

Written Answers.

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

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

Visa Numbers

9. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total number of visas issued by his Department in 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20762/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The total number of entry visas granted in 2011 and 2012 was around 74,700 and 79,300 respectively. This compares with about 65,700 and 70,300 in the preceding two years and represents an increase of almost 21% in that time. In addition, my Department also issued 53,480 re-entry visas in 2011 and 44,073 in 2012. Re-entry visas are issued to visa-required nationals who are legally resident in the State.

In the period in question, the overall approval rate for visa applications was in excess of 91% which compares favourably with other EU member states. Provisional figures for the first three months of 2013 indicate that around 16,100 entry visas were granted and 8,700 re-entry visas.

I would remind the Deputy that since coming into office I have introduced the State's first ever Visa Waiver Programme whereby citizens of seventeen designated countries can travel on to Ireland from the UK without the need for an Irish visa and citizens of those countries who are long-term residents in the UK or the Schengen area can obtain an Irish visa without charge. This initiative has been welcomed by both tourism promotion agencies and operators and has been a significant success with trips from the designated countries increasing by 21% in the twelve months after its introduction in July 2011.

Garda Retirements

10. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total number of Gardaí who retired in 2011, 2012 and are expected to retire in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20770/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Members of An Garda Síochána may retire on a voluntary basis once they have reached 50 years of age and have accrued 30 years service. Members must retire on compulsory age grounds on reaching the age of 60. In actual fact, most Gardaí take voluntary retirement ahead of their compulsory retirement age

and it is not possible to predict with any certainty the number of Gardaí who will leave the Force during the course of any one year. There are approximately 1,300 Garda members who could retire in 2013 on full pension. However, there is no basis for expecting that all those who could retire will actually do so.

Equally it is difficult to establish an average figure for Garda retirements, particularly as the annual rate of retirements has been affected in the past by one-off factors such as the grace period which lasted until the end of February last year. While it would not be unreasonable, therefore, extrapolating from recent experience, to expect that retirements might range somewhere between 300 and 400, it is not possible to give a scientific estimate. I have, however, been informed by the Garda authorities that in 2011 and 2012 the number of retirements from An Garda Síochána was 444 and 429 respectively. As of 28 April 2013, the number of Gardaí who have retired or declared their intention to retire during the course of 2013 is 173.

Family Reunification Policy

11. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when his new policy on family reunification will be published and implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20834/13]

12. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of family reunification cases currently being delayed by the current pause in processing certain categories pending his new policy in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20835/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 11 and 12 together.

Work has been underway on a policy document on family reunification for some time and this is now well advanced. It is my intention to publish this document in the coming weeks. That is not to say that no policies are in place as things stand. On the contrary, every year the immigration authorities process significant levels of family reunification applications with variations in potential eligibility depending on the circumstances. However I believe there is a need to overhaul our policies in this area. I believe we can provide a more comprehensive set of rules and regulations so that applicants and practitioners can have a better understanding of likely outcomes and our own officials have more complete guidelines to help them in their work. In addition I think it would be helpful for the State to explain the rationale for its policies.

Family reunification is a matter of considerable importance within the immigration system and accounts for a substantial proportion of the work of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service. It is entirely natural that families would wish to be together as a unit and indeed family reunification contributes in a positive sense to integration of the family members in the host country. Moreover both the Irish Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights recognise the importance of the family. Of course this does not equate to a right to family reunification but it has nevertheless a significant bearing on the policy choices that the Government of the day will make.

The Government has a duty to control immigration in furtherance of public policy, including operation of the Common Travel Area. Ultimately family reunification policy is a question of finding the appropriate balance between the legitimate aspirations of the family and its members to reside together in Ireland and the interests of the wider society, including those relating to the economy. Sometimes these interests will coincide and in some cases they may not. The

document will focus on those areas where family reunification is a matter of national policy. Accordingly the focus will be on family reunification both where the sponsor is an Irish national and where he/she is from outside the EEA. Family reunification for the non-EEA members of the family of an EU national who has moved to Ireland in exercise of free movement rights are governed by EU law. The policy document will include guidelines on all the main issues involved in determining an application for residence in Ireland on the basis of family reunification including eligibility, the concept of sponsorship, dependency, financial resources and personal requirements.

To date there less than 50 visa applications worldwide in respect of family reunification awaiting consideration in anticipation of the introduction of this new policy. It should be noted that most of the normal family caseload is not impacted. It is only those cases of particular complexity that need to be held at this point.

Asylum Support Services

13. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he intends to replace the direct provision system or put a system in place that would allow asylum seekers the right to work and live independently, which would save the State a considerable amount of money; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20697/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Direct Provision system managed by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department remains a key pillar of the State's asylum and immigration system and I have no plans to end it at this time. Rather, my intention is that the factors which lead to delays in the processing of cases are dealt with so that asylum seekers spend as little time as is necessary in that accommodation system.

The Deputy's question wrongly asserts that allowing asylum seekers work and live independently would save the State money. That is not so. There are no cheaper alternatives to the Direct Provision system. A key finding in the 2010 Value for Money Report on the Direct Provision system was that if we were operating a system which facilitated asylum seekers in living independent lives in individual housing with social welfare support and payments, aside from the asylum 'pull factor' it would likely create, far from saving the State money, the cost to the exchequer would be double what is currently paid under the direct provision system.

I do accept that the length of time spent in direct provision and the complexity of the asylum process itself is an issue which needs to be addressed. The accommodation system is inextricably linked to the surrounding asylum process. The revised Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill, which I intend to re-publish, should substantially simplify and streamline the existing arrangements for asylum, subsidiary protection and leave to remain applications. It will do this by making provision for the establishment of a single application procedure, so that applicants can be provided with a final decision on all aspects of their protection application in a more straight forward and timely fashion.

Pending the enactment and commencement of the new legislation and with a view to improving processing, I am proposing to introduce new arrangements for the processing of subsidiary protection applications 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.

Departmental Reports

14. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the Justice Quirke report on the operation of the Magdalen laundries redress fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20777/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Mr Justice Quirke has been asked to advise on the establishment of a scheme for the benefit of those women who were admitted to and worked in a Magdalen Laundry and to examine how best to operate, as part of that scheme, necessary supports for women who have been in a Magdalen Laundry. It is a matter for Mr Justice Quirke to decide independently how he will carry out his examination. He was invited in February to submit his report within three months. When his recommendations have been received, the Government will consider the matter and decide how best to implement a scheme.

Garda Corruption

15. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on whether whistleblower gardaí are adequately protected by the confidential recipient system and existing whistleblowers' legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20824/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Síochána (Confidential Reporting of Corruption or Malpractice) Regulations 2007 provide for an independent Confidential Recipient to whom members of the Force can report, in confidence, instances where they believe there may be corruption or malpractice within the Force. The Confidential Recipient is required to transmit each report to the Commissioner but, in doing so, is bound to protect the identity of the confidential reporter. Any communication between the Confidential Recipient and the Commissioner is absolutely confidential and there are strong safeguards in the Regulations for the protection of confidential reporters.

It is also the case that, in line with a commitment in the Programme for Government, my colleague the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform will shortly bring forward legislative proposals to give robust protection for whistleblowing employees generally, across the public and private sectors. The intention is that this legislation will make provision for the Garda Síochána, and I look forward to the opportunity of discussing the details of the proposals when they are published.

Garda Strength

16. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for the total strength of the force in 2013, 2014 and 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20753/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The strength of the Force has been reducing due to the moratorium on recruitment introduced by the previous Government and the strength, as of the 31 March 2013, is 13,366. While it is difficult to predict with any certainty the number of Garda members who will retire in any year, given that members with 30 years service may retire on full pension after the age of 50, a retirement rate in line with recent experience could see Garda strength approaching 13,000 by the end of this year.

Looking forward to future years, I have already said that I would not like to see Garda

strength fall below that level, and I will bring proposals to Government shortly in relation to maintaining Garda operational strength. It is of course the case that a resumption of Garda recruitment, at a time when both overall headcount and the size of the pay bill in the public service must be reduced, would have financial implications that must be managed within the overall resources available to Government. It is simply not credible for any Deputy to pay lip service to the need for budgetary discipline while at the same time implying through Questions in the House that the cost of significant elements of the public service can be increased without regard for the financial consequences. In that context, it is important that the current impasse in relation to the LRC proposals on saving €1 billion from the public service pay bill, including €300 million this year, is first resolved. As Deputies will be aware, the LRC is currently exploring with all the parties concerned the potential for such a resolution, and of course I hope that there is a positive outcome to that process.

Garda Deployment

17. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is satisfied that adequate resources and appropriate Garda units are available to the Superintendent in charge of the Lucan and Clondalkin areas of Dublin following the recent robberies, murders and attempted murders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20594/13]

47. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views that an armed response unit should be based in the Dublin mid-west area following recent murders and attempted murders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20593/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 17 and 47 together.

The Deputy will be aware that the Commissioner is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources, including personnel and armed response units, throughout the organisation and I have no direct function in the matter. This allocation of resources is constantly monitored in the context of demographics, crime trends, policing needs and other operational strategies in place on a District, Divisional and Regional level to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public.

As of 31 March 2013, there were 742 Gardaí assigned to the Dublin Metropolitan Region West Division of which 214 are assigned to Clondalkin and 165 assigned to Lucan. There are also 66 Garda Reserves and 47 civilians assigned to the Division. In addition, local resources are supported, when necessary, with a 24/7 armed response from the Special Detective Unit and the Emergency Response Unit throughout the Region.

An Garda Síochána continues to vigorously tackle organised crime through undertaking a range of targeted activities designed to disrupt and dismantle the operations of criminal organisations. This involves targeting serious criminals and organised criminal groups on a number of fronts, including through the use of focused intelligence-led operations by specialist units such as the Serious and Organised Crime Unit, the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation and the Criminal Assets Bureau. These units are also supported, as required, by the Security and Intelligence Section which assists with the provision of intelligence briefings and timely information.

Proposed Legislation

18. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he will

introduce consolidated and reformed legislation on domestic violence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20844/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Programme for Government commitment - to introduce consolidated and reformed domestic violence legislation to address all aspects of domestic violence, threatened violence and intimidation, in a way that provides protection to victims - will be progressed as soon as possible having regard to the need for consultations and other legislative priorities.

In addition, the Law Reform Commission is considering, at my request, a possible amendment to section 10 of the Non-fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997, which deals with harassment. This arises from reports of difficulties in bringing successful prosecutions under that section in relation to domestic and sexual violence. I understand the Law Reform Commission expects to complete a discussion or consultation paper in the first half of this year in relation to their consideration of the provision. The paper will, I expect, also consider whether stalking should be provided for specifically in legislation.

Crime Prevention

19. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress that has been made in addressing border region criminal activity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20773/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am happy to inform the House that there is close and ongoing co-operation between the Garda Síochána and the PSNI on all aspects of policing. In 2010 the two police forces put in place a joint Cross Border Policing Strategy which has as its aims to improve public safety throughout Ireland, to disrupt criminal activity and to enhance the policing capability of both police services on the island. The joint Cross Border Policing Strategy includes sections dealing with Operations; Cross Border Investigations; Intelligence-sharing and Security; Information and Communications Technology; Training; Human Resources, and Emergency Planning. The two police services are jointly engaged in implementing initiatives in all these areas.

I meet and maintain contact very regularly with the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice, David Ford, to address matters of mutual concern and enhance effective co-operation and co-ordination on all criminal justice matters. Under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Co-operation on Criminal Justice Matters we operate a structured framework to further develop this co-operation. Officials from our Departments meet regularly to assess and report to us on developments in a number of areas where co-operation is pursued.

The two Justice Departments, the police authorities and the public prosecutors North and South have jointly developed and put in place a Joint Manual of Guidance for use in criminal investigations with a cross-border element. The joint manual supports the police and prosecution authorities in both jurisdictions by ensuring that each side has an awareness of the needs of the other jurisdiction and can bear those in mind in conducting an investigation. The joint manual allows them to maximise the chances of a successful detection and prosecution.

The fight against the threat from paramilitary groups is a priority for both police services. The Gardaí co-operate seamlessly with their counterparts in Northern Ireland in actively bearing down on these criminal terrorists. The Garda Commissioner and the Chief Constable of the PSNI who have responsibility for operational policing co-operation have repeatedly emphasised that the close and high quality co-operation between their forces has been instrumental in

preventing attacks, combating criminality and saving lives. I would emphasise that the joint Cross Border Policing Strategy recognises the particular value of interagency co-operation in certain areas, for example, in ongoing efforts to combat the organised crime gangs operating on this island to whom the paramilitaries are inextricably linked.

The Cross-Border Task Force on Fuel Laundering and Smuggling which comprises representatives from the two police forces, the two customs services, the Criminal Assets Bureau and the Serious and Organised Crime Agency has underpinned successful actions which have disrupted the activities of a number of groups involved in the laundering and distribution of illegal fuels. A similar interagency group, the Cross Border Tobacco Enforcement Group, is in place to support the fight against the activities of gangs engaged in tobacco fraud. North-South co-operation at the policy and operational levels in combating crime is positive and dynamic. The challenges that crime presents are shared ones on this island and joint working in the fight against crime will continue to enhance our efforts to improve community safety for all.

Asylum Applications

20. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the result of the review promised by his Department last year in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20698/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned arrived in the State in September 2005 and claimed asylum. Before arriving in the State he had applied to study at Trinity College. He claimed that he had applied for this course from Mali. The person concerned is a national of Cameroon. He states that he left Cameroon around 1998 and was granted refugee status in Nigeria. He subsequently moved to Mali, where he also states that he was granted refugee status. He arrived in the State from France. The asylum application was refused by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner in May 2006. This was upheld by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal in April 2007. In May 2007 the person concerned was notified that it was proposed to make a Deportation Order against him. He was invited to apply for Subsidiary Protection and to make representations pursuant to Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999. These were duly submitted by the Refugee Legal Service in June 2007.

The Subsidiary Protection application was considered and the person was notified on 10 December 2009 that it was refused. The Section 3 representations were also considered and a Deportation Order was signed by the then Minister on 15 December 2009. This was notified to the person concerned on 22 December 2009. On 19 January 2010, the Refugee Legal Service advised the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service that the Deportation Order had not been received by the person concerned. The Order was then re-issued on 28 January 2010. Judicial Review proceedings were lodged in the High Court on 25 February 2010 challenging the refusal of Subsidiary Protection and the making of the Deportation Order. As the matter is, therefore, sub judice I do not propose to comment further.

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.

Proposed Legislation

21. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the time frame for the publication of the new Immigration Residency and Protection Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20838/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Work on the details of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2010 is ongoing at my Department pursuant to current Government policy which is committed, under the Programme for Government, to “introduce comprehensive reforms of the immigration, residency and asylum systems, which will include a statutory appeals system and set out rights and obligations in a transparent way”. As I have outlined previously to the Joint Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence, several hundred amendments to the Legal Services Regulation Bill are anticipated, the majority of a technical nature. On that occasion, I also expressed the considered view that instead of engaging in an extremely cumbersome process of tabling hundreds of amendments to the 2010 Bill it would be much more efficient to publish a new and enhanced text. Such an approach can incorporate the many anticipated amendments while addressing key outstanding issues, several of which have been of concern to Members, including that of a streamlined, single application procedure and that of an appropriate appeals procedure. This proposition was broadly welcomed by the Joint Committee. Work on the Bill continues, therefore, on that basis, including in cooperation with the Offices of Parliamentary Counsel and of the Attorney General while also taking account of any relevant rulings by the Courts. It remains my objective under this new approach, and mindful of our having to deal with the competing legislative demands of our EU/IMF/ECB Programme commitments, to be in a position to bring a revised Bill to Government for approval and publication later this year.

National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan Issues

22. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when his Department will publish an implementation plan for the national disability strategy. [20853/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Department has been engaged in a wide ranging consultation process with Government Departments and with the disability stakeholders group in the preparation of the National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan (NDSIP). The aim of the NDSIP is the engagement with the Disability sector and to build on the traditional problem solving and constructive approach of the community and voluntary sector to make progress towards the common interests. The current position is that the draft Implementation Plan has been presented to the Disability Stakeholders’ Group for consideration at their meeting on 14th May. Following consideration of the Plan by the Disability Stakeholders’ Group it may be possible to advance rapidly to publication of the Plan.

Joint Policing Committees Remit

23. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he had consulted with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government on the way the existing joint policing committees aligned to town councils here will operate after those town councils are abolished next year. [20850/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can advise the Deputy that there is ongoing liaison between my Department, the Garda authorities and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in relation to the operation of Joint Policing Committees (JPCs). The Programme for Government makes a commitment to build on ex-

isting community policing partnerships and forums to enhance trust between local communities and their Gardaí. In the spirit of that commitment I initiated a review of the operation of JPCs and, on 29 November 2012, I published a discussion document to open the matter for wider consultation. My Department, together with the Garda authorities and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government is examining the feedback received during the consultation process, to see if any amendments should be made to the existing guidelines which would enhance the operation of JPCs. The review process will also take into account the broader developments with respect to local government reform which are underway and the implications of this reform for the operation of JPCs.

Insolvency Service of Ireland Issues

24. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the timeframe for the full operation of the personal insolvency legislation mechanisms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20783/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) will be in a position to receive and process applications for the three new insolvency arrangements at the end of June 2013. The ISI will be processing Debt Relief Notice applications in July, once Approved Intermediaries are authorised and, subsequently, Debt Settlement Arrangements and Personal Insolvency Arrangements once Personal Insolvency Practitioners are authorised. Some of the key remaining pieces to be put in place include the finalisation of an Information Technology infrastructure to support the efficient and effective processing of applications, the publication by ISI of Regulations for the authorisation and supervision of Practitioners and work with the Courts Service to ensure that the Court's role in the processes is efficiently supported.

The ISI Public Information Campaign was formally launched on 18 April 2013. Since the Director of the Service took up his position at the end of last October, he has overseen a great deal of work within a short period of time. This included setting up an implementation team to address all of the operational matters necessary for the new Service; arranging office accommodation; recruiting and training specialist staff; and designing and implementing the new regulatory and IT frameworks required to accept applications. The dedicated ISI website (www.isi.gov.ie) and information line went live on 18 April. Trained ISI staff have begun taking calls from the public and will be able to advise people in regard to which debt resolution process may be most appropriate to their situation from the three processes available. It is envisaged that all the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 will be fully commenced as soon as all of the remaining necessary preparations for administration of its provisions are finalised, which is expected by the end of June 2013.

Visa Numbers

25. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total number of business visas issued by his Department in 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013 under the immigration investor and start up entrepreneurs programme; if he will name the companies involved and their area of business; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20751/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Immigrant Investor Programme and the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme were opened for applications in April 2012. Since then, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service have received 27 applica-

tions for the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme and 10 Applications for the Immigrant Investor Programme. Fourteen applications have been approved under the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme, seven applications have been refused, one applicant gained an alternative status and the remainder are still under consideration. Three applications have been approved under the Immigrant Investor Programme and the remainder are still under consideration.

It has been the long standing policy of the Department of Justice and Equality, under both my office and that of previous Ministers, to respect the privacy of individual migrants and not to divulge their personal details. I can say however that to date the total investment committed under both Programmes is of the order of €10.5 million and that it is projected that 270 jobs will be retained or created on foot of these investments in the ICT, recycling and financial services areas. In addition two organisations, one educational and the other a charity, are receiving substantial endowments to support and develop their activities.

Community Policing

26. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if, in view of the reduction in direct Garda resources and funding, he will consider setting aside funding to subsidise Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch groups to specifically assist them in the placement of signage advertising the phone number of the closest 24-7 manned Garda station to each such group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20826/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): For many years my Department has provided funding for the Community Alert programme which is operated by Muintir na Tíre in partnership with the Garda authorities and which supports the operation of over 1,300 local groups. Funding is provided in relation to the employment and associated costs of a National Coordinator and Development Officers which I believe is the best use of the resources available to me to support an effective crime prevention scheme. I understand that funding for Community Alert is also received from the HSE. The partnership between An Garda Síochána and Muintir na Tíre was underlined by the signing of an updated Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations in January this year.

In relation to Neighbourhood Watch groups, while certain costs related to their operations are funded from the Garda Vote, there is not a specific financial allocation. I am currently providing the maximum possible funding to Community Alert that is open to me, having regard to the overall restrictions on my Department's resources and other expenditure needs. Accordingly, the provision of funding for the project proposed by the Deputy would necessarily have to be found within that existing allocation and my Department has not received any request from the Garda authorities or from Muintir na Tíre to reallocate resources along those lines. I should also advise the Deputy that local Garda management continue to engage with communities through the Joint Policing Committees and other fora to advise them of the relevant local policing arrangements, with a view to ensuring that the best possible policing service is provided to the public at all times.

Garda Investigations

27. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will have the case of the murder of Garda Richard Fallon on 3 April 1970 independently reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20589/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The murder of Garda Richard

Fallon was a terrible tragedy for his family and I want to, again, express my deepest sympathy to them. On top of that personal tragedy, his murder was also an event that can only be described as a heinous crime carried out by ruthless individuals. I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the Serious Review Crime Team met with members of the Fallon family on 18 April 2013 to apprise them of developments in the ongoing review of their father's case. I am conscious that this is a matter of great concern to the family but I am sure the Deputy will appreciate that it would be best to await the outcome of the Garda review.

Legislative Programme

28. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he will conclude a review of the existing legislation on prostitution here. [20849/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As part of the review referred to by the Deputy, in June 2012, I published a discussion document on the future direction of legislation on prostitution. The purpose of the discussion document is to facilitate a public consultation process. On its publication, I referred the discussion document to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality. The joint committee is conducting the consultation process independently. There is considerable public interest in this issue. It has been reported that the joint committee has received many hundreds of written submissions. Also, my Department hosted a conference in October to discuss the consultation paper. The joint committee will report back to me when it has completed its work. Its report and the views expressed at the October conference will be fully considered in the framing of any necessary legislative proposals to be submitted to Government in due course.

Human Trafficking

29. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the figures for potential and suspected cases of human trafficking in 2012, and to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20827/13]

38. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the figures for potential and suspected cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation during 2012 and to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20829/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 29 and 38 together.

I can inform the Deputy that during 2012, a total of thirty-seven investigations were initiated by An Garda Síochána into allegations of human trafficking; of these, thirty-one investigations were into allegations of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. To date in 2013, (29 April 2013), a total of fourteen investigations into allegations of human trafficking have been initiated by An Garda Síochána; of these, a total of six investigations related to allegations of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. In An Garda Síochána Policing Plan for 2013, one of the stated priorities is to prevent and detect Human Trafficking. The Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of my Department and An Garda Síochána are continually vigilant for any emerging trends relating to human trafficking and maintain a dialogue on this matter with the relevant State agencies and non-governmental organisations working in this area.

Cross-Border Co-operation

30. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will work with the Northern Ireland Minister for Justice to explore the potential value of a Donegal-Tyrone-Derry community policing board structure based on this State's existing joint policing committee model; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20591/13]

40. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will engage with Minister David Ford of the Northern Ireland Executive with a view to establishing the worthiness of a possible Donegal-Tyrone-Derry community policing structure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20592/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 30 and 40 together.

I am happy to inform the Deputy that there is close and ongoing co-operation between the Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland on all aspects of policing. The Garda Commissioner and the Chief Constable of the PSNI are responsible for operational police co-operation and they have repeatedly emphasised the priority they attach to the high quality co-operation between the two services which plays a significant role in combating crime, particularly in the border region.

The two police forces operate a joint Cross-Border Policing Strategy which has as its aims to improve public safety throughout Ireland, to disrupt criminal activity and to enhance the policing capability of both police services on the island. Senior management in the Garda Síochána and the PSNI have met regularly to progress initiatives put forward in the strategy document. All of these are important elements in enabling the two forces to work more effectively together in tackling crime and promoting community safety for all communities on this island. I meet very regularly and maintain ongoing contact with the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice, David Ford, and we have developed a close working relationship which is of great benefit in addressing matters of mutual concern and in enhancing effective co-operation and co-ordination on all policing and criminal justice matters. Indeed, we frequently discuss these matters by phone as they arise.

Under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Co-operation on Criminal Justice Matters we operate a structured framework to further enhance and develop this North-South co-operation. Officials from our Departments and from the various agencies in the justice sector, such as the probation services and the youth justice services, meet regularly to assess and report to us on developments across a range of areas where co-operation is being pursued. It is this relationship at the operational level between the police forces and the other services in the justice sector which is the key to successful joint working to prevent and detect crime, and to pursue those responsible for it. In that context, it is not clear to me that there is value to be added by creating a new or additional structure at this time. Rather the focus is on enhancing and developing the strong partnership that already exists between the police forces and the other services working in the justice sector on this island.

Departmental Strategies

31. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the work that has been carried out to compile an integration strategy; when the strategy will be published and implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20841/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Programme for Government contains a commitment that we will promote policies which integrate minority ethnic

groups in Ireland, and which promote social inclusion, equality, diversity and the participation of immigrants in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities. A significant level of activity is taking place in pursuit of this commitment. A number of key departments and agencies have developed specific strategies to ensure that their services respond to Ireland's changed demographic in an interculturally competent and inclusive manner. The strategies developed include: an Intercultural Health Strategy; an Intercultural Education Strategy; a Cultural and Arts Policy and Strategy; the Garda Síochána Diversity Strategy; and an Action Strategy for Integrated Workplaces.

The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, which is part of my Department, has responsibility for leading and coordinating work relating to the integration of legally resident immigrants. The Office is also responsible for the European Refugee Fund and the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals both of which financially assist integration of members of their target group. From next year, these Funds will be replaced by the Asylum and Migration Fund. Arrangements for this Fund will involve a policy or programming dialogue with the European Commission after which a national multi-annual programme will be drawn up for the period 2014-2020. Funding for integration of immigrants is also provided by my Department from purely national sources subject to the reduced resources which are available for all categories of public expenditure at present.

Garda Transport Numbers

32. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the numbers of Garda vehicles operational in the following years: 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. [20845/13]

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 advised by the Garda authorities that the strength of the Garda fleet over the period referred to by the Deputy was as outlined in the table.

YEAR	FLEET TOTAL
2006	2,184
2007	2,305
2008	2,729
2009	2,814
2010	2,740
2011	2,623
2012	2,414
April 2013	2,497

The Deputy will be aware that an additional €3 million was made available to An Garda Síochána towards the end of last year which enabled the Force to procure a further 171 vehicles. This brought total investment in the Garda fleet in 2012 to €4 million and resulted in a total of 213 new vehicles being procured during the year. I am informed by the Garda authorities that the roll out of the most recently purchased patrol vehicles has been completed.

In addition to the investment provided in 2012, a specific allocation of €5 million has been

provided for the purchase and fit-out of Garda transport in the current year. This represents a very considerable financial investment in Garda transport, particularly at a time when the level of funding available across the public sector is severely limited. It is a clear indication of my commitment to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, An Garda Síochána are provided with sufficient resources to enable them to deliver an effective and efficient policing service.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

33. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current waiting times for Garda vetting in 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20759/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the average processing time for Garda vetting applications for the years 2011 and 2012 was approximately 8 weeks. The current average processing time for applications is approximately 12 weeks from date of receipt, which was the average processing time for applications in 2010. 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. These personnel are currently undergoing training and will be operational within the vetting service as soon as possible.

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. I am currently considering other measures which should have a positive impact on processing times.

Garda Training

34. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will confirm his intention in relation to the continued operation of the Garda Training College in Templemore, County Tipperary; if he will confirm if his Department has conducted a risk assessment on the implications for the State of allowing the total number of active Garda personnel to fall below 13,000; if he will share this information with Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20700/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I would like to assure the House that the Garda College remains fully open as the main training centre for the Garda Síochána. The Chief Superintendent in charge of the College, and the members of the team there, develop, coordinate and direct all training interventions up to the most senior ranks.

The College provides operationally focused training across a range of areas including fire-arms training, driver training, public order training, operational skills programmes, management development programmes and of course Garda Reserve training. In 2012 training was provided in the College for over 5,000 members of the Garda Síochána, and I can confirm for

the House, and all those connected with the Garda College, that the College will continue to provide a centre of excellence for training for the Garda Síochána.

In relation to Garda strength, I have said that I would not like to see Garda strength fall below the level of 13,000, and I will bring proposals to Government shortly in relation to maintaining Garda operational strength. It is of course the case that a resumption of Garda recruitment, at a time when both overall headcount and the size of the pay bill in the public service must be reduced, would have financial implications that must be managed within the overall resources available to Government. In that context, it is important that the current impasse in relation to the LRC proposals on saving €1 billion from the public service pay bill, including €300 million this year, is first resolved. As Deputies will be aware, the LRC is currently exploring with all the parties concerned the potential for such a resolution, and of course I hope that there is a positive outcome to that process.

An Garda Síochána have had a very successful number of months and crime is down in all areas as can be seen from recently published statistics. I am confident that An Garda Síochána, which is an extremely capable and talented force, will be able to carry out their duties, that frontline Garda services will continue to be prioritised, and that the crackdown on organised crime will be maintained.

Criminal Assets Bureau

35. **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will update Dáil Éireann on the work of the Criminal Assets Bureau; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20782/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Criminal Assets Bureau is a vital component in the State's law enforcement response to serious and organised crime. The remit of the Bureau is to target those persons who seek to derive benefit from criminal activities. In carrying out this role the Bureau utilises all available legal remedies, primarily those contained in the Proceeds of Crime legislation, Taxes legislation and Social Welfare legislation, to deprive persons of benefits obtained from the proceeds of crime.

It has long been acknowledged that one of the key strengths of the Bureau is its multi-agency structure, comprising members of An Garda Síochána, officials of the Revenue Commissioners (tax and customs), officials of the Department of Social Protection, a Bureau Legal Officer and administrative and technical staff.

Bureau processes are continuously being evaluated and, where necessary, strengthened to maximise the number of cases brought and assets targeted. Since its inception, notable developments in this regard have been the establishment of a Bureau Analysis Unit within the Bureau and the ongoing training and recruitment programme for asset profilers. There are now in the region of 200 asset profilers in place throughout the jurisdiction providing an asset profiling service to the Bureau.

With regard to future developments, an Expert Group, established under the auspices of my Department, is currently engaged in a comprehensive review of the Proceeds of Crime legislation with a view to identifying possible improvements which would serve to strengthen the operation of the Bureau.

At international level it is recognised that well developed systems for the confiscation of criminal assets, together with law enforcement cooperation in tracing, identifying and seizing such assets, is vital to the targeting of organised crime activity.

Internationally, the Bureau continues to liaise and conduct investigations with law enforcement and judicial authorities throughout Europe and worldwide in pursuit of assets deriving from criminal conduct.

All monies collected by the Bureau are returned to the Exchequer in accordance with the provisions of the Proceeds of Crime legislation. In 2011, Proceeds of Crime cases yielded in excess of €2.7 million to the Exchequer. In addition, the Bureau, using appropriate Revenue provisions, forwarded in excess of €3.8 million to the Exchequer and recovered in excess of €454,000 under Social Welfare provisions.

Further more detailed information concerning the operation of the Bureau is made available in the Annual Reports of the activities of the Criminal Assets Bureau. These reports are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and published on my Department's website at www.justice.ie.

Insolvency Service of Ireland Application Numbers

36. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the expected numbers of person availing of the personal insolvency services under the three mechanisms in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20786/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): It is difficult to estimate the likely demand on the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI). The tentative estimate of applications for the Debt Settlement Arrangement (DSA) and Personal Insolvency Arrangement (PIA) is roughly 15,000 applications plus a further 3,000 to 4,000 applications for Debt Relief Notices (DRNs) in the first full year. In addition, approximately 3,000 bankruptcy applications are expected during this time. The ISI will be processing DRN applications in July, once Approved Intermediaries are authorised and subsequently, DSA and PIA applications once personal insolvency practitioners (PIPs) are authorised.

Penalty Point System

37. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he will publish the report in to allegations that a large number of penalty points were removed by senior gardaí without an adequate explanation. [20848/13]

42. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the progress and conduct of the Garda Assistant Commissioner's report into allegations of the cancellation of fixed charge penalty notices, with particular reference to the delays in bringing the matter before Dáil Éireann. [20715/13]

47. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views that an armed response unit should be based in the Dublin mid-west area following recent murders and attempted murders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20593/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 37, 42 and 44 together.

The allegations relating to the cancellation by members of the Garda Síochána of fixed charge notices were forwarded to the Garda Commissioner in October 2012. The Garda Commissioner appointed an Assistant Commissioner to conduct an examination and to report on the allegations. I received an interim report from the Commissioner in November 2012 and

2 May 2013

the final report on 28 March 2013. Legal consideration has had to be given to certain privacy issues, but I will now be bringing the report to Government and I will then be in a position to make public its findings.

I believe that it was right for me to refer this matter to the Garda Commissioner for a fact-finding investigation, rather than establishing any other type of inquiry, and I would ask Deputies to withhold judgement, on this point or more generally, until they have all of the facts.

Question No. 38 answered with Question No. 29.

Divorce Process

39. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to review the length of time a married couple have to be separated before they can attain a divorce. [20851/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I would refer the Deputy to my response to Parliamentary Question No. 196 of 18th April 2013, in which I indicated as follows: “The basis for the four year period required for divorce is that it is mandated by Article 41.3.2.i of the Constitution. The Oireachtas cannot legislate to change this period unless the majority of voters approve such a change in a referendum.” The position remains unchanged.

Question No. 40 answered with Question No. 30.

Garda Investigations

41. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 8 of 20 June 2012, the current status of the Garda review of the murder of Fr. Niall Molloy in Clara, County Offaly, in July 1985; if he will accede to the request by the family for an independent inquiry into the priest’s violent death; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20588/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Garda authorities that the examination surrounding the circumstances of the death of Father Niall Molloy is almost complete and that a report of this examination is expected to be submitted to the Commissioner sometime this month. Upon receipt of a report from the Commissioner I will review the situation.

I understand that the officers carrying out the examination are continuing to keep the family members of the deceased updated on progress. While I fully appreciate the concerns of the family, in any case where criminal behaviour is suspected it is only through a Garda investigation, and where evidence of criminal wrongdoing is available through the submission of a file by the Gardaí to the Director of Public Prosecutions, that persons can be brought fully to account.

Therefore, I hope that the Deputy will agree that, in the first instance, we need to allow the present Garda examination to proceed to its conclusion, which, as I have indicated, will be shortly.

Question No. 42 answered with Question No. 37.

Crime Levels

43. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality steps that are being taken to ensure incidents of racism are not under-reported; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20840/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can advise the Deputy that An Garda Síochána is very conscious of the impact of racist incidents and relevant structures are in place to support appropriate policing responses and to encourage reporting.

All members of An Garda Síochána are tasked with enforcing all legislation relating to criminal matters, including the relevant provisions relating to racist behaviour. On receipt of any complaint the matter will be subject of a full investigation by An Garda Síochána and on completion of such investigation an Investigation File will be submitted to the Law Officers who, on being satisfied that there is sufficient evidence available to warrant a prosecution, will direct what charges, if any, are to be proffered.

The Garda Racial Intercultural and Diversity Office (GRIDO) has responsibility for co-ordinating, monitoring and advising on all aspects of policing Ireland's diverse communities. GRIDO monitors the reporting and recording of hate and racist crime on a continual basis.

There are currently a total of 322 Garda Ethnic Liaison Officers (ELOs) appointed to work with minority communities at local level. These officers combined with GRIDO play a fundamental role in liaising with minority groups and work in partnership to encourage tolerance, respect and understanding within communities and to help prevent hate and racist crime. GRIDO and ELOs provide advice and assistance to victims of hate or racist crime where required or deemed necessary.

In addition to the work of the Gardaí, the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, which operates under my Department's remit, provides substantial funding to local authorities around the country to support local programmes that educate the public on issues such as immigration, integration and anti-racism.

Question No. 44 answered with Question No. 37.

Proposed Legislation

45. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he intends to bring forward legislation or amending legislation to facilitate separate family law courts. [20852/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Programme for Government includes a commitment to hold a Referendum to amend the Constitution to provide for a separate family court structure. The intention is that if the Referendum is approved by the People, detailed implementing legislation of the type referred to by the Deputy will be introduced. In the meantime, work on the drafting of the Scheme of a Referendum Bill is proceeding in my Department.

Human Trafficking

46. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to improve shortfalls in the identification of human trafficking victims as highlighted by the OSCE and several US trafficking in persons reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20831/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The process for the identification of victims of human trafficking used in Ireland is based on the model developed by the International Organisation on Migration (IOM); this envisages a two step process involving an assessment of the varying indicators and a detailed interview with the individual. Participation by front-line and policy personnel working in this area in various national and international training initiatives ensures that policy and processes in this regard are informed by the latest developments and in particular any new methods of identification of victims of human trafficking.

The OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Human Trafficking visited Ireland in early 2012 and the Report of her visit was published in March 2013. This Report recognised Ireland's dynamic anti-trafficking policy and the development of good practices based on a human rights approach and good governance. The Report also complimented Ireland's comprehensive institutional system, coordination mechanism and consultation and cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations and International Organisations. The full report, including the Government's response is available on www.blueblindfold.gov.ie. In 2010, 2011 and 2012 the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report has given Ireland Tier 1 rating for its efforts in combating the crime of human trafficking. In addition, Ireland also had the benefit during 2012 of a country visit from the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) who carried out a week long country visit in November; the final report from GRETA will be available in the coming months.

The contents and recommendations of these Reports, including any observations in relation to the identification process, will be taken into account in the process of drafting a new National Action Plan in this area during 2013. The views of these international organisations, developments at European Union level, along with consultations with other state agencies and civil society will significantly inform the direction and content of the new National Action Plan.

While the reports of these international bodies are a welcome acknowledgement of the work we have done in this area, they also represent important learning opportunities for developing and refining our policies and processes; we cannot be complacent with regard to our efforts to identify victims, prosecute those who perpetrate this crime or in seeking to ensure that the victims of this human rights abuse are afforded the supports and services they require.

Question No. 47 answered with Question No. 17.

Consular Services Expenditure

48. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 157 of 23 April 2013 if he will confirm the salary and related costs of diplomatic representation of staff posted from Ireland in 2011 and 2012; the capital expenditure expended on diplomatic representation in those years; if he will provide in tabular form the number of staff employed in diplomatic representation whose annual salary lies in the following ranges: €100-150,000, €150-200,000, €200-250,000 and more than €250,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20866/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): As indicated in my reply to Question No 157 on 23 April 2013, Ireland maintains 73 Diplomatic and Consular Missions abroad to represent and promote the values and interests of the State and our people and provide frontline services to Irish citizens. I have set out in the table below the salary and related costs of staff posted from Ireland who were working at these Missions in 2011 and 2012.

YEAR	SALARY	ALLOWANCES
2011	€21,327,390	€8,998,026
2012	€20,367,563	€8,709,948

In 2011, capital expenditure on Missions was €933,901. In 2012 it was €878,604.

The number of HQ-based staff working at our Missions abroad whose annual salary lies in the ranges €100-150,000, €150-200,000, €200-250,000 and more than €250,000 is as follows:

SALARY RANGE	NUMBER OF STAFF
100,000-150,000	46
150,000-200,000	4
200,000-250,000	0
>250,000	0

Irish Communities Abroad

49. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide an update on his efforts to engage with Irish citizens who work and reside abroad. [20906/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Maintaining and strengthening links with Irish communities overseas has always been a key objective of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as demonstrated by its inclusion in the high level goals set out in the Department's 2011 – 2014 Strategy Statement. Following the Report of the Task Force on Policy Regarding Emigrants of 2002, the Irish Abroad Unit was established in 2004 to address the needs of our most vulnerable emigrants abroad and to provide greater strategic direction to the Government's engagement with the Diaspora.

In partnership with our Missions abroad, the Unit works to support the most vulnerable of our emigrants, pursue appropriate legal avenues for emigration, support Irish immigration centres and new arrivals, address issues which facilitate assimilation in new home, manage our diaspora recognition programmes and engage the key influencers and leverage their experience and expertise as we work towards economic recovery.

Today, our Diaspora engagement policy has two key strands. First, through the Emigrant Support Programme, we work with almost 200 Irish community organisations in over 20 countries to provide support to Irish emigrants. Since 2004, Irish groups ranging from those providing front line services to those most at need including the elderly, isolated, vulnerable and new arrivals to those working in the culture and heritage space have received grants of over €104 million under the Programme. Details of all grant recipients since 2006 can be found on my Department's website at <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=298>. I am pleased that, despite the difficult financial situation we face, the Government has maintained the 2013 funding for the ESP at €11.59 million, the same level as 2012. In addition to supporting the most vulnerable of our diaspora, we have in recent years enhanced our engagement with communities dealing with large numbers of new emigrants, particularly, in Australia and Canada. In Canada, we support the new Irish Canadian Immigration Centre in Toronto, which I opened during my visit to Toronto in March 2012, while in Australia, the main welfare bureaus in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane all secured additional funding in 2012. Projects aimed at supporting the needs of new emigrants will be the focus of the 2013 programme which has just closed.

The second element of our policy is focussed around the work of the Global Irish Network, a group of over 300 of the most influential Irish connected business figures drawn from 40 countries. Over the past three years, the Network has proved particularly effective in the following areas: as a source of structured advice from key players in priority markets, sectors and within multinational companies; the facilitation of high level access to decision makers in major corporations for the Government and Irish companies; a direct role in job creation through high level FDI Forums (such as the President Clinton “Invest in Ireland” roundtable in February, 2012), formal involvement in developing trade missions and Connect Ireland; over 100 members have signed up to support exporters under the Global Irish Contacts Programme providing expertise in 32 markets across 14 sectors; support and assistance with our work to build a strong international reputation; and participation in a number of new initiatives including the Gathering, the Farmleigh Fellowship, the Irish Technology Leadership Group and within the agri-food sector.

In addition to the above programmes, the Department also works closely with our missions in the United States to address the position of the undocumented Irish and to reform our migration arrangements with the US and manages our diaspora recognition programmes such as the Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad and the Certificate of Irish Heritage.

Consular Services Representations

50. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the representation he has made to the Lithuanian authorities in relation to a person (details supplied) who is in prison in Lithuania; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21082/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I can inform the Deputy that the Embassy of Ireland in Lithuania and the Consular Assistance Section in Dublin has provided consular assistance to the person in question since that person’s initial detention in Lithuania. The Embassy is in regular contact with the appropriate Lithuanian authorities in response to questions or matters which have arisen during the period of imprisonment. The person and his next of kin are kept informed of the Embassy’s representations to the Lithuanian authorities on various matters, and the outcomes of these representations.

Property Taxation Administration

51. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will look into an administrative error that has arisen in respect of two persons (details supplied) in County Cork who are obliged to pay the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20950/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): A key aspect of the work undertaken by Revenue for the Local Property Tax (LPT) was the development of a comprehensive Register of residential properties in the State. The Register was developed using data drawn from a range of sources including Revenue’s own databases, the Local Government Management Agency database and data from utility companies. Data from the various sources was cross-checked to ensure that the Register is as accurate as possible and work is still in progress to refine it. I am informed that while every effort has been made to correctly match residential properties to owners, in a small number of cases, some individuals were not included on the register and for that reason did not receive an LPT Return. The possibility of such instances occurring was

acknowledged by the Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners in public statements that she has made in connection with the issue of LPT Returns.

While it is absolutely regretted that any omissions of this nature should occur, given the scale of the operation involved, there was always a likelihood that this would arise in some instances and I am very satisfied that as part of Revenue's communications around the general issue of LPT Returns, the Commissioners sought to forewarn taxpayers and they have provided very clear guidance on the steps that should be taken in these cases.

In regard to the specific case, I commend the persons in question for taking the correct action to rectify the Revenue Register details in regard to their property. I have been advised by Revenue that the matters raised by the Deputy have been discussed by Revenue officials with the persons in question and resolved, and the Register has been correctly updated.

Vehicle Registration Numbers

52. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide, in tabular form, the number of cars taxed in each emissions category for the purposes of VRT and the VRT rate associated with each of these categories for the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21037/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the number of cars registered in each emission category for the purposes of VRT and the VRT rate associated with each of these categories for the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 is as follows:

Gross registrations of new cars

-	-	2009	2010	2011	2012
-	VRT Rate	New	New	New	New
A1	14%	7,181	30,810	37,945	42,820
A2	16%	24,925	39,986	43,359	30,508
A3	20%	11,295	9,375	4,686	3,443
A4	24%	8,103	5,920	2,594	1,630
A5	28%	4,190	2,046	1,021	907
A6	32%	1,340	779	669	536
A7	36%	303	296	203	30
Total	-	57,337	89,212	90,477	79,874

Gross registrations of used cars

-	-	2009	2010	2011	2012
-	VRT Rate	Used	Used	Used	Used
A1	14%	2,140	3,805	5,308	6,445
A2	16%	9,918	10,193	12,474	14,277
A3	20%	15,507	11,909	12,229	10,658
A4	24%	9,050	6,099	5,108	4,219
A5	28%	5,749	3,691	2,718	2,068
A6	32%	3,527	2,367	1,556	1,200

-	-	2009	2010	2011	2012
-	VRT Rate	Used	Used	Used	Used
A7	36%	3,182	2,051	1,416	1,645
Total	-	49,073	40,115	40,809	40,512

Euro Coins Production

53. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to reports that it costs the State 1.65c to create a 1c coin, if he will confirm the unit cost of creating the following specie - 2c, 5c, 10c, 50c, 1 euro and 2 euro. [20862/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The average cost of producing each coin denomination is as follows:

Coin Denomination	Unit Cost
2c	2.07c
5c	3.01c
10c	5.16c
20c	6.76c
50c	8.27c
1 Euro	9.75c
2 Euro	14.25c

In any given year the cost of striking each denomination of coin is dependent upon the total volume and combination of coins produced. It should also be noted that material costs can fluctuate. Economies of scale are an important element in the allocation of costs. In years of high production the average cost of production per coin falls and vice versa.

Banking Sector Issues

54. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 185 of 23 April 2013 and confirmation that the Central Bank of Ireland has engaged BlackRock International to provide the stress-testing of Irish banks in 2013, if he will outline the principal acquisitions of assets in Ireland by BlackRock since the last stress-testing in January-March 2011. [20863/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank has advised my Department that they engaged BlackRock Solutions to provide services under the Central Bank's Financial Measures Programme (FMP) including the Prudential Capital Assessment Review (PCAR). BlackRock Solutions are an advisory firm that is part of the wider BlackRock Group. The Central Bank do not have the information requested in relation to BlackRock International. The Central Bank have told my Department that they observe EU and Irish procurement legislation requirements.

National Treasury Management Agency Remuneration

55. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 193 of 23 April 2013, if he will provide an explanation for expenses of the NTMA as

they relate to the net funds drawn down from the Exchequer to cover the National Treasury management Agency's administrative costs of €10.72 million for the three months ending 31 March 2013. [20864/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The NTMA's administrative costs are charged to the Central Fund. They include costs of employment, professional fees, operating expenses and pension costs. The figure in the Exchequer Statement represents the amount of funding drawn from the Central Fund during the quarter to meet the NTMA's administrative costs.

Maternity Benefit Issues

56. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding tax on maternity benefit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20884/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): 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 total level of income that the individual or couple concerned has in the relevant tax year or years.

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

Given the current budgetary constraints I have no plans to introduce a tax exemption along the lines proposed.

National Debt

57. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the debt repayments and interest repayments for Ireland for 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20909/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The most recent General Government interest expenditure estimates covering the period 2014-2019 are set out in the table below. These figures are consistent with the estimates from the recently published Stability Programme Update (SPU). The SPU covers the period 2013-2016 primarily but also contains high level public finance forecasts for the years 2017-2019. Tables 17 and A3 of the SPU set out these interest expenditure estimates. The Deputy will appreciate that the interest expenditure estimates for the latter part of the period are particularly tentative at this point.

The following table also shows Government bond maturities as well as maturing EU/IMF Programme loans over the period 2014-2020. The Government bond maturity figures are taken from the 30 April *Irish Government Bonds Outstanding* Report. The EU/IMF Programme loan maturities reflect the position as of end-March 2013. The information in relation to Government bond maturities and Programme loan maturities is available on the website of the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA).

€ billions	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	-
General Government Interest% of GDP	8.54.9	8.94.9	9.24.8	9.54.8	9.94.8	10.14.7	-
-	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Government Bond Maturities	7.6	3.6	10.2	6.4	9.3	14.5	20.9
EU/IMF Programme Loan Maturities	0.1	6.9	6.2	3.3	7.3	6.0	5.0

It is important to note that the EU/IMF Programme loan maturities, as outlined in the table, do not reflect the agreement reached at the April informal Eurogroup and ECOFIN meetings to lengthen the maturities of Ireland's EFSF and EFSM loans by increasing the weighted average maturity limit by 7 years. The €6.9 billion EU/IMF Programme loan maturity figure for 2015 includes a €1.27 billion loan from the EFSF. While this is due to mature in February 2015, it was announced at the time of draw down, in January 2012, that this loan would be rolled over.

National Debt

58. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Finance the percentage of tax revenues that were used up in interest repayments for 2012 and that will be used up for interest repayments in 2013 and in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20910/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table below. As the Deputy's question concerns the percentage of tax revenues used for interest expenditure, the figures in the table reflect national debt interest expenditure rather than general government interest expenditure. Expressing national debt interest expenditure as a percentage of tax revenues is a standard metric used in the context of debt sustainability.

-	2012	2013F	2014
% of Tax revenue spent on interest of National Debt	15.5	19.9	20.6

Sources: Department of Finance, NTMA

Although the national debt interest/tax revenue ratio has increased sharply in recent years, it is expected to stabilise in the coming years and remain well below the ratio prevailing in the mid-1980s.

Banking Sector Staff Issues

59. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to cap the number of consultants who are allowed work in AIB; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20911/13]

60. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Finance if there is a policy on when AIB is allowed hire consultants to work in the bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20912/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 59 and 60 together.

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

The appointment of any consultant by AIB is a commercial decision for the bank.

Tax Code

61. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider reducing the amount of capital gains tax that has to be paid on co-operatives' shares when they are sold in view of the fodder crisis and the fact that farmers may have to sell off shares to themselves over their present financial crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20995/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The current rate of capital gains tax was set in Budget 2013 as part of an overall budgetary strategy to generate necessary additional tax revenue. An increase in the taxation of capital is preferable from the point of view of its impact on the economy to an increase in employment taxes such as income tax. Farmers who sell shares whether to ease financial difficulties or otherwise, are no different to any other taxpayers who may be required to similarly sell shares or other assets. It is not, therefore appropriate or justifiable to single out farmers for favoured treatment over and above other taxpayers. It is important to bear in mind that it is only an actual chargeable gain that is subject to capital gains tax, not the entire consideration to be derived from a sale of shares. In addition a farmer can sell shares and make a gain of €1270 each year without incurring any capital gains tax (€1270 is the annual capital gains tax personal exemption). In the circumstances it is not considered appropriate to reduce the rate of capital gains tax on the sale of shares by any taxpayer, includ-

ing farmers.

Carbon Tax Collection

62. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Finance if the carbon tax for solid fuel applies only to the sale of dried turf; if the tax applies to the sale spreads of peat which must then be dried and rared; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21004/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I can confirm that the carbon tax for solid fuel applies to the first supply in the State of peat as a fuel.

Departmental Funding

63. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide bridging loan finance to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to allow it to issue the Exchequer funded element of area based compensation payments four months early to assist farmers with the purchase of fodder; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21005/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): My Department has advised me that payments can only issue directly from the Central Fund (Exchequer) i.e. non-voted disbursements if there is a statutory basis for them and a credit has been granted by the Comptroller and Auditor General under the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993. There is no statutory basis for a payment from the Central Fund for the matter referred to by the Deputy. As regards payments from the Vote for the Office of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, that is a matter for that Minister and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform who is the sanctioning authority for voted expenditure.

Small and Medium Enterprises Supports

64. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to put in place a formal timetable for banks to deal with restructuring small and medium enterprise loans in a manner similar to the targets set under the mortgage arrears resolution process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21022/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank of Ireland will set quarterly institution-specific performance targets for covered banks to move distressed borrowers onto longer-term solutions by the end of this quarter. The targets set will reflect Banks' capacity, processes and systems. I should stress that the Credit Review process remains available to any SMEs whose credit has been reduced or withdrawn by the pillar banks as well as when credit is refused by them. I would strongly advise any SME whose credit is reduced or withdrawn to avail of the services of the Credit Review Office.

Mortgage Interest Rates Issues

65. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the reason he was willing to intervene with the State supported banks in 2011 to force them to pass an ECB rate reduction but will not now intervene in respect of the large widening gap between the ECB base rate and standard variable mortgage rates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21023/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware the Relationship Framework with the banks provides that the State will not intervene in their day-to-day operations or their management decisions. These frameworks are published on the Department of Finance website. I must ensure that the banks are run on a commercial, cost effective and independent basis to ensure the value of the banks as an asset to the State, as per the Memorandum on Economic and Financial Policies agreed with the EU Commission, the ECB and the IMF. Neither the Central Bank nor the Department of Finance has a statutory function in relation to interest rate decisions made by individual lending institutions at any particular time. The ECB rate bears no relationship to the cost of funding for Irish and indeed many other banks, and until the banking system normalises across Europe the ECB rate cannot be taken as an indicator of funding costs. The rates charged by the banks must cover their actual cost of funding to enable them to return to profitability, and support the economy.

Mortgage Arrears Rate

66. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he concurs with research of the Central Bank of Ireland that rising standard variable interest rates will increase mortgage arrears; the way this can be reconciled with the intention to deal with mortgage arrears under the mortgage arrears resolution targets process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21024/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I assume the Deputy is referring to the Central Bank's Economic Letter of 28 March 2013, on *The Impact of the Financial Crisis on Banks' Net Interest Margins*. As Minister for Finance, I have no statutory function in relation to setting interest rates by individual lending institutions. While the Government is acutely aware of the increasing financial stress that some households are facing in the current environment, ultimately the pricing of financial products, including standard variable mortgage interest rates, is a commercial decision for the management team and board of each bank, including the banks which the State has a shareholding interest.

The Government does recognise the difficulty an increase in variable mortgage rates can have for some borrowers. However, I can assure the Deputy that the Government is very much aware of the difficulties in this area and it is committed to advancing appropriate measures to assist those mortgage holders who are experiencing real and genuine difficulty.

Building on the 2011 'Keane Report', the Central Bank, under its Mortgage Arrears Resolution Strategies project, has for some time been working intensively with lenders to ensure that they can offer a range of longer term forbearance options to their customers who are experiencing mortgage difficulty. These include Central Bank engagement with the main mortgage lenders to require them to progressively resolve mortgage arrears cases and to, where appropriate, offer sustainable solutions to borrowers. In addition, the full implementation of the new insolvency frameworks will shortly come on stream and the Government also provides mortgage interest supplement support to particular borrowers in difficulty and more general support through the taxation system to mortgaged borrowers.

The Government is making significant progress to address the problem of mortgage arrears and believes that the ingredients of a transparent resolution process for borrowers are now in place.

Property Taxation Administration

67. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he is concerned that errors in compiling the list of liable persons for the local property tax could result in Revenue making an incorrect deduction from a person's salary or State benefit payment from 1 July; the procedure that will apply to correct such occurrences if they arise; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21025/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): A key aspect of the work undertaken by Revenue for the Local Property Tax (LPT) was the development of a comprehensive Register of residential properties in the State. The Register was developed using data drawn from a range of sources including Revenue's own databases, the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) database and data from utility companies. Data from the various sources has been cross-checked to ensure that the Register is as accurate as possible. As previously indicated to the House, the Register was used to issue LPT correspondence to property owners. While the Commissioners have made every effort to correctly match residential properties to owners, they have clearly stated that, in a small number of cases, some individuals who are not liable persons will have received LPT Returns in error. This may have occurred, for example, where landlords are not registered with the Private Residential Tenancy Board which caused the tenant to receive the Return; in cases where a person paid the Household Charge for another person; or in cases where a person's address on Revenue's database is out of date.

The Commissioners have stressed the importance of not ignoring the LPT Return. A person who received an LPT Return but who is not the liable person in respect of the stated property, has been advised to notify Revenue in writing that they are not the liable person, who the liable person is, and to provide supporting documentation where available. This will ensure that the LPT Register can be corrected and no further correspondence will issue to the person in respect of the LPT liability for the property. I am advised that individuals who have received LPT Returns in error are contacting Revenue and the Register is being updated accordingly.

However, where individuals fail to notify Revenue, they are likely to be included in the compliance campaign which is expected to commence in the second half of June with a view to deductions beginning in July. The compliance campaign will initially focus on pursuing payment of the Revenue Notice of Estimate through mandatory deduction at source from employment income and occupational pensions.

Prior to any such mandatory deductions taking place, individuals who have not engaged with the LPT process will receive a compliance reminder. Individuals who receive a compliance reminder from Revenue in June, and who are not the liable person in respect of the property but have failed to notify Revenue of this, will have a very short final opportunity, probably no more than a few days, to contact Revenue to provide the details of the liable person and to allow Revenue to update the Register.

Some public comment suggests that non-liable persons may be deciding, or may be being advised or even encouraged not to contact Revenue and not to tell Revenue who is the owner of the property. I consider this to be irresponsible advice. The law provides that if a person is on the LPT Register s/he is liable for the tax. Furthermore, from a practical point of view, this is not a good idea. As long as Revenue continues to connect an individual with a particular property, s/he will be pursued for payment. Against a background of non-engagement, or engagement which is simply too late, mandatory deduction at source will inevitably take place in some cases where the person is not liable for LPT.

The Commissioners have assured me that where an incorrect mandatory deduction at source has commenced, arrangements will be made in due course to cancel it and to refund the LPT deducted, once details of the correct liable person are advised to them and have been validated.

Clearly, this is a situation which Revenue would prefer to avoid. It will create unnecessary inconvenience for people who are not liable, unnecessary work for employers and Revenue and arrangements for refunds will take time.

However, I am very satisfied that as part of Revenue's communications around the general issue of LPT Returns, the Commissioners sought to forewarn taxpayers that errors may occur and to provide very clear guidance on the steps that should be taken in these cases. I am also satisfied that opportunities are being provided to individuals, who receive an LPT Return and who are not liable persons, to notify Revenue of the correct liable person so as avoid an incorrect deduction.

Budget 2014 Issues

68. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to publish a medium term fiscal statement in advance of budget 2014; if this will update the planned fiscal adjustment over the period 2014-15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21026/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Under the draft regulations known as the "two-pack" which are expected to be formally adopted in May or June, a common budgetary timeline is being introduced for all Euro area member states. In line with the requirements under the "two-pack" Budget day will be on the 15th of October this year. As the Budget date is moving forward, the Medium Term Fiscal Statement which is normally produced in October/November will become unnecessary. Under the new budgetary framework, both the Stability Programme Update and the Budget will show medium-term macroeconomic and fiscal projections. As such, it has been proposed to combine the information normally contained in the Medium Term Fiscal Statement with the Budget.

As is normal practice the Budget will update the planned fiscal adjustment for the coming 3 years, this will cover the period 2014-2016.

Bank Stress Tests

69. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when he expects the 2013 PCAR exercise to commence and be concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21027/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The matter is under discussion with the Troika at the present time and a decision has not yet been taken with regard to timing.

Credit Unions Regulation

70. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of credit unions subject to lending restrictions; the nature of such restrictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21028/13]

71. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the continuing decline in the total of loans outstanding by credit unions; his views on the way this can be reversed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21029/13]

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

71 together.

I have been informed by the Registrar of Credit Unions that it has been necessary to put lending restrictions in place in credit unions where there are regulatory concerns about the operation of these individual credit unions and the resultant risk to members' savings. The number of lending restrictions is a reflection of the Registrar of Credit Union's concerns about lending practices in the sector.

There are currently about 58% of all credit unions subject to lending restrictions. Almost all credit unions with a lending restriction in place have a maximum individual loan size restriction. Of the credit unions with lending restrictions, over 71% can lend €20,000 or more to an individual member, which is a sizeable amount and should cover most circumstances.

Fewer than 2.5% of credit unions are restricted to issuing loans of less than €10,000 to an individual member, and fewer than 1% of credit unions are restricted to issuing loans of less than €5,000 per member. These are the cases where the Registrar of Credit Unions has the more significant concerns in terms of risk to members' savings. However, the individual credit union lending restrictions currently in place are reviewed on a regular basis to determine whether they are still set at appropriate levels.

The Report of the Commission on Credit Unions sets out the loan to assets ratio of the credit union sector for each year from December 2006 to December 2011. The loan to asset ratio has reduced from 40.81% in December 2011 to 36.33% in December 2012, based on Central Bank Prudential Returns. The Report also states that Irish credit unions appear to be significantly under-lent. This is due in part to the overall reduction in demand for personal loans.

The Credit Union and Co-operation with Overseas Regulators Act 2012 will see the introduction of a flexible regulatory and supervisory framework for credit unions in the form of a tiered regulatory approach. This approach will assist credit unions in determining the business model they wish to adopt and will allow some credit unions to offer a greater range of services while complying with additional regulatory requirements. The Central Bank is to set out more detailed regulations on lending in the context of this tiered approach. However, the need for prudent lending with analysis of all loan applications to ensure a credit union member's credit worthiness will remain a vital element in safeguarding credit union members' savings.

Excise Duties Yield

72. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Finance if he would provide, in tabular form, the total amount of money raised in excise duties on alcohol in each category of alcohol excise as laid out by the Revenue Commissioners in the document (details supplied) for the years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012; if he will provide the relevant levels of excise duties on the various forms of alcohol in these years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21039/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The breakdown in excise returns by alcohol in each category from 2009 to 2012 is as follows:

	2009	2010	2011	2012
-				
Beer	404.3	320.1	307.3	308
Spirits	242.5	218.8	247.3	263.9
Wine	264.1	243.5	231	231.4
Cider	57.2	44	43.9	42.8
-	968.1	826.4	829.5	846.1

Questions - Written Answers

The level of excise duties on the various forms of alcohol is set out in the tables below:

Effective from 15 October 2008

Goods	Description or Usage	Rate of Duty €
Spirits		€39.25 per litre of alcohol in the spirits
Beer	Exceeding 0.5% vol but not exceeding 1.2% vol	€0.00
-	Exceeding 1.2% vol but not exceeding 2.8% vol	€9.93 per hectolitre per cent of alcohol in the beer
-	Exceeding 2.8% vol	€19.87 per hectolitre per cent of alcohol in the beer
Wine	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 5.5% vol	€109.34 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 5.5% vol but not exceeding 15% vol	€328.09 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 15% vol	€476.06 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling, not exceeding 5.5% volume	€656.18 per hectolitre
Other Fermented Beverages:(1) Cider and Perry	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 2.8% vol	€41.62 per hectolitre
-	Still and sparkling, exceeding 2.8% volume but not exceeding 6.0% volume	€83.25 per hectolitre
-	Still and sparkling, exceeding 6.0% vol but not exceeding 8.5% vol	€192.47 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 8.5% vol	€273.00 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling, exceeding 8.5% vol	€546.01 per hectolitre
Other Fermented Beverages:(2) Other than Cider and Perry	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 5.5% vol	€109.34 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 5.5% vol	€328.09 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling, exceeding 5.5% vol	€656.18 per hectolitre
Intermediate Beverages	Still, not exceeding 15% vol	€328.09 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 15% vol	€476.06 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling	€656.18 per hectolitre

Effective from 10 December 2009

Goods	Description or Usage	Rate of Duty €
Spirits	-	€31.13 per litre of alcohol in the spirits
Beer	Exceeding 0.5% vol but not exceeding 1.2% vol	€0.00

Goods	Description or Usage	Rate of Duty €
-	Exceeding 1.2% vol but not exceeding 2.8% vol	€7.85 per hectolitre per cent of alcohol in the beer
-	Exceeding 2.8% vol	€15.71 per hectolitre per cent of alcohol in the beer
Wine	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 5.5% vol	€87.39 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 5.5% vol but not exceeding 15% vol	€262.24 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 15% vol	€380.52 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling, not exceeding 5.5% volume	€524.48 per hectolitre
Other Fermented Beverages:(1) Cider and Perry	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 2.8% vol	€32.93 per hectolitre
-	Still and sparkling, exceeding 2.8% volume but not exceeding 6.0% volume	€65.86 per hectolitre
-	Still and sparkling, exceeding 6.0% vol but not exceeding 8.5% vol	€152.28 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 8.5% vol	€216.00 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling, exceeding 8.5% vol	€432.01 per hectolitre
Other Fermented Beverages:(2) Other than Cider and Perry	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 5.5% vol	€87.39 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 5.5% vol	€262.24 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling, exceeding 5.5% vol	€524.48 per hectolitre
Intermediate Beverages	Still, not exceeding 15% vol	€262.24 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 15% vol	€380.52 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling	€524.48 per hectolitre

Effective from 6 Dec 2012

Goods	Description or Usage	Rate of Duty €
Spirits		€36.85 per litre of alcohol in the spirits
Beer	Exceeding 0.5% volume but not exceeding 1.2% volume	€0.00
-	Exceeding 1.2% volume but not exceeding 2.8% volume	€9.56 per hectolitre per cent of alcohol in the beer
-	Exceeding 2.8% volume	€19.13 per hectolitre per cent of alcohol in the beer
Wine	Still, exceeding 5.5% volume but not exceeding 15% volume	€123.51 per hectolitre

Goods	Description or Usage	Rate of Duty €
-	Still, exceeding 15% volume	€370.64 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling, exceeding 5.5% volume	€537.81 per hectolitre
-	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 2.8% volume	€741.28 per hectolitre
Other Fermented Beverages:(1) Cider and Perry	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 2.8% volume	€40.08 per hectolitre
-	Still and sparkling, exceeding 2.8% volume but not exceeding 6% volume	€80.16 per hectolitre
-	Still and sparkling, exceeding 6.0% volume but not exceeding 8.5% volume	€185.36 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 8.5% volume	€262.92 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling, exceeding 8.5% volume	€525.85 per hectolitre
Other Fermented Beverages:(2) Other than Cider and Perry	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 5.5% volume	€123.51 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 5.5% volume	€370.64 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling, exceeding 5.5% volume	€741.28 per hectolitre
Intermediate Beverages	Still, not exceeding 15% volume	€370.64 per hectolitre
-	Still, exceeding 15% volume	€537.81 per hectolitre
-	Sparkling	€741.28 per hectolitre

Income Statistics

73. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance if he will set out the latest estimates available to the Revenue Commissioners for the tax years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 of the total number of taxpayers in each of the following bands (details supplied); the latest estimate of the total income for each of those bands; and the latest estimate of the total tax paid for each of those income bands. [21043/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the available historical data on the distribution of incomes by income ranges has been published for the tax years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 in their Statistical Reports for 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively and is available on the Revenue website at www.revenue.ie. The data is available in tables IDS1 to IDS 18 of the Income Distribution Statistics section of those reports.

In addition, using projected income levels and numbers of income earners, the Revenue Commissioners have updated their incomes data for the income tax years 2011 and 2012 years using an income tax model maintained for the purpose of estimating the Exchequer effect of budgetary changes to the income tax system. This data is provisional and likely to be revised. On this basis the tabulated information for income tax years 2011 and 2012 is as set out in the

following tables.

All Income earners for Income Tax Year 2011 (provisional)

Gross Income Range	Gross Income	Numbers	Income Tax
€	€		€
0 - 5,000	501,165,330	232,352	0
5,001 - 10,000	1,276,313,598	170,496	510,487
10,001 - 15,000	2,382,957,151	190,276	6,062,671
15,001 - 20,000	3,599,452,885	204,855	37,666,000
20,001 - 30,000	9,718,439,000	391,848	374,114,703
30,000 - 40,000	10,454,366,018	300,396	773,144,897
40,001 - 50,000	9,092,446,317	203,632	1,027,785,257
50,001 - 60,000	7,298,420,282	133,560	1,027,593,592
60,001 - 70,000	5,930,222,519	91,630	933,905,560
70,001 - 80,000	4,867,297,059	65,196	846,469,154
80,001 - 90,000	3,732,971,284	44,077	711,751,084
90,001 - 100,000	2,932,185,331	30,962	598,013,530
100,001 - 125,000	4,907,889,050	44,264	1,088,290,802
125,001 - 150,000	2,777,783,022	20,413	670,957,157
150,001 - 175,000	1,780,883,277	11,037	455,775,468
175,001 - 200,000	1,265,675,475	6,782	328,264,123
200,001 - 250,000	1,689,458,876	7,589	445,713,644
250,001 - 300,000	1,112,095,710	4,077	304,526,480
300,001 - 350,000	770,320,308	2,388	213,607,935
350,001 - 400,000	588,954,807	1,577	166,135,883
400,001 - 450,000	456,142,952	1,077	129,245,179
450,001 - 500,000	362,366,769	764	105,855,513
500,001 - 750,000	1,165,679,847	1,949	339,143,430
750,001 - 1,000,000	604,987,202	710	177,376,892
1,000,001 - 2,000,000	780,366,808	594	211,197,543
Over 2,000,000	538,797,236	129	150,257,857
Overall Total	80,587,638,117	2,162,628	11,123,364,844

All Income earners for Income Tax Year 2012 (provisional)

Gross Income Range	Gross Income	Numbers	Income Tax
€	€		€
0 - 5,000	498,244,792	230,907	0
5,001 - 10,000	1,266,800,708	169,218	526,693
10,001 - 15,000	2,364,429,313	188,770	6,111,749
15,001 - 20,000	3,570,761,415	203,218	37,898,824
20,001 - 30,000	9,677,011,170	390,082	373,852,252
30,000 - 40,000	10,422,708,176	299,435	773,585,815
40,001 - 50,000	9,100,605,135	203,817	1,031,079,033
50,001 - 60,000	7,320,079,368	133,954	1,033,634,792

Gross Income Range	Gross Income	Numbers	Income Tax
€	€		€
60,001 - 70,000	5,946,423,166	91,874	938,256,177
70,001 - 80,000	4,890,534,371	65,498	852,326,864
80,001 - 90,000	3,753,537,238	44,320	716,736,223
90,001 - 100,000	2,952,818,093	31,184	602,451,204
100,001 - 125,000	4,958,882,409	44,727	1,100,474,968
125,001 - 150,000	2,812,577,081	20,668	679,384,676
150,001 - 175,000	1,804,234,878	11,178	461,654,512
175,001 - 200,000	1,265,178,431	6,781	329,383,316
200,001 - 250,000	1,715,050,128	7,710	451,520,693
250,001 - 300,000	1,127,797,724	4,137	308,245,659
300,001 - 350,000	783,590,011	2,430	217,104,001
350,001 - 400,000	589,612,772	1,580	167,276,002
400,001 - 450,000	466,446,448	1,103	131,950,776
450,001 - 500,000	377,265,276	796	109,520,759
500,001 - 750,000	1,184,595,453	1,978	345,381,838
750,001 - 1,000,000	608,500,277	714	177,583,858
1,000,001 - 2,000,000	815,432,431	621	222,175,481
Over 2,000,000	545,004,074	130	151,736,551
Overall Total	80,818,120,338	2,156,830	11,219,852,715

It should be noted that the income ranges shown in the above table relate to Gross Income as defined in Revenue Statistical Reports.

The figures are estimates from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using actual data for the year 2010 adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends in the interim. These are, therefore, provisional and likely to be revised.

It should also be noted that a married couple which has elected or has been deemed to have elected joint assessment is counted as one tax unit.

Tax Yield

74. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide the tax take broken down by county or bailiwick for income tax PAYE and non-PAYE, VAT, corporation tax and capital gains tax for the years 2000, 2007 and 2011. [21046/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the relevant information available on a geographical basis is an estimated breakdown of the net receipt from PAYE, VAT (Internal), Corporation Tax, Income Tax (non-PAYE) and Capital Gains Tax on the basis of “bailiwick” (meaning the jurisdiction or boundaries within which Revenue Sheriffs, County Registrars or their officers operate for the purposes of enforcement of tax debt). It equates geographically with “county” while also providing separate breakdowns for “city” and “county” in the case of counties Dublin and Cork. The figures for these bailiwicks have been amalgamated to merge the results for city and county in each case. The available information for the years requested is shown in the following tables.

In considering the data it should be noted that the amount of tax attributed to a county may not necessarily be an indication of economic activity in that county for any of the following reasons:

1. The liability of a trader to VAT is generally dealt with by reference to the location of the trader's registered office even though the economic activity may be carried on in another county.
2. An employer's liability for PAYE is normally attributed to the county in which wages and salaries are paid, even though the employees may work in different counties.
3. Companies are associated on the tax record with the county address of the head-office or branch with which contact is established for tax purposes, which may be different to the city or county addresses of other branches. The distribution of corporate tax between regions can also vary from year to year as companies relocate.
4. Self-employed persons are associated on the tax record with the address at which the business is located, which may be in a different county to the home address.

Estimated breakdown of tax collection by county for 2000

County	Income Tax PAYE	Income Tax non-PAYE	VAT (domestic)	Corporation tax	Capital Gains tax
-	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
Carlow	17.24	8.70	32.07	15.12	5.55
Cavan	30.35	12.28	44.44	10.68	1.80
Clare	46.84	17.78	62.80	48.66	18.04
Donegal	54.79	20.85	68.44	17.62	8.23
Galway	447.71	38.78	165.80	70.80	32.20
Kerry	52.72	28.38	75.93	23.17	12.27
Kildare	176.27	39.73	144.28	201.95	45.44
Kilkenny	115.98	17.80	55.04	13.76	7.06
Laois	15.16	10.11	31.21	5.42	4.19
Leitrim	18.97	4.32	10.27	1.38	0.61
Limerick	137.37	44.67	176.51	69.47	16.41
Longford	23.06	5.19	15.74	3.62	2.55
Louth	95.70	16.93	133.96	49.42	8.16
Mayo	56.33	19.29	65.87	42.61	8.99
Meath	83.07	35.01	96.98	20.68	29.62
Monaghan	29.92	8.13	37.99	9.52	1.10
Offaly	123.69	11.48	37.69	10.73	5.08
Roscommon	31.21	8.46	28.25	6.86	3.81
Sligo	48.48	8.25	27.17	6.76	11.31
Tipperary	104.28	34.18	97.41	90.60	10.40
Waterford	153.75	21.19	65.37	37.65	9.68
Westmeath	474.18	13.62	57.33	21.32	23.78
Wexford	65.45	28.86	89.61	31.02	16.38
Wicklow	77.29	32.80	87.22	86.47	31.02
Dublin	4082.91	1366.67	3903.35	2563.33	396.27
Cork	448.95	110.73	494.96	323.08	52.15
Other/foreign	81.11	67.33	287.44	103.71	11.16
Totals	7092.76	2031.47	6393.13	3885.40	773.27

Estimated breakdown of tax collection by county for 2007

County	Income Tax PAYE	Income Tax non-PAYE	VAT (domestic)	Corporation tax	Capital Gains tax
-	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
Carlow	73.08	36.12	87.51	16.42	37.83
Cavan	101.68	33.69	131.99	57.67	31.61
Clare	166.97	60.77	127.24	117.23	47.58
Donegal	95.40	66.85	161.45	31.40	65.39
Galway	467.61	178.59	396.05	122.99	154.17
Kerry	358.58	92.97	186.27	38.06	49.55
Kildare	312.48	149.85	434.99	185.95	170.40
Kilkenny	172.43	60.71	139.84	25.99	31.31
Laois	48.62	39.03	91.67	14.15	34.49
Leitrim	75.88	12.57	27.76	4.03	5.66
Limerick	347.77	116.94	309.59	157.98	75.52
Longford	34.76	17.29	40.65	14.89	15.26
Louth	139.67	56.11	246.44	85.07	77.31
Mayo	114.31	68.93	169.67	45.82	41.53
Meath	208.56	136.43	270.96	120.73	133.57
Monaghan	50.36	26.85	85.19	17.12	20.44
Offaly	125.20	40.77	98.32	23.85	30.07
Roscommon	35.95	27.54	72.63	10.19	19.24
Sligo	104.73	30.92	62.91	26.76	28.95
Tipperary	138.26	100.34	212.19	106.73	49.17
Waterford	149.43	73.72	146.49	63.45	49.56
Westmeath	525.22	52.05	150.02	27.36	58.56
Wexford	127.12	96.75	201.58	54.71	97.96
Wicklow	156.25	118.31	196.84	71.64	110.45
Dublin	5,073.30	1,324.67	7,162.40	4,169.33	1,282.51
Cork	829.03	369.26	1082.87	573.90	275.81
Other/foreign	121.83	38.96	684.95	209.98	103.48
Totals	10,154.51	3,427.00	12,978.49	6,393.39	3,097.38

Estimated breakdown of tax collection by county for 2011

County	Income Tax PAYE*	Income Tax non-PAYE*	VAT (domestic)	Corporation tax	Capital Gains tax
-	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
Carlow	70.44	20.16	48.38	3.30	2.96
Cavan	99.02	22.07	59.83	8.35	1.61
Clare	184.20	38.20	84.79	93.11	7.98
Donegal	91.83	40.52	89.36	13.59	4.55
Galway	485.56	107.76	207.05	66.04	16.81

County	Income Tax PAYE*	Income Tax non-PAYE*	VAT (domestic)	Corporation tax	Capital Gains tax
-	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
Kerry	417.53	63.87	108.78	31.97	15.62
Kildare	321.84	86.09	268.23	44.50	17.71
Kilkenny	174.18	42.85	71.47	15.14	6.89
Laois	34.52	23.28	47.83	3.25	2.09
Leitrim	91.85	7.89	16.32	3.22	0.91
Limerick	335.24	84.67	159.28	132.45	8.91
Longford	30.73	11.53	17.57	4.14	2.50
Louth	158.12	35.55	143.47	14.57	5.12
Mayo	118.72	41.18	105.97	22.54	8.22
Meath	218.50	78.98	152.45	46.48	16.24
Monaghan	50.63	18.15	46.47	8.77	4.92
Offaly	173.11	23.98	56.80	6.76	4.77
Roscommon	31.22	18.78	35.68	3.46	1.84
Sligo	86.70	23.94	35.58	40.82	2.20
Tipperary	130.00	71.32	124.74	26.63	9.53
Waterford	155.20	49.84	83.45	28.36	3.43
Westmeath	677.19	43.90	64.24	11.99	10.76
Wexford	110.15	55.80	103.17	25.17	6.63
Wicklow	173.11	72.39	140.19	23.08	20.36
Dublin	5815.31	1078.26	5122.26	2046.49	194.73
Cork	962.70	270.74	843.62	721.88	32.76
Other/foreign	148.42	35.29	426.63	53.97	5.95
Totals	11346.00	2467.00	8663.60	3500.00	416.00

* Figures include Income Levy and USC

Figures in the tables are rounded and any apparent discrepancies are due to this.

Tax Collection

75. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if and when it might be possible for the Revenue Commissioners to reach conclusion in respect of liability for income tax, pending and or due in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21068/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): This is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners. Firstly, I would like to briefly comment on Revenue's approach to tax collection and in particular its overall compliance and debt management approach.

Revenue has a strong focus on making sure that every individual and business complies with the responsibility to pay the right amount of tax or duty including interest and penalties, which are due, in full and on time. That is an appropriate and correct focus for Revenue and one that I fully endorse. Delays in the collection of tax revenues properly due, adds to the level of Government borrowing and public debt interest and confers an unfair competitive advantage on non-compliant businesses. Remedying late or non compliance is preferably achieved through engagement with the business or taxpayer, but when that engagement is only partially

forthcoming, or perhaps not at all, then Revenue has no option but to utilise measures such as the charging and collection of interest or the deployment of effective enforcement measures to secure payment of the tax debt and to encourage future voluntary timely compliance.

In regard to the case to which the Deputy has referred, I am informed by Revenue that the Collector-General's office has tried unsuccessfully to engage with the person in question on a number of occasions about his outstanding tax debts, much of which was identified during a Revenue audit. While the person did previously commit to sell a foreign property to meet his tax debts unfortunately no progress was made in this regard, nor has there been any further meaningful engagement from the person. As a consequence Revenue was left with no alternative but to refer the outstanding tax for enforcement.

To date the person in question has refused to engage with the enforcement agents nor has he given any instruction to his own tax advisor in this regard. Given the complete lack of engagement Revenue has no option but to continue with enforcement proceedings to secure payment of the outstanding tax. I would recommend that the person or his advisor immediately contact the enforcement agents to bring matters to a conclusion and prevent further escalation.

Finally, from the Deputy's representation it seems that the person in question has ceased trading with effect from 4 May 2012. That being the case the person should contact Revenue to cease the relevant registration numbers, which are currently generating tax estimates and inflating the outstanding debt.

Tax Credits

76. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Finance the reason participants on the TÚS scheme are not entitled to the job assist tax credit; the legal basis for this decision; the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21083/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Sections 472A and 88A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provide tax incentives for both employees and employers, to help the long-term unemployed to return to employment. The relief under Section 472A, commonly known as the Revenue Job Assist scheme, allows qualifying employees, in addition to their normal tax credits, to claim certain income deductions, including additional deductions for qualifying children, for the three year period after taking up employment.

Section 88A provides an associated tax incentive for employers. Employers are entitled to claim a double deduction in computing the profits of the trade or profession in respect of the first 3 years wages paid to qualifying employees. This double deduction may also be claimed in respect of the employers PRSI contribution on such wages.

In order to qualify for the Revenue Job Assist scheme, an individual must be unemployed for at least 12 continuous months prior to the date of commencement of the employment. They must also be in receipt of certain payments from the Department of Social Protection or signing for PRSI credits. Time spent on certain FÁS courses and employment schemes, as well as time spent in prison can count towards the 'unemployed for 12 months' condition. The employer must not have made any staff redundant in the 26 weeks prior to the recruitment and must offer a job for a minimum of 30 hours per week with a contract for at least 12 months.

As placements on the Tús scheme, which is administered by the Department of Social Protection, are for 19.5 hours per week, they do not qualify for the Revenue Job Assist scheme.

I should point out that as announced in the Action Plan for Jobs 2013, the Revenue Job

Assist scheme and the Employer (Job) PRSI Incentive scheme are due to be replaced by the JobsPlus initiative which will be administered by the Department of Social Protection.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

77. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21591/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform have advised my Department that the information sought by the Deputy in respect of my Department will be supplied by their Minister to the Deputy. I am only responding on behalf of the Revenue Commissioners. The Revenue Commissioners have provided my Department with the information in the table set out below in response to the Deputy's question:

Table: Pension Lump Payments* from 1 March 2011 to 31 March 2013

€	Number Paid
0 to 10,000	38
10,001 to 20,000	44
20,001 to 30,000	34
30,001 to 40,000	37
40,001 to 50,000	28
50,001 to 60,000	31
60,001 to 70,000	47
70,001 to 80,000	54
80,001 to 90,000	68
90,001 to 100,000	39
100,001 to 150,000	114
150,001 to 200,000	22
200,001 to 250,000	2
over 250,000	1
Total	559

The Revenue Commissioners would like to point out that the above table includes payments in respect of the Incentivised Scheme for Early Retirement (ISER) and preserved pensions, but it does not include death gratuities.

HGV Driving Courses

78. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to any discrepancy on a county basis between the number of hours of lessons offered to participants on HGV driving courses for which participants have received funding from FÁS; the reasons for such a discrepancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21012/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): I am not aware of the issue raised by the Deputy but if he can provide some additional informa-

tion I would be happy to have the matter looked into further. However, I understand that the majority of HGV driving courses are funded under the Technical Employment Support Grant which is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Social Protection.

Higher Education Institutions Issues

79. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide, in tabular form, broken down by years for each since 2000 and for each institute of technology and university, the cost of compliance with section 35 of the University Act 1997 (Quality Assurance); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20858/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information sought is not readily available in my Department. Officials of my Department are seeking to compile the details and I will forward any available information to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Higher Education Institutions Expenditure

80. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide, in tabular form, the amount of money spent on external legal fees divided between human resources and other issues since 2000, broken down by institute of technology and by university and by year. [20860/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information sought is not readily available in my Department. Officials of my Department are seeking to compile the details and I will forward any available information to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Special Educational Needs Staffing

81. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 251 of 22 January 2013, if he will provide an update in the status of an application (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20887/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating Resource Teachers and Special Needs Assistants to schools to support children with special educational needs. SENOs also make recommendations to my Department where assistive technology support is required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in recommending such support.

I can confirm that an application for Assistive Technology support for Patrick Ward was sanctioned by my Department on 24th January, 2013. Once equipment has been sanctioned, it is a matter for school authorities to arrange for the purchase of the equipment for use by the pupil in the school.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

82. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are any training or education opportunities available for young persons with hearing difficulties in the

Dublin area; if he will outline details of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20888/13]

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

In line with my Department's policy that children with special educational needs access appropriate education intervention in mainstream settings where possible, many Deaf or hard of hearing pupils are integrated into mainstream classes at primary and post-primary level with the assistance, as necessary, of resource teaching and Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support. In addition, there are 2 Special schools in Dublin for children who are Deaf or hard of hearing who require a Special School placement. An enhanced capitation grant is provided to these schools as well as enhanced pupil teacher ratios and SNA support, where required. Grant-aid is also provided to schools towards the provision of special equipment for pupils who are hard of hearing, such as sound field systems and radio aids.

My Department also provides funding for an Irish Sign language (ISL) tuition service whereby tutors visit the homes of deaf and hard of hearing pre-school children and school-going pupils to provide training in Irish Sign ISL for these children, their siblings and parents. The Visiting Teacher Service for Children and Young People with a Hearing Impairment is provided by my Department from the time of referral through to third level education. The Visiting Teacher service works in partnership with parents of pre-school children with hearing impairment, visiting their homes and/or meeting them in groups to inform, advise and offer guidance in matters pertaining to their education and overall development and in helping their children to derive maximum benefit from the educational opportunities available. The service is available at pre-school, primary and post-primary levels.

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

I wish to advise the Deputy that people with disabilities, including those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, are eligible to access FÁS mainstream services. FÁS provides 2,110 specialist vocational training places for people with disabilities who do not avail of the mainstream options through Specialist Training Providers (STPs). Learners on Specialist Training programmes have the opportunity to participate in training ranging from FETAC level 3 to level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). All training programmes delivered through these interventions address both the generic and vocational skills requirements of participating learners.

Specialist training offers additional supports to learners which include individualised training and progression plans, literacy and numeracy support, longer training duration, adapted equipment, transport arrangements, enhanced programme content and enhanced trainer/learner ratio. Finally, the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) scheme also provides a third level admissions scheme for school leavers who have a disability or specific learning difficulty, including Deafness. Students who are considered to be DARE eligible may secure a college place on a reduced points basis. Details of the DARE scheme are available at www.accesscollege.ie. Additional supports for young adults with special educational needs are also provided by Disability Officers in third level colleges.

I understand that the Deputy has submitted this question also to the Departments of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation and Social Protection who will advise further in this regard.

Schools Health and Safety Issues

83. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the health and safety guidelines that pertain in respect of supervision of primary school children; if there is a pupil-adult ratio regarding same; the number of students per campus that is permissible per adult; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20891/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the board of management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school. Schools are required to take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of pupils and welfare of their pupils and it is the responsibility of each individual managerial authority to arrange for appropriate supervision of its pupils.

My Department has not issued specific guidelines on requirements for supervision of pupils and acknowledges that the degree of supervision required in any given school will depend on the school's particular circumstances and on factors such as the age and maturity of the pupils concerned, the nature and layout of the accommodation and play areas available etc.

In accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989, it is the responsibility of individual school management authorities to have a safety statement in place in their schools. The Statement should identify potential hazards, assess the risks to health and safety and put appropriate provision in place to safeguard the safety and health of employees and pupils.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

84. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will be maintaining the current student - teacher ratio of 17:1 in the further education sector in the budget for 2014. [20902/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The current pupil teacher ratio (PTR) for the Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programme is due to change from 17:1 to 19:1 with effect from 1 September 2013 for the 2013/2014 academic year in accordance with the decision taken by the Government last year as part of the budgetary process.

Bullying in Schools

85. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if any secondary school here, funded by the Exchequer can refuse the placing of an information poster to support LGBT students from an organisation also funded by the Exchequer, in the notice board space of that school; and if he will advise of his Department's policy on the matter. [20908/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I assume the Deputy is referring to an information poster produced as part of the educational pack for the Stand Up! Awareness Week Against Homophobic & Transphobic Bullying which is organised by BeLonG To Youth Services. The Stand Up! Awareness Week is aimed at creating positive understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people and their issues. Participation in

the Stand Up! Awareness Week provides principals and teachers with the opportunity to engage young people in fun and educational activities which aim to increase awareness, build supportive links among young people and reduce the incidence of bullying and name-calling.

Stand Up! educational packs are supplied to all second level schools free of charge and schools are actively encouraged to participate on a voluntary basis. As the Deputy has indicated in his question, the Stand Up! Awareness Week is being provided with financial support by my Department. Support for Stand Up! is one of twelve key actions in the Action Plan on Bullying, which I launched earlier this year. Stand Up! is also being supported by education stakeholders including: Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI); Institute of Guidance Counsellors; Irish Second Level Students Union (ISSU); Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA); Joint Managerial Body for secondary schools (JMB); National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD); and Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI). It would be very disappointing if a school refused to allow a Stand Up! Poster to be displayed on the school's notice board. I would suggest that, if this is the case, that the issue is raised with the school's board of management in the first instance.

My Department is currently working with the education partners to finalise new anti-bullying procedures for schools which will be issued for the start of the next school year. These new procedures will include a specific reference to preventing and tackling homophobic and transphobic bullying and there will be new requirements placed on schools to ensure that anti-bullying policies are implemented.

Schools Recognition

86. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review a submission from a school (details supplied) in County Donegal that proposes to continue to provide a valuable educational facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20941/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware, permanent recognition was granted to the Aonod Gaelach at the school in question from 1st September 2010 on the basis of a projected enrolment of over 50 pupils. Since permanent recognition was granted, the Aonod Gaelach enrolment has declined year on year with a total enrolment of 7 pupils for the 2012/2013 academic year. In light of the dramatic decrease in enrolments at the Aonod Gaelach since permanent recognition was granted in 2010, concerns have been raised regarding its viability. In October 2012, the Department contacted the school authorities and requested that immediate action be taken to increase the Aonod Gaelach enrolments. The school authorities responded in November 2012 providing information as to mechanisms being employed to encourage pupils to study through the medium of Irish and its commitment to increasing the enrolment attending the Aonod Gaelach. In that context, the Department set a target enrolment to be reached by 2016/2017. In the event this target is not reached, a further review of the future viability of the Aonod Gaelach will be conducted in 2016/17.

University Libraries

87. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether the public should but does not have the right to enter and use the libraries of publicly-funded universities in view of the fact that to promote learning in society generally is one of the statutory objects of a university. [20949/13]

92. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether members of the public should have the right to enter and use the libraries in public funded universities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20991/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 87 and 92 together.

The governing body and management authorities of a university are responsible for deciding its policy in relation to access by the general public to its library or other facilities and I have no role in the matter. It is a function of the university, as an independent statutory body, to determine appropriate arrangements and regulations concerning public access that are consistent with its objects under the Universities Act 1997.

State Bodies Mergers

88. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to merge the State Examinations Commission into his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20953/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I have no plans to merge the State Examinations Commission into my Department.

Departmental Reports

89. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when will the report on the review of the feasibility and options for a national high performance computing service will be published which was undertaken under a steering group with representatives from the HEA, his Department, SFI and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20963/13]

90. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide a breakdown of the financial contribution from his Department and the HEA towards the provision of a national high performance computing service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20964/13]

91. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when was the decision made to award the national high performance computing service to (details supplied); if he will indicate the way in which that decision was made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20965/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 89 to 91, inclusive, together.

Since 2005 the main, though not exclusive, HPC provision in Ireland has been through the Irish Centre for High End Computing (ICHEC) which is hosted by NUI Galway. Other universities, also possess HPC facilities. Since its establishment in 2005 ICHEC has primarily received funding supports from Science Foundation Ireland and the Higher Education Authority.

During 2012 a small steering group comprising senior officials from my Department, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) was established to assess a number of issues regarding Ireland's high performance computing (HPC) service provision needs. As part of this group's work and

following a tendering process in spring 2012, a report was commissioned from MacDougall Consulting, UK to examine a number of relevant issues regarding HPC services and demand in Ireland. The consultant undertook a series of meetings with a range of stakeholders, including higher education institutions, relevant Government Departments and Agencies, and key industry personnel and presented a report to the Steering Group in October, 2012. The consultant's report was prepared to assist the Steering Group in its internal deliberations rather than publication per se.

Following consideration of the report, my Department and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation agreed that they would jointly provide core funding to the Irish Centre for High-End Computing (ICHEC) to enable it to continue to provide a strategically important high performance computing service nationally. The Departments also decided that ICHEC would continue to be hosted by NUI Galway.

The joint-funding from both Departments will amount to €1.4m annually over the period 2013 to 2015, with €0.7m coming from my Department. The annual funding provision to ICHEC is subject to a range of conditions and targets involving the provision of a detailed annual business plan; ensuring best practice corporate governance arrangements; demonstrable alignment with national strategies and actions such as the Action Plan for Jobs and a national e-Infrastructure policy. ICHEC will also be subject to independent review over the period to 2015 and will be expected to leverage additional funding from industry, the EU or through national competitive research funding calls. In this regard, I understand that ICHEC was recently successful with a bid for supercomputing equipment in the 2012 SFI Infrastructure Call.

Question No. 92 answered with Question No. 87.

Teachers' Remuneration

93. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria for reaching the fifth point on the payscale for a primary teacher who entered at point three on the payscale in 2010. [21019/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Primary Teachers appointed to permanent or fixed term positions progress up the incremental salary scale to the next incremental point having completed 365 days service. Primary Teachers appointed to casual positions progress up the incremental salary scale having completed 183 days service or 915 hours.

Schools Building Projects Status

94. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application for a school extension (details supplied) County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21042/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an early stage of architectural planning. My Department's review of the Stage 1 report which was submitted by the Board of Management and their Design Team is nearing completion. Upon completion of this review, subject to no issues arising, the project will be authorised to proceed to Stage 2A, which is the Developed Sketch Design Stage. Due to competing demands on my Department's capital budget, imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of additional school accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements, it was not possible to include this project

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

Schools Building Projects Status

95. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application for school extension in respect of a school (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21047/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an early stage of architectural planning. My Department's review of the Stage 1 report which was submitted by the Board of Management and their Design Team is nearing completion. Upon completion of this review, subject to no issues arising, the project will be authorised to proceed to Stage 2A, which is the Developed Sketch Design Stage. Due to competing demands on my Department's capital budget, imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of additional school accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements, it was not possible to include this project in the five year construction programme. Schools which have not been included in the five year construction programme but which were previously initiated will continue to be progressed to final planning stages in anticipation of the possibility of further funds being available to my Department in future years. The project referred to by the Deputy remains available to be considered for progression in this context.

Education Grants

96. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if persons who have applied for the education grant from the old Education Finance Board back in September 2012 need to reapply to the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund or if their application is still ongoing. [21048/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The remit of the recently established Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (RISF) Board is different to that of the former Education Finance Board. The RISF will oversee the use of the cash contributions of up to €110 million, pledged by the religious congregations, to support the needs of survivors of institutional child abuse, across a range of services, including mental health services, health and personal social services, education and housing services.

The position in relation to the Education Finance Board is that it was dissolved with effect from 29th March. The funding available to the Board has been fully allocated and its remaining functions have been taken over by the RISF Board. The former Education Finance Board indicated in November 2011 that it expected that the funds available to it would be fully allocated on applications already received and accordingly it publicised that it would not be in a position to process any applications received after 30th November, 2011.

In accordance with the relevant legislation, the RISF Board will determine the criteria by reference to which it will make decisions in respect of applications to it. Those who are eligible to receive support from the Fund are the some 15,000 former residents who have received awards from the Residential Institutions Redress Board or equivalent Court awards.

The Board held its inaugural meeting on 27th March and has commenced work on the arrangements to be put in place for the operation of the Fund. Further publicity will be undertaken as the work of the Board progresses and a website with detailed information on the Fund's services will be developed. This information will advise potential applicants on how to apply for assistance from the Fund.

Education Grants

97. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application for an education grant is being assessed by the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21049/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The recently established Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (RISF) Board is an independent statutory body which will oversee the use of the cash contributions of up to €110 million, pledged by the religious congregations, to support the needs of survivors of institutional child abuse, across a range of services, including mental health services, health and personal social services, education and housing services. Following the dissolution of the Education Finance Board, whose funds had been fully allocated, its remaining functions have been taken over by the RISF Board.

I have arranged to have the Deputy's query regarding a specific individual forwarded to the RISF Board requesting that it respond directly to him in relation thereto.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

98. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the eligibility to a higher education grant, when a person has applied for and been awarded a grant to pursue a degree course but was unable to complete first year and in October 2013 wishes to change to an alternative course; if they will be considered eligible for a grant in October 2013; if he will outline the eligibility criteria regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21051/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): If the student is commencing a new course of study in the academic year 2013/14 it will be necessary for him/her to establish their eligibility by submitting a fully completed online grant application to Student Universal Support Ireland via www.studentfinance.ie when the application process for the 2013/14 academic year opens.

The Student Grant Scheme provides awarding authorities with discretion to waive the provisions regarding progression in exceptional circumstances and consider funding for a repeat period of study.

The Deputy will appreciate that in the absence of all of the relevant details that would be contained in an individual's application in relation to exceptional circumstances for a repeat period of study, it would not be possible for me to say whether or not a student would qualify for a grant.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

99. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21588/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information sought by the Deputy is not readily available within my Department and is being sought from the bodies/agencies under the aegis of my Department. When compiled it will be forwarded to the Deputy.

Arts Promotion

100. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans in relation to the development of an arts centre (details supplied); the progress or actions that have taken place thus far; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20956/13]

101. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans in relation to the development of an Arts centre (details supplied); the progress or actions that have taken place thus far; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20958/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): I propose to take Questions Nos. 100 and 101 together.

In order to facilitate the EU Presidency meetings at Dublin Castle, a number of organisations who had accommodation under license were requested to vacate their offices in Dublin Castle. OPW Property Management sourced alternative temporary accommodation for Irish Arts Review, Music Network and Ouroboros in the vacant Garda Station at Harcourt Terrace. Drumcondra Work Space has also been accommodated in this property.

OPW is currently developing a longer-term plan for the property and there are no plans to develop an Arts Centre at this venue.

Public Procurement Regulations

102. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the changes he is intending to make to the public procurement process; if he is engaging with employers' and workers' representatives regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20900/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Reform of public procurement is one of the major projects of key strategic importance in the Government's Public Service Reform Plan, which was published in November 2011. Procurement of supplies and services accounts for around €9 billion of current spending by the State per annum. This represents a very significant portion of overall spending and it is, therefore, essential that the Public Service achieves maximum value for money and operational efficiency in its approach to public procurement.

Progress has been made on several of the actions for procurement reform contained in the Public Service Reform Plan. The Government agreed on 12 June, 2012 to implement mandatory arrangements in respect of the centralised purchasing frameworks organised by the National Procurement Service (NPS).

Following that, an external review of the central procurement function was commissioned by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The report of the review, which was pub-

lished in September, found that significant savings can be achieved through the implementation of a transformational change to the central procurement model.

In December 2012, arising out of recommendations in the report of the review of the central procurement function the Minister announced the appointment of a Chief Procurement Officer to lead a key element of the Government's Public Service Reform agenda. The new approach to public procurement will involve:

- integrating procurement policy, strategy and sourcing in one office;
- strengthening spend analytics and data management;
- much greater aggregation of purchasing across public bodies to achieve better value for money;
- examining the specifications set out for goods and services;
- evaluating demand levels to assess how demand and volume can be reduced; and
- strengthening supplier and category management.

Since the appointment of Paul Quinn, CPO, on 28 January 2013, he has initiated and completed a series of engagements (workshops and one-to-one meetings) with key stakeholders within the public sector and their representatives in relation to the development of the proposed governance structures, implementation plan, transition arrangements and savings targets for the procurement function. The following sectors were engaged in workshops/meetings: Health, Education, Local Government, Defence, Justice, and other Central Government Departments.

Further consultation will be undertaken with employees and workers' representatives as the new Office for Government Procurement is established. We are committed to ensuring that SMEs are fully engaged in the process and will be encouraged, where necessary, to form alliances and networks to ensure they can tender on a competitive basis for this work.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

103. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21010/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Responsibility for the actual administration of public service schemes is spread over a number of Departments and agencies. For example, the HSE deals with health sector pensions, the Department of Defence manages pensions for members of the Defence Forces, and the Department of Education and Science handles those of primary and secondary school teachers.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform administers the Civil Service pension scheme, with payment of benefits charged to Vote 12 Superannuation and Retired Allowances.

The Civil Service operates a system of Delegation and Non-Delegation. The delegated Departments and offices calculate the pension due to the retiring employee and pay lump sums to their staff.

In the case of non-delegated Departments/Offices, pensions and lump sums are calculated by my Department. These non-delegated Departments/Offices are:

Departments/Offices
Office of the Attorney General
Central Statistics Office
Chief State Solicitor's Office
Commission for Public Service Appointments
Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General
Court's Service
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Department of Finance
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Department of Health
Department of Justice & Equality (for established civil servants)
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Department of the Taoiseach
Legal Aid Board
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
National Council for Special Education
Houses of the Oireachtas
Office of the Ombudsman
President's Establishment
Property Registry Authority
Public Appointment's Service
Residential Institutions Redress Board
State Examination Commission
State Laboratory
Valuation Office

Based on information provided by the Office of the Paymaster General, the data provided below provides the number of lump sum payments in the requested bands paid from the Vote for Superannuation and Retired Allowances to Civil Servants who retired from non-delegated Departments/Offices for the period 3rd March 2011 – 28th March 2013. It is also important to note that these are Gross Lump Sum Payments and may be subject to certain deductions.

Lump Sum	Number of Payments
10,000 - 20,000	98
20,001 - 30,000	61
30,001 - 40,000	44
40,001 - 50,000	49
50,001 - 60,000	58
60,001 - 70,000	43
70,001 - 80,000	57
80,001 - 90,000	68
90,001 - 100,000	106

Lump Sum	Number of Payments
100,001 - 150,000	161
150,001 - 200,000	44
200,001 - 250,000	16
250,001+	9
Total	814

The Office of Public Works is a delegated Office which comes under my aegis and the information requested is set out in the table below.

€	Established Staff	State Industrial Employees	Total
-	1 March, 2011 to 31st March, 2013	1 March, 2011 to 31st March, 2013	-
Under 10,000	2	11	13
10,000 - 20,000	3	10	13
20,001 – 30,000	3	7	10
30,001 – 40,000	6	11	17
40,001 – 50,000	3	21	24
50,001 – 60,000	2	15	17
60,001 – 70,000	4	6	10
70,001 – 80,000	8	5	13
80,001 – 90,000	12	1	13
90001 – 100,000	4	0	4
100,001 - 150,000	16	1	17
150,001 - 200,000	8	0	8
200,001 – 250,000	1	0	1
Over 250,000	0	0	0
-	72	88	160

Information regards the payment of lump sums by (i) Delegated Departments/Offices within the Civil Service and (ii) the wider public service should be sought from the relevant Departments.

Question No. 104 withdrawn.

Enterprise Support Schemes

105. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 87 of 25 April 2013, the way small and medium enterprises may apply for the scheme outlined in his reply; the other practical Government supports to a SME that wishes to create an online presence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20947/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): As I outlined in my reply to Question No 87 of 25 April 2013, the 2013 Action Plan for Jobs includes a commitment to increase the number of businesses – and particularly small businesses – trading on line. The progression of this initiative is being led by the Department of Communications,

Energy and Natural Resources.

The objective of the initiative is to support one or more pilot projects in 2013 to inform a scaling-up of the initiative in 2014.

The intention is that the detailed operational arrangements for the pilot(s) will be agreed in the third Quarter of this year and that suitable projects for inclusion in the pilot(s) will be agreed within the same period.

I anticipate that once these milestones have been achieved, details of how companies can participate in the pilot scheme(s) will be made available by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

Information and Communications Technology Issues

106. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation when the report on the review of the feasibility and options for a national high performance computing service will be published which was undertaken under a steering group with representatives from the HEA, his Department, SFI and the Department of Education and Skills; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20960/13]

107. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide a breakdown of the financial contribution from his Department and SFI towards the provision of a national high performance computing service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20961/13]

108. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation when the decision was made to award the national high performance computing service to (details supplied); if he will indicate the way in which that decision was made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20962/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 to 108, inclusive, together.

High Performance Computing (HPC) services include the provision and support of high-end compute resources, data analytics, education and training services to industry and higher education institutions. Globally, supercomputers are playing an ever increasing and critically important role in a wide range of computationally intensive tasks in various fields of relevance to cloud technologies, big data, climate research, weather forecasting, oil and gas exploration amongst others.

Since 2005 the main, though not exclusive, HPC provision in Ireland has been through the Irish Centre for High End Computing (ICHEC) which is hosted by NUI Galway. Other universities, such as Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and NUI Maynooth also possess HPC expertise and facilities. Since its establishment in 2005 ICHEC has primarily received funding supports from Science Foundation Ireland and the Higher Education Authority.

During 2012 a small steering group comprising senior officials from the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) was established to assess a number of issues regarding Ireland's future HPC service provision needs and structure.

As part of this group's work and following a tendering process in spring 2012, a report

was commissioned from MacDougall Consulting, UK to examine a number of relevant issues regarding HPC services and demand in Ireland. The consultant undertook a series of meetings with a range of stakeholders, including higher education institutions, relevant Government Departments and Agencies, and key industry personnel and presented a report to the Steering Group in October, 2012. The consultant's report was prepared to assist the Steering Group in its internal deliberations rather than publication per se.

Following consideration of the report, the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation accepted the strong recommendations that continuation of HPC services in Ireland was a strategic priority; that a centralised model of high-performance computing provision was needed in Ireland; that there was an increasing demand for HPC services by industry; and that ICHEC was the preferred centralised option at this time. In light of the consultant's recommendations, the Departments jointly agreed to the continuation of core funding support to ICHEC which previously had been provided through SFI and the Higher Education Authority. The funding will amount to €1.4m annually over the period 2013 to 2015, with €0.7m coming from each Department. The Departments also accepted the recommendation that ICHEC should, on balance, continue to be hosted by NUI Galway in the medium term.

The annual funding provision to ICHEC is subject to a range of conditions and targets involving the provision of a detailed annual business plan; ensuring best practice corporate governance arrangements; demonstrable alignment with national strategies and actions such as the Action Plan for Jobs and a national e-Infrastructure policy. ICHEC will also be subject to independent review over the period to 2015 and will be expected to leverage additional funding from industry, the EU or through national competitive research funding calls.

Recently ICHEC was successful with a bid for supercomputing equipment in the 2012 SFI Infrastructure Call. ICHEC currently has a tender out for this supercomputing equipment. This will enable ICHEC to provide leading edge computing power to a range of industry players and our higher education sector which in turn will further enhance Ireland's HPC capacity internationally. It will also assist Ireland's "Big Data" ambitions and the Government's "Disruptive Reform" agenda where we seek to be a world-leading location for big data and data analytics.

Credit Guarantee Scheme Application Numbers

109. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of applications for funding received to the credit guarantee scheme since it has been established; the number of approved loans; the amount that has been paid out to date; the feedback that has been received on job creation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21035/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Credit Guarantee Scheme (CGS) began operations on 24th October 2012. As at 31st March 2013 there were twenty-four live CGS facilities resulting in €3,131,600 being sanctioned through the scheme by the participating lenders and it is expected that 181 new jobs will be created and 25 jobs maintained.

The Department does not monitor actual applications to the banks. Decision making on individual loan applications has been fully devolved to the participating lenders AIB, Bank of Ireland and Ulster bank.

Quarterly progress reports are published on my Department's website www.enterprise.gov.ie. The new progress report detailing the analysis and performance of the CGS for the quarterly

period ending end 31st March 2013 is now available on my Department's website.

Consumers Association of Ireland Funding

110. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in view of his previous statement that it is essential that all public bodies ensure that value for money is key consideration in any expenditure, if the Consumers' Association of Ireland has supplied his Department with its quarterly reports in relation to the various performance indicators identified in respect of the marketing project; if the association is meeting its performance indicators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21040/13]

111. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reason a funding application was granted to the Consumers' Association of Ireland; if he will confirm that the organisation has not produced audited accounts in two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21041/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 110 and 111 together.

As previously advised to the House, the Consumers' Association of Ireland made an application seeking funding on 27th September 2012 to support a marketing project. A number of meetings were held with the Association to discuss the details of its application and in particular the value for money that the project would offer. Arising from these discussions, funding in the amount of €46,865 was approved to support the marketing project. As part of the agreement to provide funding support, the Association committed to providing my Department with quarterly reports in relation to the various performance indicators identified in respect of the marketing project.

My Department has recently received the first quarterly report from the Association detailing various activities undertaken in connection with the marketing campaign, including statistical details of media interviews, website traffic, e-mail/telephone contacts, membership figures etc. The details of the report are currently being considered by my Department.

As regards the issue of accounts, the Consumers' Association of Ireland is a company limited by guarantee and as such is required to file annual returns and audited accounts with the Companies Registration Office (CRO). I understand that the Association has filed an annual return made up to 28 February 2013. I also understand that accounts for the eighteen month period ending November 2012 were the last audited accounts filed with the CRO.

As previously advised, my Department is committed to achieving the best value for money in respect of the expenditure of public funds. Accordingly, my Department will continue to monitor the progress of the Association's marketing project, not least in terms of the performance indicators identified for the project, so as to ensure that the Association remains focussed on achieving the best value for money possible from the project.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

112. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21590/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The lump sum

amounts paid to retired staff members in my Department in the period March 2011 to March 2013 are listed in tabular form. In addition to those contained in the figures below, five retirees received lump sums of less than €10,000.

In relation to retirement lump sums paid to staff of Agencies under the remit of my Department, I have asked the Agencies to respond directly to the Deputy.

Lump Sum Amounts	No of Retirees paid between March 2011 and March 2013
10,000 – 20,000	9
20,001 – 30,000	6
30,001 – 40,000	5
40,001 – 50,000	8
50,001 – 60,000	2
60,001 – 70,000	5
70,001 – 80,000	7
80,001 – 90,000	5
90,001 – 100,000	4
100,001 – 150,000	20
150,001 – 200,000	10
200,001 – 250,000	2
Over 250,000	1
Total	84

European Court of Justice Rulings

113. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to the decision by the European Court of Justice in the appeal by workers at the former Waterford Crystal company in respect of their pension entitlements, the potential liability that arises in this case; if she will provide an estimate of potential liabilities in respect of other company pension schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20865/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): On the 25th April last, the European Court of Justice issued a ruling which contained a number of clarifications regarding transposition EU Directive 2008/94EC which concerns the protection of employees in the event of the insolvency of their employer. This ruling was in response to a July 2011 referral from the High Court regarding proceedings brought by former workers at Waterford Crystal.

The High Court had, in taking the view that interpretation of the provisions of the Directive 2008/94 was necessary in order for it to give its decision in this case, decided to stay the proceedings and to refer a number of questions to the Court of Justice for a preliminary ruling.

Following the ECJ ruling, the matter will now revert to the High Court for consideration. Given this matter remains before the courts it would not be appropriate that I comment further on any specific aspects of the case at this time.

Employment Rights Issues

114. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the workers of a large Irish based company whose Irish operation was terminated several years ago will be

covered by the recent decision of the European Court in relation to the defined benefit pension scheme of the former Waterford Crystal workforce; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20916/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): On 25 April 2013, the European Court of Justice issued a ruling which contained a number of clarifications regarding transposition EU Directive 2008/94EC which concerns the protection of employees in the event of the insolvency of their employer. This ruling was in response to a July 2011 referral from the High Court regarding proceedings brought by former workers at Waterford Crystal. The High Court had, in taking the view that interpretation of the provisions of the Directive 2008/94 was necessary in order for it to give its decision in this case, decided to stay the proceedings and to refer a number of questions to the Court of Justice for a preliminary ruling. Following the ECJ ruling, the matter will now revert to the High Court for consideration. Given this matter remains before the courts it would not be appropriate that I comment further on the question you have raised or any specific aspects of the case at this time.

National Internship Scheme Eligibility

115. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a business (details supplied) in County Kerry will qualify as a JobBridge employer in view of the fact that the nature of their business is not solely trade related; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20861/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): As of 25 April 2013, 16,791 people had commenced JobBridge internships, 6,030 participants were currently on JobBridge internships and 2,443 internship opportunities were advertised on the JobBridge website. I am advised that the firm to which the Deputy refers is already advertising internships under another name.

Rural Social Scheme Applications

116. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will allocate additional placements on the rural social scheme taking into account the demand on placements from farmers who are experiencing serious financial losses due to uncontrollable weather factors; her future plans for the scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20873/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The purpose of the rural social scheme (RSS) is to provide income support for farmers and fisherpersons who have an entitlement to specified social welfare payments. Persons are engaged for 19 and a half hours per week to provide certain services of benefit to rural communities. The scheme currently provides work opportunities for around 2,600 participants and 130 supervisory staff. The funds allocated for 2013 amount to €45 million, which should enable the scheme to continue as in previous years but does not allow for the recruitment of additional participants above the numbers stated above. The Department of Social Protection has recently published a review of employment support schemes which, together with the outcome of the focused policy assessment of the RSS which the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has indicated it intends to publish this year, will inform future policy developments of the scheme. I have no plans to increase the number of places available on this scheme.

The farm assist scheme, based on jobseeker's allowance, is the primary scheme for supporting low income farmers, without the requirement to be available for and genuinely seeking

work. Farm assist recipients retain all the advantages of the jobseeker's allowance scheme such as retention of secondary benefits and access to activation programmes. Farm assist is a flexible payment and any farmer experiencing lower levels of income or cash-flow issues, due for example to bad weather, can ask the local social welfare office to review the level of means applying to his or her claim. It may also be noted that the assessment of means for the purpose of qualifying for farm assist is designed to reflect the actual net income. It looks at gross income, less any expenses necessarily incurred, from farming. Income and expenditure figures for the preceding year are generally used as an indicator of the expected position in the following year. However, account is taken of any exceptional circumstances so as to ensure that the assessment accurately reflects the current situation.

The Deputy will be aware of the measures to support farmers introduced by my colleague the Minister for Agriculture and Food to provide a €1 million fund to contribute to the transport costs of importing fodder to the country, and the availability of emergency assistance under the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council's early warning system to ensure that there is no reason for any farmer to see animals suffer, and to ensure that processing of outstanding scheme payments as promptly as possible to provide cash-flow for farmers.

Question No. 117 withdrawn.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

118. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for jobseeker's benefit in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 1; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20883/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned applied for jobseeker's allowance on 4 October 2012 which was disallowed on the basis that he did not satisfy the condition of being habitually resident in the State; in addition he failed to satisfy a Social Welfare Inspector as to his means and circumstances. The person concerned was advised of both decisions on 26 November 2012. He lodged an appeal against them on 10 December 2012 and provided additional information relating to his employment record in the State. In light of this information his case was referred to a Social Welfare Inspector to review the means assessment; the outcome of this was that the decision of the original means assessment was upheld. The appeal was subsequently referred to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office who will notify the person concerned of the outcome when it is determined.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

119. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if there are any training or education opportunities available for young persons with hearing difficulties in the Dublin area; if she will outline details of same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20889/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department of Social Protection supports job seekers to secure employment. A wide range of programmes are provided by both the Department itself and other departments and job seekers should contact their local office to secure information and assistance to access these programmes. The Department is currently considering a specific proposal that seeks to support younger persons with hearing difficulties in the Dublin area but it is too early to say whether this programme will be approved for support.

Employment Support Services

120. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will have the INTREO services rolled out to the Kilbarrack Social Welfare Office, Dublin, before year end; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20919/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The roll-out of the Intreo service as outlined in the Pathways to Work document is a multi-annual project. The first ten Intreo offices went live in 2012. A further 33 offices are expected to go live in 2013, with the remainder to be delivered by the end of 2014. The implementation of the Intreo service is dependent on a number of supports including the appropriate physical infrastructure, IT, staff training etc. In relation to Kilbarrack, it is envisaged that some aspects of the service will be delivered in the coming months but the full integrated service will not be completed until 2014.

Dental Services Provision

121. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding dentures in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20948/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application in respect of dentures has not yet been received from the person concerned. However, since January 2010 dentures are no longer provided under the dental benefit scheme, which is now limited to a free yearly examination. If the person concerned has a Medical Card, he should contact his local HSE offices, who will be able to advise him of his entitlements under their dental scheme.

Treatment Benefit Scheme Applications

122. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 341 of 23 April 2013, if the application can be reviewed again (details supplied). [20951/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order to qualify for treatment benefit. The person referred to would have needed to fulfil the following two conditions at the time of his death in order for his wife to qualify for treatment benefit now: have 156 qualifying PRSI contributions paid since first starting work, and have 26 of these contributions paid or credited in either 1974 or 1975, the relevant contribution years prior to his death. While he met the first condition, with a total of 839 paid contributions paid since he commenced employment, he did not fulfil the second condition, having no contributions or credits recorded in either 1974 or 1975. As he was not eligible for treatment benefit prior to his death, his wife does not now qualify for treatment benefit on his PRSI record.

Pension Provisions

123. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will reconsider the position (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20952/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The PRSI contributions are taken into consideration for pension purposes as part of the State Pension.

Farm Assist Scheme Applications

124. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will outline the instruction circular, if any which has been issued by her Department to officials dealing with reviews/applications under the farm assist scheme in view of the impact of the current fodder crisis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21003/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The farm assist scheme is based on jobseeker's allowance. It was introduced in 1999 to replace 'Smallholders Unemployment Assistance' for low income farmers, without the requirement to be available for and genuinely seeking work. Farm assist recipients retain all the advantages of the jobseeker's allowance scheme such as retention of secondary benefits and access to activation programmes. Budget changes over the last two years have brought the more beneficial treatment of farm assist claimants relevant to the treatment of other self-employed persons who would be claiming jobseeker's allowance to an end. This ensures greater consistency in the treatment of self-employed person in both farm assist and jobseeker's allowance. The headline rates of farm assist are being maintained so farm families with the lowest income will be least affected by these changes. Farm assist remains a flexible payment and any farmer experiencing lower levels of income or cash-flow issues, due for example to bad weather, can ask his local social welfare office to review the level of means applying to his claim. In this context no circular has issued in relation to current reviews or applications.

It may also be noted that the assessment of means for the purpose of qualifying for farm assist is designed to reflect the actual net income. It also looks at gross income, less any expenses necessarily incurred, from farming. Income and expenditure figures for the preceding year are generally used as an indicator of the expected position in the following year. However, account is taken of any exceptional circumstances so as to ensure that the assessment accurately reflects the current situation.

Social Welfare Benefits Waiting Times

125. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form the current waiting times per social welfare payment for the processing of applications by her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21013/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The average number of weeks to award claims from the date of application is the main statistic collated by my Department to measure waiting times for the processing of applications for Social Welfare payments. I have attached for the Deputy's information a tabular statement detailing the average number of weeks to award claims, where available, for schemes under the auspices of my Department for claims processed in March 2013. There have been significant reductions in backlogs in the past year for family income supplement, carer's allowance, disability allowance and invalidity pension which will feed into processing times for these schemes in the coming months.

Average Time to awards claims for Social Welfare Payments Claims processed in March 2013

Scheme	Average Number of Weeks to Award Claim
Jobseekers Benefit	2
Jobseekers Allowance	4

Scheme	Average Number of Weeks to Award Claim
One-Parent Family Payment	13
State Pension Contributory (Domestic)	4
State Pension Transition (Domestic)	6
Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory Pension	2
State Pension Non-Contributory	14
Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Non-Contributory Pension	6
Household Benefits	2
Free Travel	2
Domiciliary Care Allowance	7
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	1
Bereavement Grant - Sligo	1
Child Benefit (Domestic & Formerly Resident Abroad)	3
Child Benefit (EU Regulation)	31
Family Income Supplement (New Claims)	14
Family Income Supplement (Renewals)	11
Carer's Allowance	34
Disability Allowance	23
Invalidity Pension	60
Bereavement Grant - Longford	3
Illness Benefit	1

Social Welfare Appeals Waiting Times

126. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form the current waiting times per social welfare payment for the processing of appeals by her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21014/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The current average processing times for appeals of social welfare payments are set out in the following table.

These processing times are calculated from the registration date of an appeal to the date of its finalisation. They include all activities during this period, including time spent in the Department for comment by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal put forward by the appellant, and any further investigation, examination or assessment by the Department's Inspectors and Medical Assessors that is deemed necessary. A considerable period of time is added to the process when an oral hearing is required because of the logistics involved in this process. Generally the vast majority of cases fall within average processing times but extenuating factors, which are often outside of the control of the Social Welfare Appeals Office, can cause greater delays in some cases.

Processing times of all appeal types reduced by 10.3 weeks overall in 2012 with respect to 2011, with time for an oral hearing time down by 13 weeks and the time for summary decision up by 2.7 weeks.

Because of its quasi-judicial nature, the processing of appeals takes time and reflects the fact that, by definition, the appeal process cannot be a quick one.

Appeals processing times by scheme January - March 2013 – Summary and Oral

Scheme	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Blind Pension	26.5	-
Carers Allowance	30.7	39.5
Carers Benefit	26.0	29.0
Child Benefit	31.0	47.4
Disability Allowance	37.3	42.7
Illness Benefit	42.1	48.1
Domiciliary Care	31.9	39.2
Deserted Wives Benefit	34.0	38.6
Farm Assist	23.2	31.5
Bereavement Grant	32.8	-
Family Income Supplement	29.4	44.0
Invalidity Pension	34.0	46.5
Liable Relatives	32.8	42.9
One Parent Family Payment	32.7	38.8
Maternity Benefit	30.8	51.4
Partial Capacity Benefit	20.7	-
State Pension (Contributory)	25.6	34.3
State Pension (Non-Cont)	31.9	45.9
State Pension (Transition)	21.7	39.6
Occupational Injury Benefit	39.9	59.4
Disablement Pension	35.5	39.7
Incapacity Supplement	-	42.1
Guardian's Payment (Con)	20.0	36.1
Guardian's Payment (Non-con)	45.5	46.6
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	22.0	33.8
Jobseeker's Allowance	21.5	28.5
Jobseeker's Benefit	23.7	31.8
UAUBFC	-	14.2
Respite Care Grant	26.8	32.4
Insurability of Employment	23.1	59.4
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	16.8	28.0
Treatment Benefits	32.0	-
Survivor's Pension (Con)	30.8	40.6
Survivor's Pension (Non-Con)	37.5	41.4
Widows Parent Grant	34.2	-
All Appeals	28.2	38.6

Social Welfare Appeals Waiting Times

127. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form the current waiting times per social welfare payment for the processing of reviews by her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21015/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Where a claim is in payment, reviews can be initiated by the customer where there has been a change in their circumstances, by a relevant official of the Department where it appears warranted, or as part of the on-going control of schemes to ensure that the conditions of the scheme continue to be satisfied.

As qualifying criteria for schemes differ greatly, the nature and type of a claim review can also take many different forms and may include, for instance, a medical assessment, a review of means or a general review of the claim by a deciding officer.

Reviews may necessitate some or all of the following: a home visit by a social welfare inspector, attendance for a medical examination, other attendance at an office of the Department or a request to the customer for further documentation.

In view of the above it is not possible to provide the detailed information requested by the Deputy. However, if he wishes to furnish more detail as to a specific scheme or review I would be happy to respond.

Disability Allowance Applications Waiting Times

128. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her Department is currently reviewing disability applications from July 2012; the reasons for the backlog; the attempts made by her Department to clear this backlog; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21016/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The earliest new applications for disability allowance which are awaiting action by a deciding officer was received in August 2012. Those applications have, however, been medically assessed at this point.

A recent analysis of the applications pending decision indicated that approximately 60% of them had been waiting for a decision for 12 weeks or fewer.

The general practice is that claims are decided in date of receipt order. However in some instances priority is given to certain claims, for example, claims received from 16 year olds who parents/guardians had been in receipt of domiciliary care allowance or in cases where claimants are very ill.

The processing time for individual claims can vary depending on the complexity of the claimant's circumstances and the information they provide in support. In many cases, further information is required in order to make a decision for example a medical assessment, information from the claimant or applicant themselves or a report from a social welfare inspector.

Following the completion of a major service delivery modernisation programme disability allowance has recently undertaken a business process improvement initiative aimed at eliminating the backlog and improving customer service. A plan has recently been put in place to ensure that new claims being received are dealt with promptly and to eliminate the current backlog. Additional temporary staff is being assigned to the disability allowance area to ensure that the backlog is eliminated as soon as possible. The target is to have the current backlog of disability allowance applications actioned by the end of quarter 2 2013.

Social Welfare Appeals Process

129. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if it is the policy of her Department that children are prohibited from accompanying their parents to an oral hearing for a Department care allowance application appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21017/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): While there is no policy prohibiting children from attending an oral appeal hearing, Article 18 of the Social Welfare (Appeals) Regulations S.I. No. 108 of 1998 provides that the procedure at hearing is a matter for the Appeals Officer to determine.

European Court of Justice Rulings

130. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the action she will take in view of the recent ruling in favour of former Waterford Crystal pension members; her plans to introduce new legislation in relation to the protection of workers pensions when a solvent company ignores its defined benefit pension liabilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21050/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The ruling by the European Court of Justice was in response to a reference by the High Court seeking clarification of the interpretation of European law emanating from EU Directive 2008/94EC on the protection of employees in the event of the insolvency of their employer.

The application of this Directive relates to situations of a double insolvency, that is where both the pension scheme and the employer are insolvent.

Following the ECJ ruling, the matter will now revert to the High Court for consideration. Given this matter remains before the courts it would not be appropriate that I comment further on any specific aspects of the case at this time.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

131. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to which reference has been made to liabilities such as arrears of mortgage, arrears of income tax and lack of income have been taken into account in the determination of means in respect of jobseeker's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if she will arrange for review of the decision and/or appeal with oral hearing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21059/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is in receipt of a jobseeker's allowance payment. The means assessment is subject to the legislative provisions of that scheme. It is open to the person concerned to appeal the decision and request an oral hearing to the Social Welfare Appeals Office. If there are any changes in his circumstances he can request a review of his means at his local office.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

132. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the procedure

to be followed and entitlement to jobseeker's allowance or other social welfare payment in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21061/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The jobseeker allowance claim of the person concerned is currently under review and information has been requested from her to facilitate this review. She has been informed by the Department that the requested information must be submitted by the 21/05/2013 and that failure to do so will result in the suspension of her payment.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

133. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when rent support will be restored in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21062/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The rents unit wrote to the person concerned on 30th January 2013 requesting information about any maintenance she may be receiving. In her reply she stated that she has not sought such maintenance. Subsequently on 25th April 2013 she was advised to apply for court orders for maintenance.

Her rent supplement has been paid up to 30th April 2013. Payments are now suspended pending receipt of a standard letter that Dublin District Family Law Office can provide for her stating that she has applied to the District Court for a hearing, and that a date for hearing has been set. Generally this can be done within a day. Her rent supplement will then be re-instated, and her means re-assessed in the future should she get a maintenance order from the Court.

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

134. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the way it is expected the family of persons (details supplied) in County Dublin can exist in view of the refusal of jobseeker's allowance and rent support; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21063/13]

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 Jobseeker's Allowance claim has been disallowed as the person concerned failed to provide evidence of their circumstances and means as part of the means assessment process. The person concerned has a right to appeal this decision.

Alternatively, the Jobseeker's Allowance claim can be reviewed at the local office if the outstanding information is provided to enable a means assessment be completed.

As there is currently no entitlement to a primary social welfare payment, the person concerned is not entitled to Rent Supplement.

It is understood that the current family income comprises Domiciliary Care Allowance, Child Benefit, and income from part-time earnings. If it is not considered that the current family income is adequate to meet the family's needs, they may make an application for Supplementary Welfare Allowance. If such an application is made evidence of means and circumstances

will be requested.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

135. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the procedure to be followed in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare who has taken up employment, nightshift only, and who has found their health has suffered as a result; if any options are available to them in these circumstances; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21064/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): To date the person concerned has not lodged a claim with the Department in relation to a health issue. If the person concerned has health issues they should consult with their General Practitioner in the first instance. The General Practitioner will make an assessment of their capacity for work as part of this consultation. If they are certified as medically unfit for work they can then apply for illness or injury benefit via a claim form available from their General Practitioner.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

136. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the entitlements, if any, in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21065/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): According to the records of this Department there is no recent application for a payment from the person concerned. It is therefore not possible to determine her current entitlements.

Illness Benefit Appeals

137. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review or accept an appeal regarding refusal of illness benefit in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21066/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned claimed illness benefit with effect from 08 August 2011. They were found not eligible for illness benefit following an in person assessment by a Departmental medical assessor on 18 April 2013. Following this finding, it was decided to disallow his claim from 26 April 2013 and he was notified of the decision to disallow his claim in writing. As part of this notification, the person concerned was advised of his right of appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

It is open to him to appeal against the above referred to decision to disallow his illness benefit claim.

The appeal should be made in writing within 21 days of notification of the Deciding Officer's decision and should set out the grounds on which the decision is disputed.

Exceptional Needs Payment Eligibility

138. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to

which exceptional needs payment might be made available to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21067/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment to help meet essential, once-off, exceptional and unforeseen expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income.

The costs incurred by the person concerned in providing a diabetic diet for her daughter are on-going in nature and therefore are not eligible for funding by way of exceptional needs payments.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

139. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21585/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The table below provides the details requested by the Deputy in relation to the lump sum payments made to staff who retired from my Department between March 2011 and March 2013.

Lump sum amounts	2011	2012	2013
	March - December	January - December	January - March
0 - 10,000	4	10	1
10,001 - 20,000	6	11	4
20,001 - 30,000	7	26	4
30,001 - 40,000	24	19	3
40,001 - 50,000	8	32	1
50,001 - 60,000	8	28	2
60,001 - 70,000	10	50	NIL
70,001 - 80,000	10	35	2
80,001 - 90,000	9	47	2
90,001 - 100,000	5	13	NIL
100,001 - 150,000	5	17	3
150,001 - 200,000	1	3	NIL
200,001 - 250,000	NIL	1	NIL
Over 250,000	NIL	NIL	NIL

Arts Centres

140. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his plans in relation to the development of an Arts centre (details supplied); the progress or actions that have taken place thus far; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20957/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The property in question is the responsibility of the Office of Public Works, and any questions relating to the future use of the building should be addressed to that Office.

Housing Assistance Payments Eligibility

141. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if there is currently any scheme or funding available in his Department similar to the Gaeltacht area house grants scheme to allow Gaeltacht residents to update or repair their homes; if he intends to restore this scheme in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20976/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): The scheme of housing grants under the Housing (Gaeltacht) Acts was suspended with effect from 7 April 2009. There are no plans to restore the scheme at present. While my Department has no other scheme to assist Gaeltacht residents to modernise or repair their homes, Gaeltacht residents have access to the same schemes available to people outside of the Gaeltacht, such as schemes provided by the local authorities.

Protection of Architectural Heritage

142. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he plans to introduce legislation to compel banks to deal with the issue of abandoned property held in safe keeping in view of the fact that of this property has the potential to be of significant historic and cultural value to the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20980/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I refer the Deputy to my reply to question No. 353 of 26th March, 2013.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

143. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21582/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The information requested by the Deputy in respect of lump sums paid to civil and public servants who retired between March 2011 and March 2013 is set out in the table below. The Deputy will note that figures in respect of the Department are in respect of the period from the establishment of the Department on 2nd June 2011.

Value of Lump Sums Paid €	Staff of Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gael- tacht	Staff of public bodies un- der the aegis of the Depart- ment
Below 10,000	2	9
10,001 - 20,000	1	13
20,001 - 30,000	3	11
30,000 - 40,000	4	9
40,001 - 50,000	6	5
50,001 - 60,000	6	3
60,001 - 70,000	4	1
70,001 - 80,000	0	4
80,001 - 90,000	2	3
90,001 - 100,000	1	2

Value of Lump Sums Paid €	Staff of Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gael- tacht	Staff of public bodies un- der the aegis of the Depart- ment
100,001 – 150,000	4	11
150,001 – 200,000	2	5
200,001 – 250,000	0	0
Above 250,000	0	0

RTE Revenue

144. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources further to Parliamentary Question No. 411 on 23 April 2013, if he will confirm if Radio Telefís Éireann's revenue has been sufficient to meet all sums properly chargeable to its current account and that RTÉ has made suitable provisions with respect to capital expenditure in each of 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20867/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): RTÉ is an independent national public service broadcaster whose remit and obligations are set out in Section 114 of the Broadcasting Act 2009. Section 98 provides that the company shall be independent in the pursuance of these objects, subject to the requirements of the Act and as such, I, as Minister, have no function in the management of RTÉ's day to day affairs including decisions it makes on its financial expenditure and on its budgetary position. These are purely matters for RTÉ management. RTÉ has a direct obligation under Section 105 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 to ensure that its revenue is at the earliest possible date at least sufficient to meet all sums properly chargeable to its current account and to make suitable provisions with respect to capital expenditure. I am satisfied that RTÉ management is fully cognisant of this obligation and are taking all the necessary steps to ensure that the company continues to be in compliance with the terms of the provision.

With regard to RTÉ making suitable provisions for its capital expenditure in the years 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011, I refer the Deputy to RTÉ's Annual Reports and Group Financial Statements for the years in question, which provide the information being sought by the Deputy. These documents are available in the library of the Houses of the Oireachtas and on the RTÉ website.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

145. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21583/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The information requested on lump sums paid to staff of my Department who retired during the period 1st March 2011 to end March 2013 is outlined in the table below:

Lump Sum Band	Number of Staff
Under €10,000	2
€10,000 – €20,000	2
€20,001 – €30,000	Nil

Lump Sum Band	Number of Staff
€30,001 - €40,000	2
€40,001 – €50,000	Nil
€50,001 – €60,000	2
€60,001 – €70,000	1
€70,001 – €80,000	2
€80,001 – €90,000	1
€90,001– €100,000	2
€100,001 – €150,000	6
€150,001 – €200,000	4
€200,001 – €250,000	Nil
Over €250,000	Nil

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.

Seniors Alert Scheme

146. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when will a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their personal alarm pendant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20870/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Seniors Alert Scheme provides grant assistance towards the purchase and installation of equipment to enable older persons, without sufficient means, to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind. The Scheme is administered by local community and voluntary groups with the support of my Department.

The grant application to provide a pendant alarm for the person referred to in the question was one of a number of applications received together by my Department. The grant was processed and paid in March 2013. The installation of the alarm will be arranged by the local community and voluntary group in due course.

Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas

147. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a progress report on the work of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20905/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Minister Coveney and I established the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) in September 2012 and since then the Commission has been working towards the publication of a report that will inform policies and strategies to support the economic development of rural Ireland into the future. The Commission and its Chair, Mr. Pat Spillane, have been engaging with stakeholder groups and the general public over the last number of months regarding ideas to support the future economic development of rural areas and I am grateful for their work to date.

The central element of the work of CEDRA is an extensive public consultation process which has been on-going since February 2013. To date the Commission has held 18 stakeholder meetings which looked at broader areas of rural life, 2 focus group meetings looking at rural tourism and social enterprise, 2 sub-group meetings looking at export and rural resources and 8 general public meetings all over Ireland. In total 360 people have attended the public meetings with a further 225 people attending the stakeholder meetings.

The Commission is also conducting a parallel research process and has requested submissions on its website including an option to complete an online questionnaire. To date 60 questionnaires have been completed. In addition to this, 108 submissions have been received. In total between the consultation and research exercises 850 contributions have been received to date for consideration in the CEDRA research process. The Commission will present its preliminary findings at a conference on 10 June 2013 in NUI Maynooth with the final report due in October 2013.

I believe there is clear evidence that rural communities all over Ireland have embraced the CEDRA research process; I am confident that the information that emerges from this process will provide an invaluable insight into the economic development of rural areas and assist policy making into the future.

Water Charges Introduction

148. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a decision has been taken regarding houses paying for water before a meter has been installed; if so, the way this system will work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20915/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Programme for Government and the Memorandum of Understanding with the EU, the IMF and the ECB provide for the introduction of domestic water charges. The current position is that domestic water charges will not commence before 2014, and the Government is currently reviewing the timeline for charges in consultation with the programme partners. The Government considers that charging based on usage is the fairest way to charge for water and it has decided that water meters should be installed in households connected to public water supplies. Irish Water, a new State-owned water company to be established as an independent subsidiary within the Bord Gáis Éireann Group, will be responsible for the metering programme.

The Government has also decided to assign responsibility for the economic regulation of the water sector, including the setting of charges, to the Commission for Energy Regulation. The primary role of the regulator will be to protect the interests of customers and to ensure a consistent and appropriate level of service is provided to them. An appropriate approach to charging those customers who may not be metered when charges are introduced will be put in place. The approach to charges for both metered and unmetered properties will be included in a public consultation that will take place as part of the regulatory process.

Local Authority Housing Provision

149. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which any evaluation has taken place of the serious local authority housing shortage with particular reference to the total numbers of persons registered as being in need of local authority housing by way of housing lists currently registered on a

county basis; if it is envisaged to adopt any particular strategy to address this issue, mindful of the cost of rent support in the absence of an adequate local authority housing stock; if he will consider a short to medium term plan to address the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20926/13]

151. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which he has quantified the local authority housing requirements in each local authority area by reference to the number of housing applicants recorded by each authority; if it is intended to take any specific steps to address this issue in the short and medium term thereby alleviating some of the cost of rent support currently incurred annually; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20931/13]

152. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which his Department has accessed information from the Department of Social Protection to accurately identify the number of housing applicants on local authority waiting lists who continue to be forced to rely on rent support in lieu of local authority housing; the extent to which rent support costs have been identified in full with a view to initiating a public housing campaign on a graduated basis thereby replacing some of the annual rent support costs by way of capital expenditure on housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20932/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 149, 151 and 152 together.

The Government's housing policy statement, published in June 2011, clearly identifies that the priority for Government will be to meet the most acute needs of households applying for social housing support. I am determined to ensure that the social housing programme optimises the delivery of social housing and the return for the resources invested. To achieve this, it is essential that we tailor the use of available Exchequer supports to prevailing conditions and explore the full range of solutions to address housing needs.

My Department does not have access to information from the Department of Social Protection in respect of Rent Supplement demand or associated costs. However, when applying for social housing support, households are required to confirm to the relevant local authority whether they are in receipt of Rent Supplement.

My Department also does not hold information on the number of households on local authorities' waiting lists. This figure continuously fluctuates as households are allocated housing and new households apply for housing support. Detailed information on the latest statutory assessment of housing need which was carried out in March 2011, including a breakdown by authority and category of need, is available on my Department's website www.environ.ie. or on the Housing Agency's website www.housing.ie. A summary assessment is due to be carried out in May 2013 and the results will be published in autumn 2013.

In terms of addressing the demand for social housing, the social housing capital budget has been reduced from €1.535 billion in 2008 to €287m in 2013 and the financial parameters within which we will be operating for the coming years rule out a return to large capital funded construction programmes. The Government is committed to responding more quickly and on a larger scale to social housing support needs through a variety of mechanisms, including through increased provision of social housing. In July 2012 I announced details of a three-year funding programme of €100 million to deliver some 800 new units of voluntary and local authority owned social housing. I am monitoring expenditure under my Department's housing programme for 2013, together with the level of contractual commitments extending into 2014,

with a view to a decision later this year on approving some limited new construction and house purchases over the period to end 2014.

In spite of the challenging circumstances within which local authorities must operate the final outcome for 2012 is expected to be in the region of 4,000 to 4,500 housing units. Given the current volatility of the market and different challenges to the channels of supply it is difficult to estimate the likely output of new units for social housing this year. However, it is provisionally estimated that in the region of 5,000 units will be provided for social housing in 2013.

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

Water Services Provision

150. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government the progress made to date towards the implementation of a modern water policy to take account of the current and growing demands in terms of storage and transmission; the extent to which he expects to be in a position to meet the necessary targets within a reasonable timeframe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20927/13]

160. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government the extent to which any evaluation has been done of the domestic and industrial water requirements on a regional basis throughout the country; the extent of the provision being made to meet such requirements over a specific period in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20940/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 150 and 160 together.

The overall strategy for investment in water services is to ensure that the timing and scale of investment facilitates economic and other development, achieves compliance with statutory requirements and promotes environmental sustainability objectives. The main vehicle for achieving these objectives for public domestic water supplies is the multi-annual Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2013.

The Programme provides for the commencement of contracts with a value of over €800m in relation to water supply infrastructure. This includes contracts to address deficiencies in the quality of supply, to improve the overall capacity of the system and an accelerated programme of mains rehabilitation. The Programme also provides for the advancement of a further range of schemes through planning, for progression to construction in future investment cycles. The investment in water services since 2000 has led, *inter alia*, to an increase in drinking water treatment capacity and additional drinking water storage capacity equivalent to the needs of a population of some 1.4 million and 1.9 million, respectively.

The Programme is based on an assessment of needs for water and sewerage services, un-

dertaken by each water services authority, which were subsequently appraised by my Department. In preparing their assessments, water services authorities were required to take into consideration key environmental and economic criteria in prioritising contracts and schemes to be progressed in their areas. The development of the Programme was strongly influenced by reports by the Environmental Protection Agency on drinking water quality, and an assessment by Forfás of the requirements of enterprise in Gateways and Hubs, as well as River Basin Management Plans. In addition, a detailed project appraisal is undertaken during the planning phase of each scheme, which determines issues such as the appropriate source of water, projected future demand and the most cost effective solution to meeting needs. There is, therefore, a strong evidence base, from technical assessments, environmental monitoring and policy studies to underpin the strategic direction of water services capital investment.

The series of reforms being advanced in the water sector by the Government is designed to support additional investment in the sector. An implementation strategy is in place to deliver on these reforms. This strategy is available on the Department's website. As part of this strategy, a specific work-stream is considering the matters arising in the proposed transfer of the responsibility for capital programme delivery from the 34 local authorities to Irish Water. This includes the development of a capital transition plan to manage the orderly transition from current arrangements to the new arrangements to be put in place by Irish Water.

Questions Nos. 151 and 152 answered with Question No. 149.

Fire Service Issues

153. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied regarding the adequacy of structures of the fire services part-time and whole time throughout the country; if any particular weakness exists which might affect the ability of the services to respond in particular emergency situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20933/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The provision of fire services in a local authority area is a statutory function of individual fire authorities. Under Section 10 of the Fire Services Act 1981, a fire authority is required to make provision for the delivery of fire services in its functional area, including the assessment of fire cover needs and the provision of premises. Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, each county and city manager is responsible for the staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authority for which he or she is responsible. In addition, it is a reserved function of fire authorities to adopt fire and emergency operations plans indicating the provision made in respect of organisation, appliances, equipment, fire stations, training and operational procedures for the provision of a comprehensive fire service to the community. My Department supports fire authorities through setting of general policy, training support and issue of guidance on operational and other related matters, and the provision of capital funding.

My Department's National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management has published a policy document, Keeping Communities Safe (KCS), which sets the future direction of fire services in Ireland. *Inter alia*, it sets out future service delivery structures and a system of national processes and standards for fire service delivery in Ireland based on a risk management approach to fire safety, which combines the important elements of fire prevention, protection and response.

The KCS policy document is available on my Department's web site at www.envron.ie.

Fire Service Issues

154. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which the cost-cutting requirements he inherited is affecting the quality and capacity of emergency services such as the fire services. [20934/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 606 of 5 February 2013, which sets out the position in this matter.

Local Authority Housing Provision

155. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government the extent to which it is expected to increase local authority housing stock in line with the local authority housing waiting lists in the next three years excluding any provisions in respect of voluntary housing bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20935/13]

156. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government the number of housing units likely to be constructed for or provided directly by local authorities or voluntary housing agencies in the course of the next four years; the extent to which this is intended to address the needs as defined by the current numbers on the waiting lists of the respective local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20936/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 155 and 156 together.

The difficulties facing the State's finances and the necessity to reduce public expenditure to sustainable levels are impacting on capital programmes all across the public service, including my Department's housing capital programme. The amount of capital funding available has decreased significantly in recent years along the lines highlighted in the Medium Term Exchequer Framework for Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-2016. As a result, capital spending on housing programmes is subject to constraint over the short-term.

In July 2012, I announced details of a three-year funding programme of €100 million to deliver some 377 new units of voluntary housing and 431 units of local authority owned social housing. I am monitoring expenditure under my Department's housing programme for 2013, together with the level of contractual commitments extending into 2014, with a view to a decision later this year on approving some limited new construction and house purchases over the period to end 2014. New housing provision by local authorities and the voluntary sector in the period beyond 2014 will be considered in the light of the prevailing economic conditions at that time.

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

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I am determined to ensure that the social housing programme is framed in a manner which optimises the delivery of social housing and the return for the resources invested. To achieve this it is essential that we tailor the use of available Exchequer supports to prevailing conditions and explore the full range of solutions to address housing needs.

Local Authority Services

157. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which the traditional services provided by local authorities are likely to continue in the context of the reform of local government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20937/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 609 of 5 February 2013, which sets out the position in this matter.

Local Authority Services

158. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which his Department has identified the impact of the cost cutting requirements on the services which he inherited; the way this is affecting the capacity to provide continued service throughout the sector and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20938/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Details of funding available to my Department this year as provided for in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2013, together with the spending outturns in 2011 and 2012, are set out in the following table.

REV	Capital €m	Capital Carryover €m	Current €m	Total €m
2013	726	43	482	1,251
2012	768	34	450	1252
2011	1,017	-	627	1644

While funding for my Department's activities has been reduced in line with the constrained economic climate, it remains significant - €1.25 billion in 2013. It has been necessary to prioritise resources to ensure that our programmes contribute, to the maximum extent possible and with enhanced efficiency, to the overall Government objective of economic recovery and increased employment, while at the same time assisting those most in need of support.

The total funding of some €1.25 billion available in 2013 will be used to make maximum progress across the range of programmes for which my Department is responsible, including protecting the environment; providing necessary housing supports; investing in water services infrastructure; and fostering community and rural development in partnership with local government and other local development bodies.

Housing Adaptation Grant Application Numbers

159. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which the various local authorities have received adequate provision to meet the disabled persons housing adaptation grant requirements in 2013; the numbers awaiting approval throughout the various local authorities countrywide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20939/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department’s involvement with the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability relates primarily to the recoupment of a proportion of local authority expenditure on the payment of individual grants. These schemes, introduced in November 2007, are funded by 80% recoupments available from my Department together with a 20% contribution from the resources of the local authority.

On 22 February I announced capital allocations to local authorities under the suite of Grants for Older People and People with a Disability amounting to €42.750 million. In allocating the available funding across all 34 city and county councils I did so in as transparent and as fair a way as possible. In framing the 2013 allocations, my Department wrote to each local authority requesting details of the numbers and value of grants where work had been approved to commence. Between them, local authorities reported contractual commitments in respect of approved grants totalling €18 million. This year I allocated local authorities the full amount of their contractual commitments. The balance of the available funding was allocated on the basis of each authority’s share of the new applications on hand in January 2013.

In order to deal with any acute or particular difficulty which might arise in the operation of the schemes over the course of the year I have set aside a small capital reserve. I recently approved supplementary funding of €1.2 million to 13 local authorities from this reserve. I will consider requests for further supplementary allocations later in the year. Based on information submitted by local authorities to my Department in January 2013, details of the numbers of applications received but still awaiting approval at that time, broken down by scheme, are set out in the following table:

Local Authority	Housing Adaptation Grants	Housing Aid for Older People	Mobility Aids Grants	Total
Carlow County Council	47	137	42	226
Cavan County Council	36	93	31	160
Clare County Council	122	461	150	733
Cork County Council	64	673	137	874
Donegal County Council	112	26	36	174
Dun Laogh/Rath Co Council	67	2	0	69
Fingal County Council	112	160	13	285
Galway County Council	13	186	16	215
Kerry County Council	84	126	99	309

Local Authority	Housing Adapta- tion Grants	Housing Aid for Older People	Mobility Aids Grants	Total
Kildare County Council	74	284	13	371
Kilkenny County Council	111	169	86	366
Laois County Council	12	78	13	103
Leitrim County Council	1	1	0	2
Limerick County Council	46	280	36	362
Longford County Council	6	30	10	46
Louth County Council	130	150	10	290
Mayo County Council	25	209	89	323
Meath County Council	39	1	1	41
Monaghan County Council	50	75	55	180
North Tipp County Council	17	142	4	163
Offaly County Council	117	159	11	287
Roscommon County Council	75	131	4	210
Sligo County Council	8	5	3	16
South Dublin County Council	72	10	20	102
South Tipp County Council	104	148	38	290
Waterford County Council	18	81	25	124
Westmeath County Council	54	73	18	145
Wexford County Council	29	505	103	637
Wicklow County Council	20	68	50	138
Cork City Council	142	197	19	358
Dublin City Council	454	47	28	529
Galway City Council	15	32	6	53

Local Authority	Housing Adaptation Grants	Housing Aid for Older People	Mobility Aids Grants	Total
Limerick City Council	94	266	95	455
Waterford City Council	15	11	30	56
TOTALS	2385	5016	1291	8692

Question No. 160 answered with Question No. 150.

Waste Management Issues

161. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will introduce legislation which would cap the fees charged by waste management companies to domestic users, which have increased repeatedly since privatisation by the local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20943/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Matters relating to the transfer of waste collection services by local authorities to private operators are in the first instance for the local authorities concerned.

My Department's role is to provide a comprehensive legislative and waste policy framework through which the relevant regulatory bodies, such as local authorities and the Environmental Protection Agency, operate. In this regard, I published A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland in July 2012, setting out a range of measures which will significantly revise the current regulatory regime to ensure, *inter alia*, that waste collected is managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy, that mandated service levels are delivered and that Customer Charters are put in place by all waste collection providers. Customer Charters will be required to clearly set out information for customers including charging structures, procedures for dealing with arrears and arrangements for switching from one waste collector to another. Following the publication of the new waste policy, I wrote to the waste management industry in September and October, 2012 in relation to the development of such charters and I understand that a number of waste collection providers have already put in place a Customer Charter ahead of the development of the new regulatory regime. It is my intention that the improved regulatory regime will deliver both enhanced environmental performance and ensure a quality service for consumers.

Notwithstanding the above measures, the Competition Authority currently maintains an ongoing oversight of household waste collection markets. The next formal review of the household waste collection market, including a report by the Competition Authority, will be carried out in 2016, as part of the proposed overall mid-term review of the implementation of the waste policy. In addition, the National Consumer Agency has engaged with the waste industry in relation to consumer issues such as the terms and conditions contained in contracts, the refund of credit balances and cancellation fees.

Water Quality Issues

162. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if Donegal County Council is the competent body for designation of the

bathing waters in Lough Foyle at Carnagarve, Moville, County Donegal, under the EU bathing Water Directive. [20971/13]

163. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of public requests for designation of bathing waters that were received in 2012 for 2013 designation and in which counties. [20972/13]

164. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will set out the decision making process on bathing water designation; if a central register is maintained which shows public input; and if there is an appeal process. [20973/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 162 to 164, inclusive, together.

The identification of bathing waters is a matter for local authorities under the Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008 which transposed the EU Bathing Water Directive 2006 into Irish law. Regulation 4 of the regulations places a requirement on local authorities, on or before **24 March** each year, to identify bathing waters in relation to the bathing season in that year and to notify the EPA of the bathing waters so identified and the reason for any change compared to the previous year. Donegal County Council therefore, is the competent authority for the identification of bathing waters in Lough Foyle.

My Department does not compile or keep statistics in relation to public requests for identification of bathing waters. However, the overall number of identified bathing water sites has increased from 131 in 2008 to 136 in 2012. The additional bathing waters are in the Galway, Mayo, Sligo and Fingal local authority areas. The 2008 Regulations require, inter alia, that bathing waters to be identified are to be all elements of surface waters where the local authorities expect a large number of people to bathe. The term ‘**large number**’ is not defined by the Directive. In 2010 my Department issued guidance to local authorities on the identification of bathing waters, and advised them to use their own discretion in deciding a threshold for a ‘large number’ of bathers. The guidance notes that this number will vary due to numerous factors, including proximity to urban areas, ease of access by road, scenic amenity, tradition of bathing at the site and proximity to recreational/tourism amenities.

Local authorities are required to ensure that appropriate measures have been taken in relation to encouraging public participation in the process of establishment, review and updating of bathing waters.

Departmental Schemes

165. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there is any scheme in place in his Department for former council tenants or those on low incomes to avail of financial assistance to carry out essential home repairs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20975/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): In the case of privately owned properties, grants are available under my Department’s Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People With a Disability to assist households to have necessary repairs, adaptations or improvement works carried out in order to meet the accommodation needs of an older person or a person with a disability. The suite of grants include three separate grant measures; the Mobility Aids Grant scheme with grants of up to €6,000, the Housing Aid for Older People scheme with grants of

up to €10,500 and the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability with grants of up to €30,000, depending on household income. Exchequer allocations for 2013 totalling some €42.750 million were notified to local authorities in February 2013 in respect of these schemes which are administered by the local authorities. Outside of these grant schemes, there are no other grants available from my Department in respect of repairs to privately owned properties.

Housing Inspections

166. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he will be carrying out reviews under the intensified inspection programme on rental properties in Fingal, County Dublin; the areas that will be inspected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21036/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Minimum standards for rental accommodation are prescribed in the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008, made under section 18 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992. These regulations were further amended by the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 which expanded the definition of ‘a proper state of structural repair’ to allow for all aspects of the internal and external appearance of a dwelling to be taken into account for the purposes of the regulations. All landlords have a legal obligation to ensure that their rented properties comply with the regulations. Responsibility for enforcing the regulations rests with the relevant local authority, supported by a dedicated stream of funding allocated by my Department.

It is a matter for each individual local authority to decide the specific details of its enforcement strategy and inspection arrangements. In discharging their responsibilities in relation to the rental sector authorities have been asked to have regard to the Good Practice Guidelines for Local Authorities on Standards in the Private Rented Sector: Strategic Planning, Effective Enforcement, published by the Centre for Housing Research in November 2007, which made a range of recommendations on relevant issues, including targeting inspection activities.

My Department has allocated more than €25 million since 2004 to housing authorities for the purpose of carrying out their functions under the Housing Acts in relation to rented accommodation. Additional funding was provided in 2010 for once-off strategically-planned programmes of inspection known as “Intensified Inspection Projects”. Funding for Intensified Inspection Projects was awarded where housing authorities agreed to undertake additional, targeted inspection activity, over and above what they would conduct as part of their usual inspection programme. Fingal County Council did not submit a funding application for an Intensified Inspection Project and therefore did not receive additional funding in this regard. My Department, by means of on-site visits, examines a sample of local authorities’ inspection procedures each year, with particular reference to the Intensified Inspection Programme, to verify that value for money is being achieved. Fingal County Council has not yet been examined as part of this process.

In general, local authorities have significantly expanded their inspection activity in recent years with the number of inspections almost trebling – from 6,815 to 19,616 - in the period 2005 to 2012. Details of the inspections of private rented accommodation carried out on a county/city basis are available on my Department’s website at www.environ.ie.

Environmental Management Costs Issues

167. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide, in tabular form, the waste electrical and electronic equipment charge associated with the following items for the years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, mobile phone, answering machine, fax machine, television, DVD player, satellite dish, hair dryer, games console, personal computer, MP3 player, microwave oven, dishwasher, fridge and or freezer, oven and or cooker; in the event that there is more than one possible WEEE charge associated with an item, if he will provide all possible charges for the item in question as well as the number of each item sold in the item sub-category in the stated years in order that an average WEEE charge for each item may be ascertained; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21038/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I assume that the question refers to the Environmental Management Costs (EMCs) that consumers have paid to producers when purchasing certain electrical items since the introduction of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations in Ireland; these EMCs were discontinued finally in February 2013. This system of EMCs was put in place to provide funds for the recovery and recycling of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) that was placed on the market prior to the introduction of the WEEE Regulations. The recovery and recycling of EEE that was placed on the market after that time (August 2005) must be funded by producers as part of their normal business costs.

The level of EMCs for each category of electrical items was set by the independent WEEE Register Society; I do not have a function in that regard. I understand that some of the factors that the WEEE Register Society took into account when setting the EMCs were the costs of recovery and recycling and the levels of financial reserves which the approved WEEE schemes (WEEE Ireland and ERP Ireland) had in place to discharge the costs associated with managing this historical WEEE; EMCs have been reduced year on year since 2005.

The Visible Environmental Management Costs associated with the electrical and electronic equipment specified for the period 2009-2012 are available from the WEEE Register Society, which may be contacted by post at WEEE Register Society Ltd, The National Registration Body, Suite 509, 8 Dawson Street, Dublin 2; by telephone at 01 6333551 or by email at info@weeeregister.ie. The WEEE Register Society category listings outline the 10 categories covered by the First Schedule of the European Communities (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) Regulations 2011. The Society further provides a breakdown of all electrical and electronic equipment into sub-categories.

My Department does not collate data on the sales of specific pieces of electrical and electronic equipment; this information may however be available from the WEEE Register Society, subject to normal commercial confidentiality and data protection requirements.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

168. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21589/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The information is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Departmental Bodies Reports

169. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will lay the latest annual report and accounts for the Irish Film Classification Office before the Houses of the Oireachtas. [20868/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Film Classification Office that its latest Annual Report will be submitted to my Department by end May 2013. The Report will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas as soon as possible thereafter.

Immigration Policy

170. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total number of business visas issued by his Department in 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013 under the immigration investor and start up entrepreneurs programme; if he will name the individuals involved and their area of business; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20857/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Immigrant Investor Programme and the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme were opened for applications in April 2012. Since then, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service have received 27 applications for the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme and 10 Applications for the Immigrant Investor Programme. Fourteen applications have been approved under the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme, seven applications have been refused, one applicant gained an alternative status and the remainder are still under consideration. Three applications have been approved under the Immigrant Investor Programme and the remainder are still under consideration. It has been the long standing policy of the Department of Justice and Equality, under both my office and that of previous Ministers, to respect the privacy of individual migrants and not to divulge their personal details.

Insolvency Payments Scheme Eligibility

171. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the provision that has been made within the Insolvency Service of Ireland rules for the foster care allowance which is paid out by the Health Service Executive; if the fostering care allowance should be excluded as income by lending institutions when calculating mortgage repayments (details supplied) in County Roscommon; his views on whether including such an allowance in mortgage repayments calculations is to put the welfare of fostered children in jeopardy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20875/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Under the provisions of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012, all income received by an applicant for one of the three personal insolvency arrangements must be taken into account. Therefore foster care allowance will be taken into account when calculating the income of an applicant. However, the Insolvency Service of Ireland's Guidelines on a Reasonable Standard of Living and Reasonable Living Expenses make provision for special circumstances. Accordingly, an applicant with foster care responsibilities will have the costs associated with foster care included as part of their reasonable living expenses calculation.

Insolvency Service of Ireland Issues

172. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an individual who is an authorised person by the Central Bank of Ireland to deal in financial services and who is qualified to deal in financial products by the grandfather arrangement of being fully operational before the year 2000, is eligible to practice as a personal insolvency practitioner under the terms of the new Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20886/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) will shortly publish Regulations under Section 161 of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 in regard to the authorisation and regulation of personal insolvency practitioners (PIPs). The Regulations will set out the necessary criteria in relation to qualifications. The Insolvency Service will accept applications from individuals to become PIPs if they meet the eligibility requirements set out in the Regulations. It is likely that future practitioners will be solicitors, barristers, accountants and qualified financial advisors. In addition, there is a further option for individuals who hold a relevant qualification in the area of law, business or finance to make an application.

The applicant will also have to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Insolvency Service that they have the relevant knowledge and experience to become a practitioner. This will be done by completing a course of study and passing an exam on the law and practice generally, as it applies in the State relating to the insolvency of individuals, including the Personal Insolvency Act 2012.

An individual who is an authorised person by the Central Bank of Ireland to deal in financial services and who is qualified to deal in financial products by the grandfather arrangement of being fully operational before the year 2000, will not be eligible to practice as a personal insolvency practitioner, but it will, of course be open to such persons to apply in the same manner as other individuals to be licensed by the ISI to practice as PIPs.

Legislative Programme

173. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he expects the Courts Bill 2013 to be fully enacted; his view on whether the enactment of this Bill will result in more staff being employed by the Courts Service; and if extra staff are being recruited if it will be throughout the country. [20907/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Courts Bill 2013 is currently before the Seanad and I hope to progress the Bill before the Oireachtas with a view to its enactment before the Summer recess. The purposes of the Bill are (i) to amend the *in camera* rule in order to introduce greater transparency in the administration of family and child care law by allowing press access to the courts in family and child care proceedings, subject to certain restrictions and prohibitions, and (ii) to increase the monetary jurisdiction limits of the Circuit and District Courts in civil proceedings.

There will be an impact on the Courts Service in terms of redistribution of work between court jurisdictions but the overall volume of cases is not expected to increase as a result of the Bill and no increase in staff is anticipated. The position will, however, be kept under review.

Visa Applications

174. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a decision will issue on an appeal for a visa in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20913/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can advise the Deputy, that no appeal has been submitted to date. The person concerned has been contacted directly and intends to submit an appeal shortly. Once received the appeal will be considered and a decision made without delay.

Queries in relation to general immigration matters 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.

Traffic Regulations

175. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of heavy goods vehicles or any other vehicles that were brought to weigh bridges by the Garda Traffic Corps in the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; the number of vehicles that were found to be overweight; his plans to increase the penalties for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20921/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have requested a report from the Garda authorities on the matters raised by the Deputy. I will contact the Deputy directly when the report is to hand.

Garda Operations

176. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on Garda Operation Nascar; the number of persons arrested and charged to date; the number of successful convictions obtained to date; if this operation is still active; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20922/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that Operation Nascar, which commenced in December 2011, is an ongoing operation targeting suspected fraudulent motor insurance claims. The investigation is focused on alleged offences within the meaning of deception as outlined under section 6 of the Criminal Justice (Theft & Fraud) Offences Act 2001. I am further informed that there has been three phases to the investigation to date with arrest operations in February, March and April 2013. Seventeen persons have been arrested under Operation Nascar to date. It is envisaged that once the investigation is complete a full consolidated file on all the arrests and investigative processes will be submitted to the Law Officers for directions.

Anti-Social Behaviour

177. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the reasons given by gardaí for issuing ASBOS, behaviour warnings and good behaviour contracts from 2010 to date in 2013 in the Dublin region; and if

he will make a statement on the matter. [20923/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Part 11 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006, which provides for civil proceedings in relation to anti-social behaviour by adults, was commenced on 1 January 2007. Part 13 of the Act, which relates to anti-social behaviour by children, was commenced on 1 March 2007. These provisions set out an incremental procedure for addressing anti-social behaviour by adults and children. With regard to children, these range from a warning from a member of An Garda Síochána, to a good behaviour contract involving the child and his or her parents or guardian, to referral to the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme and finally to the making of a behaviour order by the Children Court. With regard to adults, they include a warning and the making of a civil order by the court.

The Act provides that a person behaves in an anti-social manner if the person causes or, in the circumstances, is likely to cause, to one or more persons who are not of the same household as the person harassment, significant or persistent alarm, distress, fear or intimidation or significant or persistent impairment of their use or enjoyment of their property.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that it would require a disproportionate expenditure of Garda time and resources to identify and precisely categorise the types of incidents for which behaviour warnings, good behaviour contracts, behaviour orders and civil orders are issued. However, my understanding is that the majority of situations which give rise to behaviour warnings or orders appear to arise from public order type incidents.

Garda Strength

178. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which an increase in Garda numbers is required to bring the strength of the force up to the level comparable with best international practice and or other EU jurisdictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20928/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): There is no mathematical formula for determining the optimum strength of the Garda Síochána, or indeed any police force. Instead, it is a matter of Government policy, taking into account all the relevant factors such as population and the crime rate, as well of course as the availability of resources.

Nor is it a straightforward matter to compare police strength in different jurisdictions. EUROSTAT, the statistical office of the European Commission, maintains statistics on police strength in the European Union, but direct comparisons using these figures are difficult to make. In order to make any proper comparison, account would have to be taken of any differences in police function. For example, the Garda Síochána is not only the national police force, but also provides the national security and intelligence service, as well as an immigration service. In other jurisdictions these functions are discharged by separate agencies.

Charities Regulation

179. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if and when all sections of the 2009 Charities Act will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20929/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Charities Act 2009 was designed to support and enhance public trust in charities by providing for the statutory regis-

tration and regulation of charities operating in Ireland by an independent Charities Regulatory Authority.

The decision was taken in 2011, because of the urgent need to make savings in Government expenditure, to defer full implementation of the Charities Act. This decision was taken for financial reasons and it has remained Government policy to provide for the implementation of the Charities Act 2009.

My Department has therefore examined methods of how best to implement the Charities Act in the current financial climate. As part of this process, in January of this year I published for consultation outline proposals for implementing key provisions of the Act. The consultation document invited the views of stakeholders and members of the public on proposals for the implementation of the Act on a phased and low cost basis. I was very pleased with the outcome to this consultation. Some 160 submissions, containing much valuable feedback, were received in response.

My Department is currently reviewing the submissions received and I look forward to publishing the results in due course and a further indication of the Government's timeframe for the introduction of an operational Charities Regulatory Authority and full implementation of the Charities Act 2009.

Garda Divisional Headquarters

180. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update in the building plans for (details supplied); when he expects progress to be made; if the project has gone to tender; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20959/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The provision of three new Garda Divisional Headquarters was included in the special Government stimulus package announced in July 2012. It is intended that these projects will be delivered by means of a Public Private Partnership and work is being undertaken by the relevant agencies in the light of the Government announcement.

As the arrangements to be put in place for Public Private Partnerships are complex, it is not possible at this stage to indicate when the specific elements of the projects will be completed. However, I can assure the Deputy that they are being treated as a priority.

Garda Vetting Applications

181. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 901 of 16 April 2013, if he will arrange for the vetting application to be expedited in view of the fact that the applicant has been through the process several times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20987/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer further to Parliamentary Question No. 901 of 16 April 2013.

I am now informed by the Garda authorities that the vetting application on behalf of the individual referred to by the Deputy was processed and returned to the registered organisation concerned on 16 April 2013.

Prison Visiting Committees Issues

182. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position on the make-up of prison visiting committees; if he will provide a breakdown of the numbers of people on each committee of each prison; the number of vacancies on each committee at present; the procedure in place for vacancies to be filled; the remuneration for each committee member from 2007 to 2012; if he is considering the future of prison visiting committees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20990/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Visiting Committee members are appointed for a period of three years by the Minister for Justice and Equality under the Prisons (Visiting Committees) Act 1925 and Prisons (Visiting Committees) Order 1925. There are fourteen Prison Visiting Committees in existence - one for each institution.

Each Visiting Committee comprises no more than six members, and only suitable people with appropriate qualifications and a genuine interest in prison issues are appointed. There are currently 25 vacancies which I am in the process of filling, details of which are set out in the table below.

Unfortunately it is not possible to provide the figures for the remuneration for each committee member from 2007 to 2012 as this would require a disproportionate and inordinate amount of staff time and effort to prepare and could not be justified in the current circumstances where there are other significant demands on resources. However I can inform the Deputy that a per diem payment at a current rate of €142.50 per visit or meeting, which is subject to tax is paid to Visiting Committee members. The following table sets out the total expenditure paid out to the Visiting Committees over each of the past six years.

Year	Total Annual Payments
2007	€ 254,400.00
2008	€262,650.00
2009	€250,350.00
2010	€269,849.50
2011	€214,249.30
2012	€143,457.80

The Government has approved the drafting of a General Scheme of an Inspection of Places of Detention Bill, which will include provisions to make Visiting Committees more effective, while they continue their role of visiting prisons, meeting with prisoners, and liaising on their behalf with prison authorities. A link will be established between the Visiting Committees and the Inspector of Prisons. As part of these plans, it is intended to expand the role of the Inspector of Prisons. I believe this will greatly enhance the Inspector's independent oversight of the prison system.

Subject to competing legislative priorities, it is expected that the General Scheme will be published this year. When work on preparation of the General Scheme has been completed, I will be seeking Government approval for its publication to facilitate a consultation process in advance of drafting and publication of the Bill.

LIST OF CURRENT PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE VACANCIES 1st May 2013

Prison/Place of Detention	Current membership	Vacancies
Arbour Hill	5	1

Prison/Place of Detention	Current membership	Vacancies
Castlerea	3	3
Cloverhill	2	4
Cork	4	2
Dóchas	5	1
Limerick	5	1
Loughan House	6	0
Midlands	3	3
Mountjoy	4	2
Portlaoise	3	3
Shelton Abbey	4	2
St. Patrick's	5	1
Training Unit	5	1
Wheatfield	5	1
TOTAL	59	25

Garda Stations Closures

183. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if will give an assurance that there are no plans to discontinue the use of Santry Garda station as a Garda station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21045/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Commissioner's Policing Plan for 2013 sets out details for the closure of 100 Garda stations throughout the country. Santry Garda Stations was not listed for closure.

While the Policing plans for 2014 and 2015 have not yet been prepared, I understand, from discussions with the Garda Commissioner, that the current consolidation process will be largely completed by the end of this year and it seems unlikely at this point in time that there will be any further station closures in 2014 and 2015.

Family Reunification Applications

184. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if and when family reunification can be arranged or approved in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; if the necessary arrangements can be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21053/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Based on the information supplied by the Deputy, I am informed by officials in my Department that they can find no record of a current visa application for a family member of the person in question. When completing an on-line visa application the applicant is assigned a unique visa transaction number. If the Deputy could provide this number to officials in the Visa Office, I will arrange for an update on the case to be provided. If a visa application has not been submitted by the person concerned, it is open to them to make a visa application on-line through the following link: <https://www.visas.inis.gov.ie>. Comprehensive information on the visa application process is available on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (www.inis.gov.ie).

Queries in relation to general immigration matters 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

185. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress if any made to date in the determination of entitlement to long-term residency or naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21054/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my detailed reply to his earlier Parliamentary Question, PQ No. 241 of Tuesday, 27th March 2013 - copied beneath. The position is unchanged since then.

The person concerned is a failed asylum applicant. Arising from the refusal of her asylum application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 27th February, 2009, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the then Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against her. In addition, she was notified of her entitlement to apply for subsidiary protection in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006.

The person concerned initiated judicial review proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal in her case. As these proceedings are ongoing, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the case of the person concerned at this time.

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

Citizenship Applications

186. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding long term residency-eligibility for naturalisation and entitlement to an Irish passport in respect of a child (details supplied) in Dublin 5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21055/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The mother of the child concerned has been granted leave to remain in the State for the period to 5 May 2015. This decision was conveyed in writing to the person concerned by letter dated 5 May 2012. The position in the State of the child of the person concerned will shortly 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 mother of the child concerned. It will be open to the person concerned to apply to the Citizenship Section of my Department for a Certificate of Naturalisation when she is in a position to meet the lawful residency criteria applicable to the lodgement of such applications. Details on the criteria to be met by persons lodging such applications are available from my Department's Website (www.justice.ie).

The Deputy should note that responsibility for the issuing of passports is vested in the Irish Passport Office, a business unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. As a result, the persons concerned, or indeed the Deputy on their behalf, may wish to pursue that matter with the Irish Passport Office or indeed with the Offices of the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs. 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.

Citizenship Applications

187. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding determination of residency status eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21056/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned claims to have arrived in the State in May 2005 with his EU national wife. He applied for residency in the State on the basis of his marriage to an EU national in or around June 2005. By letter dated 22 August 2005, the person was notified that he was granted residency in the State for an initial one year period on the basis of his marriage to an EU citizen who was exercising her EU Treaty rights in the State. The person applied for permanent residency in the State in or around December 2010. By letter dated 15 June 2011, he was refused permanent residency. He applied for a review of the decision by letter dated 22 August 2011. By letter dated 6 December 2011, the reapplication for permanent residency was refused and the decision of 15 June 2011 was confirmed. Judicial Review proceedings were instituted on 20 March 2012. As the matter is now 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.

Residency Permits

188. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to and validity of qualified residency under stamp 4 in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21057/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 201 of 18 April 2013. I have nothing further to add to the information contained therein:

2 May 2013

The person concerned was granted permission to remain in the State for an initial 2 year period on Stamp 4 conditions from 11 November, 2005, under the revised arrangements for the non-EEA national parents of children born in Ireland prior to January, 2005, commonly known as the IBC/05 Scheme. This permission to remain was renewed regularly and is currently valid until 15 February, 2014. There is no record of an application for a Certificate of Naturalisation having been received from the person concerned. However, it is open to any individual to lodge such an application to the Citizenship Section of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended. Details on the criteria to be met by persons lodging such applications are available on the website of the INIS (www.inis.gov.ie).

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

Residency Permits

189. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding long-term residency and or eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21058/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the person concerned has had no permission to be in the State since 22 March, 2011 and that he has also failed to renew his registration with An Garda Síochána as required by section 9 of the Immigration Act, 2004. No application has been received from the person to renew his permission to remain.

No non-national may be in the State other than in accordance with the terms of any permission given to him or her by or on behalf of the Minister. Therefore, in the event that the person has remained in the State, he may be unlawfully present and in breach of his registration requirements. Such contraventions of the Immigration Act, 2004 are offences punishable by a fine on summary conviction not exceeding €3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both. A non-national in these circumstances also faces the prospect of being subject to removal proceedings. The INIS have also informed me that the person has previously remained in the State without permission and failed to register. However, on that occasion the person was subsequently granted permission to remain in the State as an exceptional measure on Stamp 4 conditions from 26 May 2010 to 22 March, 2011 (the date of expiry of his passport). The person concerned, if they are still in the State, should now make contact with their local registration officer, An Garda Síochána or with INIS, 13/14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2 as a matter of urgency.

Garda Resources

190. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which Garda strength here and access to adequate modern levels of technology, transport and forensics is available to gardaí; the extent to which this compares with international best practice notwithstanding the budgetary difficulties inherited from his predecessors; the action he

plans to address these issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21069/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda authorities are continually looking at opportunities to employ new technologies to achieve their goals and to contribute to the services they provide. This is a policy that is designed to ensure that the Garda Síochána will be in a position to take advantage of proven up to date technological developments to meet the needs of an effective police force. As the Deputy will be aware, considerable progress has been made within the Garda force in the field of modern technological support. In addition to a world class computer system, PULSE, these include the full roll-out of the state of the art National Digital Radio System, the Automated Fingerprint Information System and Automated Number Plate Recognition.

In so far as Garda transport is concerned, an additional €3 million was made available towards the end of last year to the Force for the procurement of a further 171 vehicles. This brought total investment in the Garda fleet in 2012 to €4 million and resulted in a total of 213 new vehicles being procured during the year. I am informed by the Garda authorities that the roll out of the most recently purchased patrol vehicles has been completed. In addition to the investment provided in 2012, a specific allocation of €5 million has been provided for the purchase and fit-out of Garda transport in the current year. This represents a very considerable financial investment in Garda transport, particularly at a time when the level of funding available across the public sector is severely limited. It is a clear indication of my commitment to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, the Garda Síochána are provided with sufficient resources to enable them to deliver an effective and efficient policing service. Regarding forensic services for the Garda Síochána, the scene of crime examiners, the Garda Technical Bureau and the Forensic Science Laboratory provide services in scenes of crime examinations and forensic science particularly in the area of drug analyses and DNA examinations.

I am determined, as Minister for Justice and Equality, that the resources of the Garda Síochána will be used in the best, most effective and efficient way possible. I believe that the primary Garda objective of combating crime will be continue to be achieved, and that, despite the pressure on the public finances, it will be possible for the Force to operate to the optimum benefit of our communities in a manner that will facilitate the prevention and detection of offences.

Crime Statistics

191. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which the statistics show fluctuation in the levels of various crimes reported in County Kildare in each of the past five years to date; if any particular action is planned to address any issues arising; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21070/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Síochána Act 2005 makes provision for the compilation and publication of crime statistics by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose. I have requested the CSO to provide relevant statistics directly to the Deputy. In relation to actions to address the incidence of crime locally, and any issues arising, I am advised by the Garda authorities that local Garda Management closely monitors patrols, and other operational strategies in place, in conjunction with crime trends and the policing needs of local communities to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources, and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public.

Garda Resources

192. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the necessity for the maintenance of an adequate network of Garda stations throughout the country in both urban and rural areas with a view to ensuring adequate resources and visibility to meet any challenges of criminal activity and crime levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21071/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will be aware that the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources, including personnel, throughout the organisation and I have no direct function in the matter. This allocation of resources is constantly monitored in the context of demographics, crime trends, policing needs and other operational strategies in place on a District, Divisional and Regional level to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public.

Over the course of the last two years the Garda Commissioner has carried out a comprehensive review of the entire Garda station and District network. The objective of the review was to ensure that the best possible service continues to be provided to the public across the country. The Commissioner concluded that, in his professional opinion, a number of Garda stations could be closed and a number of Garda Districts could be amalgamated. I fully agree with the Commissioner's conclusions. 139 Garda stations were identified for closure and 30 Garda Districts were amalgamated into 15 new Garda Districts.

The Garda Commissioner has stated that the revised structures will continue to support the Garda community philosophy through the clustering of services at policing hubs. This centralisation of services will facilitate the introduction of enhanced patrolling arrangements which, in turn, will provide increased Garda visibility as well as maintaining existing Garda links with communities throughout the country. The objective will be to ensure that the best possible policing service will continue to be provided to our communities. The Garda Commissioner has also advised that closure of stations will result in some additional 61,000 patrolling hours being available for operational policing. I am confident that the Garda Síochána will continue to provide a professional policing service right across the country in a manner that is effective and is consistent with the highest standards for which the Force is renowned.

Courts Service Issues

193. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date in achieving the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission in the context of traditional reform or setting up of a court of criminal appeal and-or other administrative changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21072/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I understand that the Deputy is referring to the Report of the Working Group on the Court of Appeal which was published in 2009 and recommended the establishment of a single Court of Appeal. As he may be aware, the Government decided in principle last summer to proceed with preparations for the necessary Referendum and I recently announced that the intention would be to establish a Court of Appeal with both criminal and civil jurisdiction. The Government is committed to the holding of a Constitutional referendum on Article 34 which is necessary to achieve this and work has commenced in my Department in this regard. It is intended that the referendum will take place, together with at least one other referendum, in the autumn.

Crime Statistics

194. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total number of persons known to have absconded while on bail in each of the past four years to date; those recaptured; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21073/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Síochána Act 2005 makes provision for the compilation and publication of crime statistics by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose. I have requested the CSO to provide relevant information with reference to the statistics which are available directly to the Deputy. Insofar as the enforcement of bench warrants is concerned, including those which issue where a person on bail fails to attend in court, An Garda Síochána take all possible action to ensure that such persons are located as quickly as possible, having regard to all of the relevant circumstances.

Crime Levels

195. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of incidents of rape reported in each of the past four years to date; the extent to which each case has been investigated and concluded or is in the course thereof; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21074/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Síochána Act 2005 makes provision for the compilation and publication of crime statistics by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose.

I have requested the CSO to provide relevant statistics directly to the Deputy.

Crime Levels

196. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of incidents of gun crime reported in each of the past four years to date; the number of such instances resulting in death; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21075/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Síochána Act 2005 makes provision for the compilation and publication of crime statistics by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose.

I have requested the CSO to provide relevant statistics directly to the Deputy.

Legal Aid Service Reform

197. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the proposals, if any, to update and streamline the administration of legal aid with particular reference to speeding up the process and increased accessibility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21076/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that there is no waiting period associated with the granting of criminal legal aid as under the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Act 1962, the courts, through the judiciary, are responsible for the

granting of legal aid on the applicant's appearance in Court.

In relation to civil legal aid, I am to advise that demand for legal services from the Legal Aid Board has increased significantly since the down-turn in the economy. While there was a 10% drop in demand at the general law centres in 2012 compared to 2011, nevertheless the demand in 2011 was 93% greater than it was in 2006. The Board has not been subject to the sort of cuts to its grant-in-aid that other public service bodies have had to experience and I have been able to maintain the Board's grant-in-aid at the same level for 2013 as it was in 2012 (and 2011). Nevertheless it is a challenging environment that has resulted in lengthened waiting times for those seeking legal services for matters that are not prioritised. Notwithstanding the pressures on resources, the Government has further supported the Board by approving exemptions from the moratorium to enable the organisation to recruit front-line staff for direct service delivery. The Public Appointments Service is currently running a solicitor recruitment competition for the Board from which appointments, both temporary and permanent, will be made within the next month or so.

In response to the changed environment the Board has taken steps to try and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of its legal services. Those steps include the following:

- The Board has been piloting a 'triage' approach in its law centres to service delivery and this approach is operative in most of its centres at this stage. The pilot is in response to lengthening waiting times. The aim of the 'triage' approach is that every applicant gets to see a solicitor within a period of one month for the purpose of getting legal advice (consultations are broadly limited to 45 minutes). If the applicant requires further services they remain on the 'waiting list'. There is or has been a 'backlog' of applicants to be seen for triage purposes hence it is taking time to reduce the waiting time for such an appointment to one month. A first review of the operation of the pilot indicated that clients were overwhelmingly satisfied with this particular service initiative. This was because they got early access to a solicitor for advice on their legal disputes that provided clarity about the options open to them and the process through which their disputes might be resolved.

- In August 2012 the Board introduced a new case management system in its law centres. This is a 'start to end' system which will in the medium term deliver efficiencies in terms of the administration aspect as well as in relation to the delivery of the legal services;

- In November 2011 the Board took responsibility for the management and administration of the State funded family mediation service. A key reason for transferring this responsibility to the Board was to improve the synergies between the State funded family mediation services and the State funded civil legal aid services (most of the demand for legal services is in the area of family law). Improving the synergies will be for the benefit of the customer and will help move away from a 'litigation first' approach that may on occasion be too common. Already there are very positive signs from a pilot initiative operating in Dolphin House (where the District Family Court sits) involving the co-location of the courts and a mediation service with a legal service located there also. Steps are now being taken to replicate this initiative in a number of other locations including Cork and Naas;

- With the drop in demand for asylum services the Board has taken steps to integrate its Refugee Legal Service into the general law centre service delivery model thus effectively transferring resources from the asylum area to the general legal service area where the demands have increased;

- The Board has maintained a high level of usage of private solicitors for family law cases in the District Court;

- The Board has continued to engage with other key players in the justice / legal area with a view to trying to ensure that State funded resources that impact on its area of business are used to best effect.

I am currently considering a package of proposals from the Board for the revision of the financial eligibility and contributions provisions governing the granting of civil legal aid. These provisions may have some impact, albeit relatively marginal, on the demand for legal services and the resources available to the Board.

I am very conscious of the difficulties that delays in accessing legal aid can give rise to and I am aware that the Board is also keenly aware of those difficulties and is working to ensure the delays are minimised to the greatest extent possible. I have noted some of the steps that it has taken and I know that it is constantly keeping the delivery of its services under review with a view to getting services to those most in need of them as quickly as possible.

Legal Services Regulation

198. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding reform of the legal profession; the extent to which negotiations are continuing with respective interest groups; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21077/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Programme for Government 2011-2016 undertakes to “establish independent regulation of the legal profession to improve access and competition, make legal costs more transparent and ensure adequate procedures for addressing consumer complaints”. These undertakings complement those structural reforms in the EU/IMF/ECB Troika Programme of Financial Support for Ireland aimed at removing restrictions to trade and competition in the provision of legal services and at the reform of the legal costs regime. Effect is being given to these structural reform commitments in the form of the extensive provisions of the Legal Services Bill 2011 which remains a priority under the Government Legislation Programme, has completed Second Stage in the Dáil and is due to begin Committee Stage. It will be recalled that priority also had to be given, during the intervening period, to the drafting and enactment of the Personal Insolvency Bill by the end of last year as a competing Troika programme objective.

Detailed preparation of the Legal Services Regulation Bill is ongoing at my Department in conjunction with the Offices of the Attorney General and of Parliamentary Counsel. We continue to encourage, receive and consider submissions from concerned stakeholders and I very much look forward to debating the relevant issues with Members in the course of the Bill’s ongoing passage through the Houses. As I have previously indicated, amendments to the Bill will be made available for consideration prior to the commencement of Committee Stage which is now due to take place on 10-12 July 2013.

Prisoner Rehabilitation Programmes

199. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which prisoners serving long-term sentences in respect of first time offences have been referred for rehabilitative training and or education in their first year of incarceration in the past five years; the number of recidivistic offenders who have availed of such schemes in the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21078/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my reply

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to Dáil Question No 185 of 6th March 2013:- *“The Deputy will be aware from my replies to previous Parliamentary Questions that the statistics requested are not centrally recorded by the Irish Prison Service and to provide such information would require the allocation of a disproportionate and inordinate amount of staff time and resources.*

The Irish Prison Service provides a wide range of rehabilitative programmes that include education, vocational training, healthcare, psychiatric, psychological, counselling, welfare and spiritual services. These programmes are available in all prisons and all prisoners are eligible to use the services. On committal, all prisoners are interviewed by the Governor and are informed of the services available in the prison. At this point prisoners may be referred to services or they can self refer at a later date. Where Governors consider, on the information available, that a prisoner needs a particular intervention they will initiate a referral.

The development of prisoner programmes forms a central part of the new Irish Prison Service Three Year Strategic Plan 2012-2015. There is a clear commitment in the Strategy to enhance sentence planning including Integrated Sentence Management and the delivery of prison based rehabilitative programmes such as education, work training and resettlement programmes”.

The position remains the same as outlined above.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

200. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21587/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The information provided in a table refers to lump sum (gratuity) payments made to retiring members of An Garda Síochána in the period 1st March 2011 to 1st March 2013.

Value range	Numbers
Over €250,000	0
€200,001 to €250,000	4
€150,001 to €200,000	14
€100,001 to €150,000	130
€90,001 to €100,000	195
€80,001 to €90,000	453
€70,001 to €80,000	91
€60,001 to €70,000	11
€50,001 to €60,000	7
€40,001 to €50,000	6
€30,001 to €40,000	5
€20,001 to €30,000	7
€10,000 to €20,000	11

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

201. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector

workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21584/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): It has not been possible in the time available to compile all of the information requested by the Deputy which, in the case of the Defence organisation, covers retired members of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF), retired civil servants from the Department of Defence and retired civilian employees employed with the PDF. I will forward the information to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

202. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the new computer system for AOS 1 will be in place; when payments under AOS 1 will be processed; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a person (details supplied) in County Galway who was promised payments in December has not yet received any payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20874/13]

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.

Payments under AEOS are issuing to farmers on an ongoing basis and outstanding payments under AEOS I are largely due to either penalties on applications or unresolved queries associated with applications. Where necessary officials in my Department will have contacted the applicants concerned with the intention of resolving outstanding problems and issuing payment as soon as possible.

The person named was approved for participation in the Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from the 1st September 2010 and full payments totalling €272.13 and €2,917.60 issued in respect of 2010 and 2011 respectively.

The application was selected for a Cross Compliance inspection which resulted in a penalty of 1% being imposed on the AEOS application for 2012. Officials in my Department are now finalising the application of the person named on this basis and payment will shortly issue to the person named.

Fish Quotas

203. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide an update on a submission regarding the seafood industry (details supplied) that was presented to him in March 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20877/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I understand that the Deputy is referring to correspondence he submitted to me on 26 March 2013 on behalf of mussel farmers in Lough Foyle who are having trading difficulties. That correspondence notes declining market prices for mussels and the lack of a mussel seed spat fall in Lough Foyle

in recent years and requests assistance for growers.

Mussel seed spat fall is a naturally occurring phenomenon. I am informed that scientific knowledge in this area continues to evolve and the reasons for the variability in spat fall from year to year are not well understood by scientists or operators. However, it is believed that climatic factors, such as cold seas and storms in recent years, may have contributed to lesser spat falls. Nevertheless, over 30,000 tonnes of seed was fished in the last 3 years, including over 26,000 from Irish waters. Authorisations to fish mussel seed are issued annually to operators who have access to aquaculture plots for on-growing. These authorisations allow the holder to fish for seed in Irish waters and are not restricted to Lough Foyle. In addition, authorised vessels are permitted to fish for seed in Northern Ireland waters.

Under the current measures, there is no provision in the European Fisheries Fund Regulation (1198/2006) allowing financial aid to operators affected by lower market prices or lack of local seed supply.

However, I have asked BIM to provide any other technical assistance that it can to assist operators in Foyle. I understand that BIM has discussed with operators possible alternative sources of seed mussel, including use of long-lines and purchase of seed from third parties. BIM will continue to provide all technical assistance possible.

Harbours and Piers Funding

204. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a full list of the applications made by a local authority (details supplied) for funding under the Fishery Harbours and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2012 and also the Fishery Harbours and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme 2013. [20879/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department provides funding, where exchequer funds allow, for the development and repair of Local Authority owned piers and slipways under the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme. Coastal Local Authorities were invited to submit applications for projects in both of years of interest to the Deputy, 2012 and 2013. Applications received from Mayo Co Co were as follows:

Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme

2012 Application for funding from Mayo County Council

Location	Total Project Cost
Roigh	€150,000
Killala Main Pier	€300,000
Bundorragha	€300,000
Kilcummin	€150,000
Cloghmore	€50,000
Westport	€50,000
Newport Quay	€200,000
Frenchport	€25,000
Rosmoney	€150,000
Purteen	€150,000

Location	Total Project Cost
Ballina Harbour	€150,000
Ballyglass	€150,000
Porturlin	€150,000
Rinroe	€150,000
Murrisk	€150,000
Mulranny	€150,000
Tullaghan	€20,000
Dooagh	€100,000
Saleen	€150,000
Shore Rd, Belmullet	€150,000
Rathlacken	€150,000
Faulmore	€10,000
Belmullet Quay	€75,000
Valley	€150,000
Roscahill	€150,000
Cashel	€100,000

2013 Application for funding from Mayo County Council

Location	Total Project Cost
Killala Harbour	€150,000
Roigh	€150,000
Bundorragha	€150,000
Ballina Harbour	€150,000
Newport Quay	€150,000
Killala Main Pier	€150,000
Westport	€50,000
Cloghmore	€50,000
Frenchport	€25,000
Purteen	€30,000
Ballyglass	€150,000
Saleen	€150,000
Porturlin	€150,000
Rinroe	€150,000
Mulranny	€150,000
Tullaghan	€20,000
Dooagh	€100,000
Shore Road, Belmullet	€30,000
Roscahill	€150,000
Rathlacken	€150,000
Faulmore	€10,000
Belmullet Quay	€75,000
Valley	€30,000
Cashel	€100,000

Harbours and Piers Funding

205. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the budget allocated to the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme for the years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013; the amount actually spent in each of these years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20918/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department administers the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Capital Development Programme. The programme funds capital works at the six State owned Fishery Harbour Centres and, subject to available exchequer funding, the programme also provides grant aid to coastal Local Authorities for development and repair works at marine facilities in their ownership. The table below details the allocation and expenditure for each of the years 2009 to 2013:

Year	Allocated	Expenditure
2009	€15,000,000	€14,910,074
2010	€10,600,000	€8,565,507
2011	€10,862,023	€9,919,430
2012	€7,250,000	€6,728,315
2013	€8,595,000	Not yet available

Compulsory Purchase Orders

206. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will confirm that his Department has been issued with a compulsory purchase order by Donegal County Council for part of the Lough Foyle sea bed at Carnagarve, Moville, County Donegal; and if so, his Department's response. [20970/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has received a Compulsory Purchase Order from Donegal County Council in respect of the area referred to by the Deputy. The matter is currently under consideration within my Department.

Agriculture Schemes Expenditure

207. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding that is available for the purposes of providing agriculture handling facilities and agricultural sheds; if so, the process involved for applying for such funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20992/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Grant-aid is available for the purchase of mobile handling equipment for the sheep sector under the TAMS Sheep Fencing/Mobile Handling Equipment Scheme. The grant-rate is 40 per cent and the maximum eligible investment ceiling is €25,000, i.e. a maximum grant of €10,000 per holding. The application forms and terms and conditions of the Scheme are available on my Department's website. There is no grant-aid currently available from my Department for the construction of animal housing or sheds.

Fodder Crisis

208. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he plans to make an application for emergency funding to the EU to deal with the fodder shortage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20994/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In response to difficulties currently being experienced by farmers in sourcing fodder, I introduced a scheme on the 24th April last – the Imported Fodder Transport Scheme – under which €1m is being made available to assist in transport costs associated with importation of forage from abroad. The Scheme is operated by my Department through the Dairy Co-operatives/Milk Purchasers. The scheme originally covered forage imported by the co-ops from 15th April 2013 to 3rd May 2013 but I have announced an extension to the duration of the scheme for one week until Friday 10th May 2013. In order to provide for wider variety of forage, I have included maize silage under the scheme and large quantities of maize silage are currently being sourced abroad for early delivery to farmers.

The Department funded scheme complements the work being done by the farm organisations, the dairy co-operatives and marts etc who are making great efforts to assist farmers in need of fodder. In addition to the Imported Fodder Transport Scheme, emergency assistance continues to be made available under my Department's early warning system to farmers whose animals are currently experiencing serious welfare issues and where the farmer him/herself is unable to cope with the situation.

With regard to the EU Solidarity Fund, this Fund is, in the main, confined to major disasters which have lasting repercussions on economic stability, living conditions and the natural environment. A natural disaster is considered as 'major' if it results in damage on the State's territory estimated either at over EUR 3 billion (2002 prices), or at more than 0.6 % of its gross national income. I am keeping the funding and fodder situation under review and will react as appropriate to emerging situations.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

209. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment of an agri-environment options scheme 1 will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21009/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from the 1st November 2010 and full payments totalling €833.30 and €4,999.97 issued in respect of 2010 and 2011 respectively. Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. During these checks for 2012 issues were identified in relation to the claimed areas on the Species Rich Grassland action. Officials in my Department are finalising the application of the person named with the intention of issuing payment as soon as possible.

Departmental Staff Contracts

210. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of members of staff in his Department that are employed on temporary contracts; the way such members of staff have been employed on a temporary contract basis; the pay grades that the temporary staff members occupy; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[21021/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): One Assistant Secretary General and one Principal Officer have been re-hired on a part-time, contract basis which are due to expire at the end of the EU Presidency on 28 June 2013. Payments are calculated on a daily rate taking into account normal pension abatement rules. Three temporary Forestry Inspectors, Grade 3 are employed on a fixed term contract which is due to expire October 2013.

Departmental Staff Contracts

211. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of staff in his Department that have retired from service in the past five years that have now been reinstated on temporary contracts; if he will confirm the pay grade that said staff members occupied at retirement and also at reinstatement; if he will disclose the gap in working days between their retirement and their reinstatement on a temporary contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21030/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): One Assistant Secretary General who retired on the 22 October 2010 has been re-engaged by my Department since 25 October 2010 on a part-time contract basis which is due to expire at the end of the EU Presidency on 28 June 2013. One Principal Officer who retired on the 30 November 2009 has since been re-engaged from 1 October 2012 on a part-time contract basis to work on specific matters related to the Irish Presidency of the EU until 28 June 2013. Normal pension abatement rules have been applied in both cases.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

212. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason payment under the 2012 disadvantaged area based scheme has not issued in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; the reason for the delay in issuing this payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21032/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, the holdings of eligible applicants were required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of six consecutive months, in addition to maintaining an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. As the person named has not as yet demonstrated that the holding satisfies the scheme minimum stocking density requirements, as of now, no payment is due in respect of the 2012 Scheme.

Nitrates Directive Issues

213. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an official in his Department will contact a person (details supplied) in County Limerick regarding a single farm payment and fine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21044/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was the subject of a nitrates inspection by my Department, on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, on 15 February 2012. This inspection

recorded breaches under the nitrates regulations relating to the inadequate collection of manure, inadequate management of storage facilities for manure and the stockpiling of farmyard manure on land in contravention of regulations regarding the maintenance of buffer zones. As a result a penalty of 20% was recorded against the applicant's 2012 direct payments. The applicant was notified of this decision on 23 February 2012.

The applicant requested a review of this decision and the outcome of the review, which was to uphold the original decision, was notified by letter dated 5 October 2012. The applicant was also advised of the right to appeal the outcome of the review to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within three months of the date of the review letter. My Department understands that no such appeal was lodged. My Department is in the process of contacting the person concerned to restate the position.

In terms of assisting the person concerned to become compliant in the future, I would draw attention to the Farm Advisory System, FAS, under which my Department approves and trains advisors on the detail of the requirements under the various cross compliance measures. A list of approved FAS advisors is available on my Department's website.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

214. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will issue on an application in respect of a person (details provided) for the disadvantaged area scheme 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21081/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named is one of a number of applicants under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, whose cases are impacted by the requirement to have achieved a minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare in 2011 and who applied for and were refused derogation in this regard.

The person named subsequently availed of the option to appeal to the independently chaired DAS Appeals Committee. It is understood that the committee's adjudication on this appeal will be notified to the appellant in writing in the coming days.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

215. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21581/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information requested by the Deputy in respect of staff who retired from my Department in the relevant period is set out in the table following. It is important to note that these are gross lump sum payments and may be subject to certain deductions.

The parallel information in respect of the State bodies under the aegis of my Department is a matter for the bodies themselves.

Gross Lump Sums Paid between 1 March 2011 and 31 March 2013

Lump Sum amounts range €	Numbers Paid
10,000 – 20,000	13
20,001 – 30,000	16
30,001 – 40,000	17
40,001 – 50,000	21
50,001 – 60,000	33
60,001 – 70,000	56
70,001 – 80,000	34
80,001 – 90,000	44
90,001 – 100,000	31
100,001 – 150,000	45
150,001 – 200,000	11
200,001 – 250,000	1
Over 250,000	0
Totals	322

Inter-Country Adoptions

216. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will outline the details of any bilateral agreements with Mexico for inter-country adoption; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20955/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Mexico has ratified the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption. As such, no bilateral agreement is necessary. The Adoption Authority has advised that the National Central Authority in Mexico has indicated its willingness to accept dossiers from the Adoption Authority.

Youth Work Projects Funding

217. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason she, at a recent Irish Presidency conference where the theme was quality youth work and social inclusion, gave a commitment to youth work at the European level, while at the same time she cut funding to quality youth work projects at the national level; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20978/13]

218. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in view of fact that at the recent Irish Presidency conference on quality youth work and social inclusion a set of conclusions was agreed with the expressed aim of influencing EU policy, if she will now support the Irish youth sector to make these conclusions a reality for marginalised young people; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [20979/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 217 and 218 together.

The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department provides a range of funding schemes, programmes and supports to the youth sector. Funding of some €53.498m is available in 2013 to support the provision of youth services and programmes to young people throughout the country includ-

ing those from disadvantaged communities. Targeted supports for disadvantaged, marginalised and at risk young people are provided through the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2 and Local Drugs Task Force Projects. These funding schemes support national and local youth work provision to some 400,000 young people and involve approximately 1,400 paid staff and 40,000 volunteers working in youth work services and communities throughout the country. This funding allocation includes an amount of €1 million for fit-out, refurbishment works or building enhancement projects for the start-up of new Youth Cafés. It also includes €1.35m for a Local Youth Club Grant Scheme which supports youth work and youth activities in local communities. The funding for the local youth clubs grants has not been cut in 2012 or 2013. These grants are made available to all local youth clubs and groups through local Vocational Education Committees.

The savings required under the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure in respect of 2013 amounted to €5.393m on the funding that was available for the provision of youth services in 2012. 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 these necessary reductions in funding.

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.

The EU Youth Conference held in March in Dublin was the highlight of Ireland's EU Youth Presidency and almost 180 young people and policy makers from all 27 Member States jointly discussed social inclusion challenges that impact on young people's lives such as employment and social supports as well as the role of quality youth work.

The Conference, which was organised by my Department in partnership with the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) also provided a major opportunity to showcase the talent and innovation of Ireland's young people and youth sector and almost 100 young people from youth organisations and clubs around the country were involved in supporting the Conference.

I propose that the conclusions from the Conference will be progressed at national level, through the development of the Youth Policy Framework. At EU level, they will inform the policy document on the importance of quality youth work to young people's development which I will bring to the Council of Youth Ministers meeting on 16 May 2013. They will also be progressed under the Lithuanian and Greek Presidencies and will form the basis of a Council Resolution on Structured Dialogue with young people at the end of the Greek Presidency in 2014.

Food Safety Promotion Board

219. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Health the role of the Food Safety Promotion Board; when the Board last reported to the North-South Ministerial Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20988/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Food Safety Promotion Board, FSPB, is one of six North-South Implementation Bodies established under the Good Friday Agreement in 1999. It is principally charged with tasks involving food safety awareness - through public campaigns, conferences, training and advising professionals and the general public. It is also involved in supporting North-South scientific co-operation and links between institutions working in the field of food safety - laboratories, statutory food safety enforcement agencies, and international and domestic research bodies. Its remit also includes the promotion of specialised laboratory services, North and South.

At the last Health North/South Ministerial Council meeting on 21 November 2012 a comprehensive paper on the CEO's progress report outlining recent achievements by the board was presented to the Council. FSPB's 2012 Business Plan was cleared at the Education Sectoral Meeting of the North-South Ministerial Council on 27 February 2013.

Mental Health Services Funding

220. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the progress that has been made in respect of the 2012 allocation of €35 million which was ring fenced but not spent; the additional community facilities that have been put in place; if this commitment has now been met; when the 2013 commitment of a further €35 million will be allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20859/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The special allocation of €35m provided in 2012 was for the provision of mental health services and was 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 29th April, 383 of the 414 posts approved in 2012 have either been filled, are under offer or awaiting clearance. The National Recruitment Service (NRS) of the HSE creates national panels in anticipation of vacancies. On occasion however, it is difficult to fill some posts for various reasons including geographical location, international shortage of some grades, most notably clinical Psychologists etc. The NRS is currently working to ensure that the 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.

Medical Card Appeals

221. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the refusal of a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [20872/13]

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 Eligibility

222. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will publish the medical criteria being applied to the assessment of medical cards, and particularly those medical card applications that are over the income thresholds; if he will outline any changes that have been made to these criteria since the centralisation of medical card applications and assessment; and when these changes were made. [20892/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Following the centralisation of the overall management of the GMS Scheme to PCRS in July 2011, the assessment methodology applied to applications, that include supporting documentation to indicate that the applicant (or dependent(s), where applicable) has a medical condition, are outlined below.

Where the combined income of an applicant and spouse/partner is over the Medical Card or GP Visit Card income qualifying limits for an individual or family and they have difficult personal circumstances that cause them undue hardship, such as a family member with a particular illness, the application is considered under hardship/unduly burdensome. In such instances, evidence, for example a medical report and/or medical expense receipts will be considered. In cases where a medical condition applies, the file will be reviewed by a Medical Officer who may recommend to invoke discretion and issue a Medical Card or GP Visit Card, as considered appropriate.

Medical Card Eligibility

223. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will publish the operational guidelines for the assessment of medical card applications that are made on the basis of one individual family member who has a number of medical conditions. [20893/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Medical Card/ GP Visit Card National Assessment Guidelines, including the guidelines which deal with income in excess of the Medical Card Guidelines and undue hardship, are available on the HSE website.

Primary Care Reimbursement Service Payments

224. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the statutory basis for the current procedures applied by the PCRS when assessing undue hardship and unduly burdensome. [20894/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Under the Health Act 1970, as amended, the HSE is responsible for assessing an individual's entitlement to a medical card and a GP visit card. Section 45 provides that adult persons who, in the opinion of the HSE are unable, without due hardship, to arrange general practitioner medical and surgical services for themselves and their dependents are deemed to be persons with full eligibility.

Section 58 provides that the HSE will make available general practitioner medical and surgical services for adult persons and their dependents for whom, in the opinion of the HSE, it would be unduly burdensome for those persons to arrange such services. In deciding whether or not a person comes within these categories, the HSE shall have regard to the person's overall financial situation in view of the person's reasonable expenditure, including his or her dependents.

Primary Care Reimbursement Service Payments

225. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that the PCRS are now applying the new DPS thresholds in their determination of medical costs when assessing medical card applications. [20895/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I can confirm that the DPS monthly threshold is considered in the overall assessment of applications for a medical card/GP Visit Card in the determination of medical costs where an applicant provides supporting documentation to indicate that he/she - or dependents - have a medical condition.

Primary Care Reimbursement Service Payments

226. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that the PCRS are now applying the new prescription charge rates in their determination of medical costs when assessing medical card applications. [20896/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The prescription charges, referred to by the Deputy, only apply to persons who have eligibility under the GMS Scheme.

Primary Care Reimbursement Service Payments

227. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the statutory basis for the PCRS policy of not allowing for the cost of the new property tax when determining net income for the purposes of a medical card assessment when all other taxes that can be deducted from salary are so allowed. [20897/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Under the Health Act 1970, as amended, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is responsible for assessing an individual's entitlement to a medical card and a GP visit card. Section 45 of the Act provides that adult persons who, in the opinion of the HSE are unable, without due hardship, to arrange general practitioner medical and surgical services for themselves and their dependents are deemed to be persons with full eligibility.

Section 58 of the Act provides that the HSE will make available general practitioner medical and surgical services for adult persons and their dependents for whom, in the opinion of the

HSE, it would be unduly burdensome for those persons to arrange such services. The HSE has set out National Assessment Guidelines outlining what is included in the assessment process and the Local Property Tax is not included.

Medical Card Eligibility

228. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the way in which current medical card criteria discriminates against persons who hold an occupational pension instead of a State pension whereby a person whose only income is an occupational pension but at the same value as the State contributory pension will not automatically qualify for a medical card whereas a person whose only income is the State pension will; and the action he will take to improve the position of occupational pension holders in this regard so that such discrimination is ended. [20898/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Medical Card/GP Visit Card National Assessment Guidelines provide for consideration of income that is derived solely from allowances/benefits paid by the Department of Social Protection or the HSE that which are in excess of the Income Guidelines.

In 2009, a new scheme was introduced for people aged 70 years and over. This new scheme set a significantly higher gross income limit for a single person, currently €600 per week and €1,200 per week for a couple. This compares with a weekly income limit of €184 for a person aged up to 65 and €266.50 for a couple and compares with a weekly income limit of €201.50 for a single person aged between 65 and 70 and €298 for a couple within that same age bracket.

Departmental Bodies

229. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he is considering appointing a toxicologist to the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health. [20901/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health and its sub-committees have broad representation from areas such as dentistry, toxicology, biochemistry, environmental health and public health medicine. Given that there is a toxicologist on the New and Emerging Issues sub-committee, the appointment of a toxicologist to the Expert Body is not currently being considered.

HSE Expenditure

230. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health if he will explain the per capita disparity in the Health Service Executive regional service plan budget for the PCCC as published on 28 February 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20903/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The current budget allocation process in the HSE is based on a historic roll forward methodology. It allocates funding on a historic basis to the care centres from where the services are provided. The system funds hospital, primary and community care in the various Integrated Service Areas (ISA) irrespective of whether the patient lives within the boundary of the ISA.

‘Future Health: A Strategic Framework for Reform of the Health Service 2012 – 2015’, published in November of last year, recognised that fundamental reform of our funding model

is required. This document indicated the Government's intention to introduce a Money Follows the Patient (MFTP) funding model in the health service to replace the historic block grant method. Detailed proposals for the roll-out of MFTP were outlined in the 'Money Follows the Patient Policy Paper on Hospital Financing' which was published for consultation in February. While this document focuses on public treatment in public hospitals, it highlights the intention to extend MFTP to other areas of the health service in order to support integrated care across different settings. The Government is confident that the reform of the funding system will help to deliver a greater degree of fairness, efficiency and transparency while also driving improvements in quality.

Tobacco Control Measures

231. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health in his capacity as a member of the Council of Health Ministers, if he is supporting the European Commission's proposal to have a minimum pack size of rolling tobacco of 40g as proposed in the European Tobacco Products Directive. [20944/13]

232. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the way he as Health Council Chair and his Department can openly support and put forward any position for Ireland in the debate on the European Tobacco Products Directive which is currently underway with EU member states during the Irish Presidency, when he stated that the analysis of the 6,400 responses received by his Department on 16 January to the public consultation to inform Ireland's view on the Directive is still ongoing as of 16 April. [20945/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 231 and 232 together.

The Irish Government supports the overall objective of the proposal for the revised Tobacco Products Directive which is to reduce the numbers of people smoking.

In particular the aim of the revised Directive is to reduce the attractiveness of tobacco products to young people. Approximately 700,000 people die every year in the EU from tobacco related illnesses. Some of the elements of the proposed Directive are already in place in Ireland e.g. mandatory picture and text warnings on cigarette packs and minimum contents of twenty cigarettes per pack.

Ireland, as one of the Tobacco Control leaders in the EU, supports any efforts at European level to limit the harm to health, society and to the economy caused by tobacco consumption. As Chair of the negotiations on the Directive during the Irish Presidency, we are working to progress the discussions and to build consensus among the Member States to facilitate the adoption of legislation which will ultimately reduce the number of EU citizens who die from tobacco related illnesses. These negotiations are on-going and no conclusions have been reached in relation to the Commission's proposal in Article 13 that a packet of roll your own tobacco should have a minimum weight of 40g.

Mental Health Commission Remit

233. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Health the role of the Mental Health Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20954/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Mental

Health Commission is an independent statutory body established under the Mental Health Act 2001 and its key functions are laid down in Section 33 of the Act.

The principal functions of the Commission are to promote, encourage and foster the establishment and maintenance of high standards in the delivery of mental health services and to take all reasonable steps to protect the interests of persons detained in approved centres under the Act. To further protect the interests of persons involuntarily admitted to approved centres the Commission:

- appoints members of Mental Health Tribunals.
- establishes a panel of Consultant Psychiatrists to carry out independent medical examinations of persons involuntarily admitted to approved centres
- establishes a legal aid scheme for persons involuntarily admitted to approved centres.

The Commission also appoints the Inspector of Mental Health Services (Section 50, Mental Health Act 2001). In accordance with the Act, the Inspector of Mental Health Services is required to visit and inspect every approved centre annually and, as the Inspectorate think appropriate, to visit and inspect any other premises where mental health services are being provided.

The Commission publishes an Annual Report, which includes the Report of the Inspector of Mental Health Services, which is laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Mental Health Services Provision

234. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm the position regarding assisted admissions for mentally ill patients (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20966/13]

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

Primary Care Centres Provision

235. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a progress report on the proposal to develop a primary care centre at Carrickmacross, County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20967/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Carrickmacross is one of the 35 potential locations for primary care centres to be developed by means of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) project as announced in the July 2012 Infrastructure Stimulus Package. Of the 35, approximately 20 will be offered to the market subject to a) agreement between the local GPs and the HSE on active local GP involvement in the centres and b) site suitability and availability.

Primary Care Centres Provision

236. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a progress report on the proposal to develop a primary care centre at Kells County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20968/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Kells is one of the 35 potential locations for primary care centres to be developed by means of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) project as announced in the July 2012 Infrastructure Stimulus Package. Of the 35, approximately 20 will be offered to the market subject to a) agreement between the local GPs and the HSE on active local GP involvement in the centres and b) site suitability and availability.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

237. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Health the role of the Chief Dental Officer; the reason the position has not been filled for some time; when he intends to advertise publicly to fill this position; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20969/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The current moratorium on the filling of posts has meant that my Department has not to date been in a position to fill the post of Chief Dental Officer. However, this matter is currently under active consideration in my Department and I expect there will be some developments on this in the near future.

Nursing Home Services

238. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an application for residential nursing home care on behalf of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20993/13]

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.

Medical Card Reviews

239. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that a medical card will be restored in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry in view of confirmation from the Department of Justice that they remain in the asylum process and have no deportation order against them, which was received by the Health Service Executive on 10 April. [20999/13]

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

240. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the recruitment of additional rehabilitation medicine consultants; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[21000/13]

241. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health if a decision has been taken on where the rehabilitation medicine consultant appointed to the Health Service Executive west region will be located; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21001/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 240 and 241 together.

The National Clinical Programme for Rehabilitation Medicine was established under the guidance of the National Clinical Strategy and Programmes Directorate of the Health Service Executive. The appointment and location of consultants in rehabilitation medicine and the development of services nationally and regionally is a matter for the HSE. Accordingly the Department has asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Hospital Services

242. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the reason the decision was taken not to locate an acute stroke unit and-or telemedicine stroke unit at Roscommon hospital in view of Roscommon's geographical location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21002/13]

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.

Maternity Services

243. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide information which is available on the incidence of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder per maternity hospital for each of the past five years; and the actions being taken to reduce these figures. [21006/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Although Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is a specific diagnosis, there are many features that need to be present, as well as a history of pre-natal alcohol intake. For these reasons the diagnosis of FASD is difficult and is frequently either misdiagnosed or unconfirmed. There is no national register of FASD, therefore the number of cases of FASD, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), and Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND) in Ireland are unknown. This reflects the situation in many countries in Europe.

A study partly funded by the HSE is underway in the Coombe Women's Hospital in Dublin. The study initially screened women for alcohol intake in pregnancy with a view to counselling them accordingly. The study examined the records of 61,241 women who booked for ante-natal care and delivered between 2000 and 2007. The study found that 81% of women reported alcohol consumption during the peri-conceptual period; of these 71% reported low alcohol intake (0-5 units per week), 9.9% moderate intake (6-20 units per week) and 0.2% high intake (over 20 units per week). There was one case of FASD in each of these three categories of peri-conceptual drinkers. As well as this retrospective case note study a prospective study is currently underway to examine the incidence of foetal alcohol effects on a longitudinal basis. I have requested the HSE to provide me with an update on this study and I will forward this information to the Deputy as soon as possible.

As the Deputy knows the Report of the National Substance Misuse Strategy Steering Group recommended that labels of alcohol products sold in Ireland should include health warnings in relation to consuming alcohol in pregnancy. In relation to Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) the Report recommended to:

- Implement policies and clinical protocols in all healthcare settings to prevent, assess and respond to issues arising in relation to pregnant women affected by alcohol use;

- Strengthen FASD surveillance in maternity hospitals through the Eurocat Reporting system and promote greater awareness among healthcare professionals of FASD so as to improve the diagnosis and management of FASD.

Real and tangible proposals are currently being finalised on foot of the recommendations in the National Substance Misuse Strategy report. These proposals cover all of the areas mentioned in the report, including the labelling of alcohol products and prevention and intervention activities on alcohol. The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy has considered these proposals and I intend to bring forward specific proposals for consideration by Government as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Provision

244. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Health in view of the fact that the new Health Service Executive access protocols should ensure that all 16 year olds are treated in a CAMHS facility from 1 January 2013 and all 17 year olds from 1 January 2014, if the majority of the first tranche of an additional 150 child and adolescent community mental health team posts have been put in place; if he will provide an update on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21020/13]

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 29 April, 122 of the designated 150 posts for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services have been either been filled, are under offer or awaiting clearance. The National Recruitment Service (NRS) of the HSE creates national panels in anticipation of vacancies. On occasion however, it is difficult to fill some posts for various reasons including geographical location, international shortage of some grades, most notably clinical Psychologists etc. The NRS is currently working to ensure that the remaining posts will be filled as soon as possible, subject to appropriately qualified candidates being available.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

245. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the waiting list for orthodontic treatments in Letterkenny General Hospital, County Donegal; the number of these that have been on the list for more than two years; the number of these who have been on this list for more than one year; the average length of time spent by a child on the waiting list before treatment is carried out; the number of children who have been added to the

waiting list per month over the past two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21033/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE has commissioned an independent review of orthodontic services. The outcome of this review will give guidance as to what changes will be desirable to provide the best possible model of care delivery, given the current resources available and future demand for services. It is anticipated that a report for consideration by the HSE and the Department of Health will be ready by the end of the second quarter of 2013. The HSE has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy regarding the provision of orthodontic services in Letterkenny General Hospital.

Hospital Services

246. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the procedure to be followed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare who has had two faulty hip replacements and one subsequent repair; if any particular special provision is being made available in such circumstances in view of the fact that there have been numerous complaints in relation to such replacements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21052/13]

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.

Hospital Appointment Delays

247. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health when a hospital appointment will be made in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin in view of the fact that this case is a priority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21079/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Improving access to outpatient services is a key priority for the Government. Building on work already undertaken by the HSE, the National Treatment Purchase Fund has now taken over the reporting of outpatient waiting time data. For the first time data is available on www.ntpf.ie. The collation and analysis of outpatient waiting time data in a standardised format will reveal the distribution of long waiters across all hospitals. In the first instance, this will allow resources to be targeted towards those patients who are waiting longest and ensure that they are seen and assessed. For 2013, a maximum waiting time target has now been set of 12 months for a first time outpatient appointment.

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

In relation to the 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.

Ministerial Meetings

248. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on his visit to Tallaght hospital, Dublin 24, on 26 April 2013; if he gave guarantees to the Tallaght hospital board

that he will ensure full implementation of all recommendations of the Health Information and Quality Authority in respect of the hospital; if he will confirm that these recommendations will be implemented nationally as previously promised by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21080/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The purpose of my recent visit to Tallaght Hospital was to review the situation there and the progress they have made in patient care. There has been progress in a range of areas, for example the new Medical Admissions Unit is functioning extremely well, and there are plans to extend its hours. In addition, there have been reductions in average length of stay for patients and targets in relation to the number of people waiting nine months or longer have been met. I visited a number of areas in the hospital, including the Telemedicine Unit, a fantastic facility that enables doctors in Tallaght to advise doctors in more remote locations like Naas, Mullingar or Portlaoise on stroke patient care, examine CT Scans and interact with the patient. This development will improve the range of services available to patients in the smaller hospitals. I look forward to continuing to support Tallaght hospital in improving outcomes for patients.

In relation to the Deputy's question regarding the implementation of the recommendations of HIQA, the responsibility for implementing the recommendations rests with the Chief Executive Officer of the hospital and the Director General Designate of the HSE with oversight from my Department. In line with established HSE policy on the receipt and implementation of major reports, the HSE established an Implementation Oversight Group with appropriate chairmanship and membership to progress the Report's recommendations relating to Tallaght hospital and nationally. In recognition of the importance attached to the reports recommendations, the HSE National Operational Plan for 2013 includes a specific commitment to the Reports continued implementation. This is being reinforced through the supporting Regional Service Plans and Service Arrangements with voluntary providers.

Tourism Industry Issues

249. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the value of the Irish economy in money terms of golf tourism in 2010, 2011 and 2012 on an annual basis; the proposals, if any, to expand this sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20920/13]

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

The Gathering Expenditure

250. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when grants for The Gathering events will be paid to local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20946/13]

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

Sports Capital Programme Application Numbers

251. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide details of the number of applications from city and county councils for funding under the sports capital programme in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20981/13]

252. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will give a detailed account of the reason applications from city and county councils were rejected for funding under the sports capital grant scheme 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20982/13]

254. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he intends to introduce the next phase of the sports capital programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20984/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 251, 252 and 254 together.

The total number of applications from city and county councils for funding under the 2012 Sports Capital Programme was 94, of which 31 were successful, with 63 unsuccessful. Applications were unsuccessful for various reasons. Some were deemed invalid for one or more of the following reasons: issues regarding title, no evidence of own funding, issues regarding planning permission, original signatures not provided, issues regarding quotes, feasibility study not provided, insufficient sporting content, or a lack of supporting documentation. Furthermore, the budget available for the scheme did not allow all valid applications to be supported.

No decision has been taken on the timing of the next round of the Sports Capital Programme.

Diaspora Centre Establishment

253. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in view of his emphasis on The Gathering, if he has any plans to establish a world class museum of the Irish diaspora; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20983/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Government's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Framework 2012-2016, published in November 2011, includes a commitment of support for a Diaspora Centre or Diaspora Museum should a suitable project and partner be available. However, no capital allocation has been made for a Diaspora Centre to date.

Accordingly, I asked Fáilte Ireland to carry out a scoping study on the development of such a centre and the most suitable means by which it could be financed, developed and managed. I await the final outcome of the study which will inform future developments and next steps.

Question No. 254 answered with Question No. 251.

Integrated Ticketing

255. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the role of the Integrated Ticketing Project Board; the progress the board has made to date on integrated ticketing; the further steps that will be taken by the board in the future; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [20986/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Integrated Ticketing Leap Card system became a function of the National Transport Authority (NTA) with effect from 30th September 2010 in accordance with section 58 of the DTA Act 2008. In the light of this it was agreed between the NTA and the Project Board that the Board would stand down at the end of 2011.

I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply to the specific queries raised regarding the rollout of the integrated ticketing system. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Signage

256. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if signage will be erected to notify motorists travelling the Wild Atlantic Way of attractions and places of interest that are located within short distances of the main route (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [20989/13]

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

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

257. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide in tabular form information on lump sum payments (details supplied) paid to retiring public sector workers between March 2011 and March 2013. [21586/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The information requested by the Deputy is included in Table 1 below. The figures in Table 1 are inclusive of 6 lump sums paid to officers who retired under the Incentivised Scheme of Early Retirement and who reached age 60 between March 2011 and March 2013. Under this retirement scheme the 90% outstanding lump sum is payable at age 60.

Table 1 - Lump Sum Payments

-	-	March 2011 to March 2012	-	March 2012 to March 2013
Lump sum payments	Number of Payments	Total Amount	Number of Payments	Total Amount
10,000 and 20,000	1	€15,248	1	€16,088
20,001 to 30,000	4	€91,712	1	€21,436
30,001 to 40,000	3	€99,843	0	0
40,001 to 50,000	3	€140,262	4	€176,621
50,001 to 60,000	9	€481,086	0	0
60,001 to 70,000	1	€64,204	1	€64,412
70,001 to 80,000	7	€518,822	1	€78,983
80,001 to 90,000	3	€252,194	1	€89,180

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-	-	March 2011 to March 2012	-	March 2012 to March 2013
Lump sum payments	Number of Payments	Total Amount	Number of Payments	Total Amount
90,001 to 100,000	7	€655,596	0	0
100,001 to 150,000	5	€610,515	3	€384,943
150,001 to 200,000	2	€307,729	0	0
200,001 to 250,000	0	0	0	0
Over 250,000	0	0	0	0

I have asked the State Agencies under the aegis of my Department to provide the Deputy with the information requested. If you do not receive a reply from the agencies within 10 working days please advise my private office.