place to deal with the situation. I met with the CEO's of the Dairy Co-ops, who have agreed with my request that they will substantially increase the volume of fodder being imported into the country over the short to medium term. In tandem with this, I have created a fund of €1m to contribute to the transport costs of importing fodder, which will reduce the cost of purchasing fodder for farmers by approximately a third. The Dairy Co Ops have also agreed to consider the introduction of interest free credit, within limits, to farmers for the purchase of fertiliser, during the month of May.

Emergency assistance will also be available under the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council's early warning system. Support is there for any farmer that is facing an emergency situation and I would urge farmers who need support to contact the Department for assistance immediately. I have also met with senior bank representatives and have asked them for flexibility over the coming period for farmers that wish to access credit at this time. In addition, outstanding scheme payments are being processed by my Department with urgency.

While access to fodder is the immediate priority, grass growth will be a crucial factor in alleviating the current situation and in ensuring that there will be sufficient fodder conserved for next winter. In that regard, I have asked the advisory services to prioritise advice to farmers in the period ahead and to focus on the optimum use of fertiliser in generating feed for the national herd. The situation is being constantly monitored and I will continue to work with all stakeholders in the sector to get through this difficult period caused by very unusual weather patterns.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Application Numbers

194. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a breakdown per county of the total number of farmers that are awaiting payments under the agri-environment options scheme; the reasons for the delay in administering payments; the expected date that the payments will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19684/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the EU Regulations governing the scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check of all applications, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. Successive EU audits have made it absolutely clear that compliance with the Regulations must be strictly adhered to and that all administrative checks must be passed and eligibility conditions met before payment issues. As a result, my Department is obliged to ensure that individual payments will not issue until all aspects of a farmer's application are in order, all outstanding documentation provided and all queries resolved.

Outstanding payments under both AEOS I and AEOS II are largely due to unresolved queries associated with applications and in most instances officials in my Department will have contacted the applicants concerned with the intention of issuing payment as soon as possible. There is a specific issue delaying payments under AEOS 2 related to non productive capital investments. In order to facilitate the 2012 payment applicants must have submitted a valid claim form, if they have selected a non-productive capital investment action. However a significant number of applicants have either not submitted a claim form or have outstanding queries associated with submitted forms. Officials in my Department have been in contact with all these farmers and are dealing with the responses received with the intention of clearing any backlog as soon as possible.

The information requested is not readily available but will be collated and forwarded directly to the Deputy. I am also conscious that farmers are experiencing difficulties given the current fodder shortage. Payments are being processed as promptly as possible. €2.5 million will be paid out in payments over the coming weeks.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Application Numbers

195. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a breakdown per county of the total number of farmers that are awaiting payments under the disadvantaged areas scheme; the reasons for the delay in administering payments; the expected date that the payments will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19685/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payments under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme commenced, on target, on 26 September 2012 and, to date, payments worth in excess of €207 million have issued to 94,529 of the total of 102,083 who applied. Details are given in the Annex. However, as demonstrated below, no undue delay currently exists in processing cases and payments continue to issue twice weekly, as individual cases are confirmed eligible.

A major factor impacting on processing of 2012 Scheme applications arose from the changes made to better focus the Scheme in light of budgetary realities and, in particular, ensuring that affected applicants could have access to robust and fair derogation and appeal processes. In this context, my Department wrote to in excess of 10,000 beneficiaries under the 2011 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme whose holdings had not achieved the minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare, as required under the Terms and Conditions of the 2012 Scheme.

In response, my Department received a total of 9,829 derogation applications of which 7,385 were successful. Those, whose applications were unsuccessful, were informed of their right of appeal to the independently chaired DAS Appeals Committee, on foot of which 1,572 appeals were received. On the basis of additional information which had not previously been submitted, my Department was in a position to overturn the original decision on 612 cases, without the need to refer the cases to the DAS Appeals Committee.

Of the appeals submitted to the Committee, decisions have been taken in respect of 844 cases, of which 302 were allowed, 458 disallowed and 84 requested to submit additional information. Processing of the outstanding appeals remains ongoing.

On a more general note, the overall position is that those who have not received payment under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme (i.e. 7,554 cases – see table) are not yet confirmed eligible for payment. Of the 7,554 cases in question, 3,556 have not, as yet, shown that their holdings satisfied the Scheme minimum stocking density requirements. The holdings of a further 2,822 did not achieve the minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units in 2011; 444 cases relate to applicants being deceased or change of ownership where my Department must await legal formalities to be completed. A further 47 cases relate to cases where it has not been demonstrated that equines are eligible. The remaining 685 cases in the main relate to outstanding area-related issues.

2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme

Name	Applied	Paid	Gross Amount
Carlow	757	708	€1,457,968.65
Cavan	4,851	4,589	€9,942,480.88
Clare	6,135	5,780	€13,926,017.47
Cork	7,127	6,704	€15,353,624.81
Donegal	8,485	7,597	€17,634,172.68
Dublin	134	116	€250,656.27
Galway	12,177	11,139	€24,158,510.63
Kerry	7,723	7,154	€17,643,066.85
Kildare	523	465	€826,652.81
Kilkenny	1,768	1,662	€3,484,943.75
Laois	1,727	1,609	€3,188,848.99
Leitrim	3,483	3,220	€7,252,000.29
Limerick	2,933	2,718	€5,373,814.93
Longford	2,392	2,266	€4,978,349.96
Louth	756	685	€1,142,766.91
Mayo	11,621	10,695	€22,922,103.82
Meath	1,355	1,260	€2,297,512.50
Monaghan	4,108	3,863	€7,660,546.74
Offaly	2,397	2,246	€4,486,745.07
Roscommon	5,746	5,395	€11,889,546.34
Sligo	4,064	3,714	€8,082,267.69
Tipperary	4,536	4,236	€9,029,815.31
Waterford	1,449	1,326	€2,721,511.86
Westmeath	2,653	2,501	€5,070,850.28
Wexford	1,432	1,278	€2,354,521.62
Wicklow	1,751	1,603	€3,904,501.61
TOTALS	102,083	94,529	€207,033,798.72

Foster Care Supports

196. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if adequate support services are in place to support foster parents (details supplied). [19544/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): In placing a child in foster care, the HSE regards the welfare of the child as paramount, having regard to the rights and duties of his/her parents. Each child in foster care has a social worker who visits the child in the foster carers' home and maintains a link with the child's birth family. 90.8% of children in relative foster care have an allocated social worker while 92.2% in general foster care have an allocated social worker.

Every foster carer also has a social worker, known as a link worker, to support and supervise them. The link workers responsibilities include ensuring that foster carers receive all relevant information and advice about the children including background history, health and education. The link worker organises training, provides regular supervision and support for foster carers and their children and ensures that foster carers are aware of and operate within relevant standards, policies and guidance of the HSE. The link worker also provides foster carers with specific written information on and explanations of HSE procedures should a complaint or al-

legation be made against them and the supports available in such an event.

Support is also available from Public Health Nurses, psychologists and child care workers as appropriate with other professionals being accessed if necessary, for example, speech therapists, counselling services etc. Any concerns that a foster carer has about a child's welfare may be addressed to the appropriate person from the support network available to them. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that in relation to the recruitment of social workers, the HSE has advised me that as of 15 April, there are currently 123 vacant posts being filled.

Adoption Services Provision

197. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason, as part of the Health Service Executive assessment of applicants, a person wishing to adopt is required to nominate a single country from which he or she wishes to adopt and any subsequent approval to adopt is then limited to adoptions from that same country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19589/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As part of the assessment process in relation to an application for a declaration of eligibility and suitability to adopt, applicants are required to select a country from which they would like to adopt and must research the country and the specific needs in relation to adopting a child from this country. The social worker assesses applicants with reference to the known needs of children from different countries and the specific capacities of these particular applicants to meet the needs of a child adopted from this area. Following the issuance of a declaration to adopt, should an applicant wish to change to another country they may contact their social worker for an updated assessment in this regard.

Adoption Services Provision

198. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason in the context of intercountry adoption, that a declaration of suitability is only valid for a period of two years; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that in many cases this period is insufficient to complete an adoption; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19590/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The expiration of declarations is covered under Section 41 (1) of the Adoption Act, 2010. The section provides that a declaration of eligibility and suitability expires after 24 months from the date of issuance of the declaration or after a further period of not more than 12 months that the Adoption Authority may specify. I understand that at the time of drafting of the legislation it was felt that this provided an adequate period following the initial assessment of applicants to complete an adoption. Given the changing landscape of intercountry adoption, this may no longer be the case. I am currently examining a number of proposals in relation to amendments to the Adoption Act, 2010. I intend to bring forward any changes to the legislation in conjunction with the draft Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2013, which I propose to bring before the Oireachtas in the coming months. However, any change to the length of validity of a declaration must be weighed up against the necessity to ensure that an applicant's current situation in relation to their suitability to adopt is taken in to account in the adoption process.

Youth Services

199. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views regarding core funding in respect of a facility (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19576/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department provides a range of funding schemes, programmes and supports to the youth sector. Funding of some €53.173m is available in 2013 to support the provision of youth services and programmes to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. Targeted supports for disadvantaged, marginalised and at risk young people are provided through the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2 and Local Drugs Task Force Projects.

The Youth Service referred to by the Deputy administers a number of youth projects under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme and one Youth Information Centre on behalf of my Department. The allocations to the organisation's youth projects and youth information centre in 2013 are €511,465.

A comprehensive Value for Money and Policy Review of youth funding has been commenced in my Department and this report is expected later this year. It is anticipated that this report will inform the provision of funding for youth programmes/services going into the future.

In addition my Department is developing a new youth policy framework for publication later this year. The new youth policy framework will aim to enhance the provision of youth services and activities and it will, inter alia, promote co-ordination between government departments and youth sector organisations with a view to maximising the effectiveness of the State funding available to support services for young people in future years.

Youth Services

200. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding funding for a youth café (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19577/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Funding of up to €1 million is available in 2013 from my Department for fit-out, refurbishment works or building enhancement projects for the start up of new Youth Cafés. One of the core functions of a youth café is that it offers support to young people, ranging from practical support to advice through their participation in activities that are of interest to them and that are varied and on offer at times that suit their normal activities. The criteria for the scheme places a clear focus on both long term sustainability and service planning. Pobal is assisting my Department in managing the Youth Café Programme 2013.

The closing date for applications was Friday, 12 April. I understand that Pobal received an application for funding from Kerry Diocesan Youth Service on behalf of Castleisland Youth Café. This application will be appraised along with all other applications received and Kerry Diocesan Youth Service have been informed that the appraisal process will take approximately eight to ten weeks. Those applicants who successfully make it through the first phase will proceed to phase 2 of the application process at the end of which, those successfully through that phase, will receive funding approval from my Department. The time frame for this is July to October, 2013 and it is anticipated that funding draw-down for the successful applications will commence in November 2013.

Youth Services

201. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on youth services cuts (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19578/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department provides a range of funding schemes, programmes and supports to the youth sector. Funding of some €53.173 million is available in 2013 to support the provision of youth services and programmes to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. Targeted supports for disadvantaged, marginalised and at risk young people are provided through the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2 and Local Drugs Task Force Projects.

The Youth Service referred to by the Deputy administers a number of youth projects under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme and one Youth Information Centre on behalf of my Department. The allocations to the organisation's youth projects and youth information centre in 2013 are €511,465.

The savings required under the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure in respect of 2013 across all schemes and projects for youth amounted to €5.393 million. Having regard to the savings requirements identified in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure my Department has tried to ensure that, in the determination process for the allocations, the front line youth services, particularly those for the most vulnerable young people are protected as far as is possible from the impact of any necessary reductions in funding. Organisations are being asked to consider any scope for savings and administrative costs in order to protect front line services.

A comprehensive Value for Money and Policy Review of youth funding has been commenced in my Department and this report is expected later this year. It is anticipated that this report will inform the provision of funding for youth programmes/services going into the future.

In addition my Department is developing a new youth policy framework for publication later this year. The new youth policy framework will aim to enhance the provision of youth services and activities and it will, *inter alia*, promote coordination between government departments and youth sector organisations with a view to maximising the effectiveness of the State funding available to support services for young people in future years.

Child Care Services

202. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of registered crèches that were inspected in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; the frequency of such creche inspections; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19604/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has sought the information requested by the Deputy from the HSE and I will provide the Deputy with the information as soon as it becomes available.

Departmental Staff Numbers

203. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of social workers in community care area 8 in the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date

in 2013; the number of vacancies currently unfilled; her plans to fill these vital posts as soon as possible; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19605/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has sought the information requested by the Deputy from the HSE. I will provide the Deputy with the information as soon as it becomes available.

Health Services Allowances

204. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health when a decision on an appeal will be made in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19565/13]

206. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will issue on an appeal against the disallowance of their mobility allowance claim in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [19542/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 204 and 206 together.

As the Deputies' questions relate to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for a direct reply to the Deputy.

Water Fluoridation

205. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding artificial water fluoridation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19619/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Water fluoridation and the use of appropriate fluorides is a major plank of public health policy in Ireland in the prevention and management of tooth decay. 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 effects of fluoridation on health and related matters are kept under constant review. The material to which the Deputy refers is a generic letter, which has already been received and forwarded to the Expert Body for examination. I will write to the Deputy separately to deal with the issues raised in the letter.

Question No. 206 answered with Question No. 204.

Drugs Payment Scheme Administration

207. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that persons (details supplied) in County Dublin will receive the refund owed to them by the Health Service Executive due to an overpayment of the monthly €120 prescribed by the drug payment scheme over the periods from March to December 2011 and January to August 2012, in view of the fact that at that time the guidelines for the drug payment scheme clearly stated that a person or family only had to pay €120 each month for approved prescribed drugs, medicines and certain

appliances for use by that person or their family in that month; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19517/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE is responsible for the administration of the Drug Payment Scheme; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

208. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health the number of scheduled surgical procedures and treatments cancelled or postponed in the past year at University Hospital Galway owing to lack of availability of hospital beds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19522/13]

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.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

209. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to an issue regarding availability of medical care at an accident and emergency in the eye and ear hospital in Dublin (details supplied); his views on whether this level of care is acceptable; and if he will ensure adequate cover is provided in hospitals. [19523/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Maternity Services

210. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the number of non-national maternal deaths using MDE classifications rather than CSO classifications that have occurred here. [19524/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Statistics on causes of death are based on civil registration and compiled internationally by the World Health Organisation. In the most recent World Health Statistics Annual Report (2012), Ireland had the 13th lowest rate of maternal mortality out of 178 countries reporting data. It is generally recognised internationally that official vital statistics can result in an underestimate of maternal deaths. In particular, indirect obstetric deaths resulting from previous existing disease or diseases which developed during the pregnancy may be missed in the official statistics. For this reason, Ireland established a Confidential Maternal Death Enquiry (MDE) system in 2009. In doing so, it linked itself with the United Kingdom's Confidential MDE which has been acknowledged as a gold standard for maternal death enquiry in recent decades.

The MDE report shows that 75.4 per cent of maternities in Ireland in 2010 were women of Irish nationality and that 40% of all maternal deaths identified in the triennium 2009-2011 occurred in women who were not born in Ireland. There were 25 maternal deaths in the period, and 10 of these deaths were women not born in Ireland. The report draws attention to how these women engage with Irish maternity services and the importance of the availability of

interpretive services. A particular concern was the issue of engagement with the services by non-national patients in receipt of alternative medical advice from outside the country.

In order to improve standardisation and to drive service quality, the HSE's National Clinical Programme in Obstetrics and Gynaecology has been working on the development of national clinical guidelines; to date, 20 guidelines have been developed, eight are under review and a further 20 have been commissioned. It is important to state that no matter what definitions are used or how case ascertainment is conducted, that Ireland continues to be a very safe country for a woman to give birth and our safety record compares favourably with other developed countries.

Departmental Legal Cases

211. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health the number of High Court maternity cases which have involved non-nationals. [19525/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I understand that this question has been clarified with the Deputy and that she is seeking information concerning how many Irish high court maternity cases have involved non-nationals being brought to court by medical practitioners to compel them to undergo a procedure for which they do not give their consent. The information requested by the Deputy is not readily available within the health system. As Minister for Health I have no function in court cases that have not been taken by or against the State in relation to health care.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

212. Deputy Olivia Mitchell asked the Minister for Health the annual cost per patient for the supply of Kalydeco, the cystic fibrosis drug; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19529/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Dr. James Reilly TD, Minister for Health announced, on the 1st February 2013, that Kalydeco, a new innovative medicine for the treatment of cystic fibrosis (CF) in patients who have the G551D mutation, would be made available for patients in Ireland from the 1st of March. The projected costs for the provision of Kalydeco to patients was estimated at over €234,000 per patient per annum in the assessment carried out by the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics. Following successful confidential commercial negotiations between the HSE and the manufacturer, a mechanism was agreed whereby the drug could be made available to patients while at the same time significantly reducing the budget impact of the drug. The treatment cost per patient per annum is commercially confidential.

Mobility Allowance Decision

213. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a progress report on the proposed new alternative scheme to the mobility allowance and motorised transport grant; if he will outline if representative bodies have been involved in consultations relating to the new scheme to replace this grant; if he will provide a timeframe for the introduction of a new scheme; if the new proposal will be in place by 1 July 2013; if current holders have to reapply or if their existing certificates will be accepted in the new system; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [19536/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): A 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. In advance of the establishment of the Project Group, Department of Health officials met with representatives of the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, the Disability Federation of Ireland and the Irish Wheelchair Association at my request. The work of the Project Group is being supported by the National Disability Authority and includes representatives from the Irish Wheelchair Association, the Disability Federation of Ireland, an independent service user and advocate for people with disabilities and a retired County Council Manager with relevant experience. Both Minister Reilly and myself have instructed the Project Group to seek solutions across the whole of Government, so that alongside representatives from the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive, membership also includes representatives from Pobal and from the Departments of Transport, Tourism & Sport, Environment, Community and Local Government, Social Protection and Finance and the Revenue Commissioners.

The work of the Project Group includes a public consultation process, which is currently underway. Any views held by individuals or organisations on this matter can be made known to the Project Group, through this process. The Group who will report to Government next month, has 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 Government.

Health Services Provision

214. Deputy Finian McGrath asked the Minister for Health the position regarding assistance in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 17. [19546/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I wish to refer the Deputy to my answer to his question of 28 March last. I have also asked the Health Service Executive to follow up on his further query.

Organ Donation

215. Deputy Dominic Hannigan asked the Minister for Health if there are any plans for an opt out organ transplant system; the work his Department is doing to investigate if this system could work here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19560/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Programme for Government envisages the introduction of an opt-out system of organ donation, with a view to improving the availability of organs for patients in need of transplantation. This will of course require detailed consideration and further consultation and I am developing proposals for Government on this matter. In addition to consent systems, there is evidence from other countries that good co-ordination at hospital level and counselling arrangements for relatives are significant factors in achieving high organ donation rates. In conjunction with the HSE's National Organ Donation and Transplantation Office I am also examining what practices and organisational changes could further improve donation rates in this country.

The Deputy may also wish to note that following discussions between my Department and

the Road Safety Authority, the new Driving Licence Application Form contains a question asking applicants if they would like a code to be placed on their driving licence indicating their wish to become an organ donor. Since the introduction of a new type of driving licence on 19 January, the code that will appear on new driving licences issued to people who indicate that they wish to become an organ donor, is 115. My Department has written to the National Organ Donation and Transplantation Office and the Regional Directors of Operations in the HSE asking them to alert relevant hospital staff to this initiative and to the code which will appear on new driving licences of people who wish to donate. My Department is also in discussion with the Department of Social Protection with a view to including a similar code on the Public Services Card.

Medical Card Applications

216. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card application in respect persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19571/13]

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.

Hospital Staff

217. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health if there are vacancies here at present for occupational psychologists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19574/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Medical Card Applications

218. 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. [19581/13]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

219. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant orthopaedic surgeons at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9; the number of persons on the waiting list; the average waiting time to see the consultant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19597/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2013*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has recently been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists. In relation to the particular queries raised by the Deputy, I have asked the Health Service Executive to investigate the situation and respond directly to the Deputy in these matters.

Medical Card Eligibility

220. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who have been refused either a medical card or a general practitioner only card in the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; the main reasons for being refused a card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19598/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I have asked the Health Service Executive for a report on the issue raised by the Deputy. I will revert to the Deputy on the matter as soon as possible.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

221. Deputy Patrick O'Donovan asked the Minister for Health the plans that are in place for persons who use the services in a living unit (details supplied) once it closes down; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19611/13]

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.

Home Care Packages

222. Deputy Finian McGrath asked the Minister for Health the position regarding home help-home care package in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [19614/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Mental Health Services Provision

223. Deputy Ciarán Lynch asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied)

in County Cork will be provided with an adult mental health services appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19620/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Ministerial Meetings

224. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if the commitment given to the Happy New Ear campaign to meet with the Minister of State, Deputy Kathleen Lynch, may be prioritised as the matter is one of urgency for the children involved. [19625/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Minister of State, Ms Kathleen Lynch TD, has indicated that she will meet with Happy New Ear and the group will be contacted shortly in this regard.

Mental Health Services Provision

225. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the replacement of the Central Mental Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19627/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Replacing the Central Mental Hospital (CMH) with an appropriate modern facility is one of the priority health projects set out in the Infrastructure & Capital Investment 2012-2016: Medium Term Exchequer Framework. The Minister for Health announced in November 2011 that the CMH would be located at St Ita's, Portrane, Co. Dublin. This project includes replacement of the CMH, and also development of associated new facilities. Four regional Intensive Care Rehabilitation Units (ICRUs) are also planned, one of which will be located at Portrane.

The Steering Group for this project is in place and members include representatives from Department of Health, HSE Estates, HSE Service, HSE LHM for Dublin Mid-Leinster, NSUE, Irish Advocacy Network, Central Mental Hospital Carer's Group, National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) and representatives from the Central Mental Hospital. The Design Team appointed in July 2012 is advancing the design for the project.

National Children's Hospital Status

226. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the development of the national children's hospital, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19628/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The decision to locate the new children's hospital on the St James's campus was announced on 6 November 2012. Co-location, and ultimately tri-location with a maternity hospital, on the St James's campus will support the provision of excellence in clinical care that our children deserve. The new children's hospital is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and the largest project within the current Capital Plan.

The National Paediatric Hospital Development Board is the body charged with building

the hospital. Following detailed consideration of the project management structures and governance arrangements required to enable delivery of the project as quickly as possible and to the highest quality, I intend to restructure the NPHDB to focus on the core function of planning, designing, building and equipping the new hospital. The new Children's Hospital Group, which brings together the three existing paediatric hospitals, will now lead on functions relating to service transfer planning, human resource planning, philanthropy etc. which were previously within the remit of the NPHDB.

In line with its core function of building the hospital, the membership of the restructured NPHDB must include the expertise to deal with this very large and complex capital project. The necessary appointments are under consideration and, in the interim, a transitional Board is in place comprising officials from my Department and the HSE, ensuring continued governance and decision-making for the project.

The transitional Board is progressing a number of immediate issues. In this first phase of the project, the focus is on reconciling the brief with the new site, site and site preparation and new procurement processes. A joint group involving the HSE and St James's Hospital are meeting regularly to progress the enabling and decant work required. A shared services group has been established to focus on identifying the facilities which can be shared so as to optimise the build. While much of the work that has been done for the project in its previous location on the Mater site is transferable to the new site, a new design for the new site is required and in this regard a priority now for the NPHDB is the procurement of a new design team. A review of urgent care centre(s) configuration is underway and is expected to be complete within the coming weeks; this is key to finalising the scale of the facilities required on the St James's campus and informing the design.

It is important to remember that, in addition to a new building, the new children's hospital entails the coming together of three existing paediatric hospitals (Temple Street, Crumlin and Tallaght). I welcome the commitment expressed by the three existing hospitals to becoming a single service well before the new hospital is built and the establishment of the new Children's Hospital Group, involving the three hospitals, is an important step in this regard. The Group will have a non-statutory Board of Direction which will oversee the integration of services across the three hospitals, over time. Dr Jim Browne has been appointed as its Chair, and will work closely with the Chairs of the three existing hospitals, who have welcomed his appointment.

Cochlear Implants

227. Deputy Dominic Hannigan asked the Minister for Health the steps his Department is taking to ensure that children can get bilateral cochlear implants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19630/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Since the national cochlear implant programme commenced seventeen years ago, over 700 patients have received cochlear implants. I am advised that, in 2012, ninety cochlear implants were carried out with 42 children receiving implants and 48 adults. In addition to providing the surgical services, the programme provides a comprehensive assessment service to potential candidates and a rehabilitative service to those actually implanted.

In 2009 a National Review of Audiology Services was carried out by the HSE, to examine the services provided to children and adults nationwide, and to formulate a national plan for the services. The report of the National Audiology Review Group, published by the HSE in 2011,

provides the blueprint for the planning, development and delivery of HSE audiology services, from new-born screening to assessment and management of adults and children with hearing problems, including cochlear implantation. Two of the main recommendations in the report include the national roll-out of a universal new-born hearing screening programme and the establishment of a bone anchored hearing aid programme. The report also included a recommendation that continued ring-fenced financial support be provided for the cochlear implant programme but at levels which allow for simultaneous bilateral implantation for children.

The HSE is working closely with Beaumont Hospital to progress plans for both simultaneous and sequential bilateral implantation. The development of the service will require additional resources for Beaumont and these plans will be progressed through the HSE 2014 Estimates process.

Hospital Waiting Lists

228. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a surgery appointment in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [19636/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2013*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has recently been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to this particular query raised by the Deputy, I have asked the Health Service Executive to investigate the situation and respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Medical Card Eligibility

229. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 979 of 16 January 2013, when a response will issue from the Health Service Executive. [19638/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I wrote to Deputy Ó Caoláin earlier this month when I received the report from the HSE, the detail of which is restated below.

The Primary Care Reimbursement Service has confirmed that medical cards are provided to Asylum Seekers once supported by relevant documentation (confirmation that they are in receipt of Asylum Seekers weekly payment of €19.10). The card is issued for a year and is subject to normal review thereafter.

Departmental Bodies

230. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 235 of 17 April 2013, if he will list any other such oversight committees which have been established since his appointment; the membership and remit of any such committees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19641/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In 2012 my Department answered a number of Parliamentary Questions in relation to groups, tribunals, task forces, committees etc established since my appointment as Minister. While not specific to oversight committees I have forwarded the details of such groups established to you separately. The information forwarded covers the period from March 2011 to October 2012. Details in respect of the period from October 2012 to date is being collated and will be sent to you shortly.

The Deputy will note that the information in relation to October 2012 does not include the membership of the various groups etc established as it was not requested at the time. However if the Deputy requires membership details in respect of any of the groups if he gives me the name of the group or groups I will forward the relevant details to him.

HSE Correspondence

231. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 288 of 27 March 2013, when a response will issue from the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19650/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I understand that the Health Service Executive issued a reply to the Deputy on Tuesday 16th April, 2013.

HSE Funding

232. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the amount allocated and the outturn in respect of local schemes (details supplied) in each of the past five years with a breakdown by its constituent parts. [19668/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The information requested is currently being collated by the HSE and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Neuro-Rehabilitation Services Provision

233. Deputy Seán Kyne asked the Minister for Health if he will indicate a timetable for an implementation plan for the national neurorehabilitation strategy which was developed by his Department. [19673/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Department of Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE) have developed and published the "National Policy and Strategy for the provision of Neuro-Rehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011 - 2015". In addition, the HSE is developing its Rehabilitation Medicine Programme within the Clinical Strategy and Programmes Directorate. The Report is the overarching policy on neuro-rehabilitation services and includes proposals for a framework for the future of neuro-rehabilitation services in Ireland, including key elements such as: guiding principles; implementation structure; methodology for implementation; and information and communication.

The Report recognises that given the current economic climate, the focus in the short to medium term has to be on re-configuration of services, structures and resources and the enhancement of the skills and competencies required to meet the changing context.

The key priority areas, as identified in the HSE's National Operational Plan for 2013 are to map and develop Integrated Service Area level rehabilitation networks; implement the model of care for rehabilitation services within the networks with a focus on community rehabilitation.

An implementation plan beyond the overall operational plan commitments would not be beneficial, as the work involved to progress networks and teams will require to be flexible and responsive to the areas identified and to their specific service profiles.

The Rehabilitation Medicine Programme has been working in collaboration with the National Disability Unit as part of an expert Working Group planning for the implementation of the Report. The Rehabilitation Medicine Programme has incorporated key elements of the Report into its own Model of Care and adopted the Strategy's recommendation of "hub and spoke" model for specialist rehabilitation services and is keen to progress with a comprehensive model for the continuation of such service into the community. This co-operation will continue in 2013.

EU Presidency Issues

234. Deputy Seán Kyne asked the Minister for Health in advance of Ireland's hosting of the European Month of the Brain as part of the EU Presidency, the measures being taken to reduce waiting times for neurological medical consultations. [19674/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Improving access to outpatient services is a key priority for the Government. In 2012 the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) initiated a national project to compile, for the first time, an Outpatient Waiting List database based on patient-level information from individual hospitals. Now, for the first time, clear data on the OPD waiting list is being reported and is published on www.ntpf.ie. The collation and analysis of outpatient waiting time data in a standardised format will reveal the distribution of long waiters across all hospitals. In the first instance, this will allow resources to be targeted towards those patients who are waiting longest and ensure that they are seen and assessed. For 2013, a maximum waiting time target has now been set of 12 months for a first time outpatient appointment.

In parallel with reducing the numbers of longest waiters, the SDU will also work with the HSE Clinical Programmes to reform the structure, organisation and delivery of outpatient services to ensure that the right patient is seen and assessed by the right health professional at the right time.

In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Mental Health Services Provision

235. Deputy Seán Kyne asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm when the new staff for community mental health services sector will be appointed; the progress made in enhancing community mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19675/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): In 2012, a special allocation of €35m was provided for mental health to be used primarily to further strengthen Community Mental Health Teams in both adult and children's mental health services, to advance activities in the area of suicide prevention, to initiate the provision of psychological

and counselling services in primary care, and to facilitate the transfer of mental health service users from institutional to community based care. 414 posts were approved to implement the €35m package of special measures.

As at 22 April, 338 of the 414 posts have been filled (229 for Adult Mental Health Services and 109 for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and 40 posts have been accepted and are being processed for clearance. The National Recruitment Service of the HSE is currently working to ensure that remaining posts will be filled as soon as possible, subject to appropriately qualified candidates being available.

A further €35m was provided in Budget 2013 for the continued development of mental health services across a range of headings, including the further ongoing development of community services and 477 posts have been approved to implement these measures. Discussions are ongoing within the HSE, and in consultation with the Department of Health to finalise the allocation of these resources and commence recruitment. Business cases from each HSE Region are being finalised and examined, against each of the identified objectives, detailing how the funding is to be spent and the type and number of WTE to be recruited. It is expected that this process will be concluded in the very near future with a view to recruitment of the additional staff proceeding as soon as possible. I have received assurances from the HSE that the recruitment process for the new posts being funded in 2013, and any outstanding 2012 posts, is being given priority within the HSE.

Hospital Services

236. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health if he intends to upgrade the status of Letterkenny General Hospital, County Donegal, to a regional hospital; the impact this upgrade would have on the funding and services in the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19690/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): We have a large number and range of acute hospitals in Ireland, all of which are held in high esteem and used mainly by local people for the majority of their hospital care. However, the provision of modern, high quality, safe care requires increasing levels of cooperation and overarching systems of governance and communication. We know that the traditional practice of providing as many services as possible in every hospital is neither sustainable nor safe. Experience in Ireland and abroad teaches us that a co-ordinated system of care is clearly better for patients than a sporadic approach from hospital to hospital. The formation of Irish acute hospitals into a small number of groups, each with its own governance and management, will provide an optimum opportunity for hospital services to be configured to deliver high-quality, safe patient care in a cost-effective manner.

It was with this in mind that I appointed Professor John Higgins in June of last year to chair a Strategic Board on the establishment of Hospital Groups. I have received Professor Higgins' report, which is based on a comprehensive consultation process and contains almost 60 recommendations on the formation, management and governance of hospital groups, all of which are strongly endorsed by the Strategic Board. I will shortly submit this report to Government, to consider and decide on the final formation of each hospital group. I appreciate that this report and the related government decision are anxiously awaited: however, this is the most radical and most fundamental modernisation of our health system infrastructure since the State's foundation and I take very seriously my obligation to consider the report closely, to assure myself and my Cabinet colleagues that it provides a robust basis to enable timely access to a high quality and sustainable hospital service for those who need it.

The Government will decide on the initial make up of hospital groups which will be established on an administrative basis pending the legislation required to set up hospital trusts by 2015. Before those trusts are established the composition and functioning of the Groups will be reviewed and if changes prove necessary then they will be made with Government approval when the hospital trusts are being formed.

Health Services Issues

237. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Health when details of a diagnosis will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19697/13]

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

238. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Health if and when a medical card will issue in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19723/13]

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

239. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an application for a medical card in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19724/13]

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.

Road Maintenance

240. Deputy Andrew Doyle asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the proposed national motorway maintenance and renewal contract being put

forward by the National Roads Authority; if it will include national roads and dual carriageways; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19513/13]

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 maintenance of individual sections of national roads is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Official Engagements

241. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an itinerary of his official engagements in the Far East over the recent St. Patrick's Day holiday as part of the promote Ireland programme of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. [19528/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As part of the Government's St Patricks Day "Promote Ireland" programme I travelled to Japan and South Korea. I set out the principle engagements below. As the Deputy will be aware, St. Patrick's Day is a unique opportunity to promote Ireland abroad. Few, if any, other countries have a national day which is so widely known and celebrated across the entire globe. As a country we should maximise the value we get from such global attention and goodwill. The purpose of these visits is threefold: Firstly, to promote Irish economic and cultural links overseas. Secondly, to use the opportunity of St Patrick's Day to strengthen our bi-lateral relationship with other states and thirdly, to connect with our diaspora overseas as well as those individuals with a strong connection or affinity with Ireland.

Tuesday 12th March

Travel

Wednesday 13th March

Arrival in Seoul, South Korea

Briefing with Irish Embassy, Enterprise Ireland (EI) and IDA

Meeting with Irish Business Community and contacts

Thursday 14th March

Meeting with Global Irish Network member

Meeting with IDA target company

Meeting with Minister for Patriots and Veterans Affairs

Meeting with Seoul Finance Forum

Interview with Korean media

Meeting with Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport

Meeting with EI clients

National Day Reception

Friday 15th March

Travel from Seoul, South Korea to Tokyo, Japan

Meeting with Japan Ireland Parliamentary Friendship League

Working Lunch with Irish Embassy, Enterprise Ireland and IDA staff

Meeting with Japan Rail East

Meeting with EI client

Media Interview

Irish National Day Reception

Saturday 16th March

Yokohama St. Patrick's Day Parade & related functions

Meeting with EI Clients

Emerald Ball

Sunday 17th March

Tokyo St. Patrick's Day Parade & related functions

Monday 18th March

Meeting with Members of the Global Irish Network

Briefing for members of the Tourism Trade in Japan

Meeting with Japanese Vice-Minister for Land, Infrastructure and Transport

Meeting with Minister for Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

Meeting with IDA client

Meeting with Mitsui Busan

Speak at Glen Dimplex seminar on Green Energy

Tuesday 19th March

Travel to Osaka

Meeting with IDA Client

Meetings with Vice-Governor of Osaka Prefecture

Meeting with EI client

Meeting with IDA target

Meeting with English Language School

Irish National Day Reception, Osaka

Wednesday 20th March

Depart Osaka

Air Services Provision

242. Deputy Finian McGrath asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will clarify an issue in regard to fuel surcharges by airlines; and if there is any legislation in this area (details supplied). [19549/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): There is no legislation governing charges such as fuel surcharges; airlines have complete freedom in setting their fares and rates since the air services market was deregulated in the EU in the early 1990s. The question of refunds is a matter of airline policy and the refund policies of individual airlines are generally set out in the airline's terms and conditions.

Driving Licence Issues

243. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will ensure that persons in County Kerry have driver licences issued to them as soon as possible (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19570/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issuing of driver licences is a matter for the Road Safety Authority (RSA), which became the national driver licensing authority in January of this year in accordance with the provisions of the Road Safety Authority (Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness) Act 2012. I have no role in the processing of driver licence applications and no power to intervene in individual cases. I have therefore forwarded this query to the RSA, and I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a reply has not been received within ten days.

Public Transport Provision

244. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request Dublin Bus to increase the frequency of bus services (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19602/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is an operational matter for Dublin Bus in conjunction with the National Transport Authority and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Telecommunications Services Expenditure

245. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount Iarnród Éireann and Dublin Bus have spent on developing a WiFi service on its fleet; the projected final costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19603/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. In the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), funding for the implementation and development of public transport infrastructure projects, such as the installation of wi-fi on both buses and trains, is provided by my Department to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for allocation to projects and programmes. Noting this I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply in relation to the funding of the installation of wi-fi on buses and trains in the GDA.

Outside of the GDA, my Department provides funding directly to Irish Rail for the implementation and development of public transport infrastructure projects, such as the installation of wi-fi on services operated by Irish Rail. Therefore, I have also referred the Deputy's question to Irish Rail for direct reply to provide the costs regarding the installation of wi-fi on trains outside of the GDA. Please advise my private office if you do not receive both replies within 10 working days.

Road Safety Issues

246. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to undertake a national speed limit review; the type of roads that will be covered by such a review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19606/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I announced last year that I had established a Group, comprising all relevant stakeholders, to carry out a review of speed limits in the country. This Group, which is chaired by my Department, includes representatives from the local authorities, the Automobile Association, An Garda Síochána, the Road Safety Authority, the National Roads Authority as well as the National Transport Authority. Much progress has been made and I expect to receive a report from the Group shortly. I will give careful consideration to implementing any recommendations that emerge from the Report.

Public Transport Provision

247. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he intends to increase bus services to a town (details supplied) in County Meath; if he will outline detail of same; his views that the current service is unsatisfactory in view of the increase in population in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19648/13]

248. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he intends to increase bus services to a town (details supplied) in County Meath; if he will outline detail of same; his views that the current service is unsatisfactory in view of the increase in population in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19649/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 247 and 248 together.

The provision of services is a matter for the relevant transport provider in conjunction with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.