

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 9, inclusive, answered orally.

Sporting Events

10. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the actions, if any, he has taken to advance the IRFU's bid for the Rugby World Cup in 2023 or 2027; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22968/13]

20. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update in relation to the possibility of Ireland bidding to host the Rugby World Cup in 2023 or 2027. [22685/13]

92. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the current position in relation to the possibility of Ireland bidding to host the Rugby World Cup in 2023 or 2027; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22941/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 10, 20 and 92 together.

The questions relate to the potential bid by the IRFU to host the Rugby World Cup in Ireland. I am fully supportive of the bid to host the Rugby World Cup in Ireland. It is a matter for the IRFU to prepare and submit a bid. A feasibility study commissioned by the IRFU on the potential for hosting the tournament was recently presented to me by them and the findings of the report are being considered.

I am pleased to note that the GAA has given its support for the bid by allowing the inclusion of Croke Park and other GAA grounds in the list of venues that would be used for matches if Ireland was selected as the host country for the tournament.

The Programme for Government includes a commitment that event tourism will be prioritised in order to continue to bring major events to Ireland. As well as bringing spectators to our shores, the hosting of sports events can provide a great showcase for Ireland. Fáilte Ireland continues to support the holding of sports and other events that can boost tourism and, where appropriate, will provide advice and assistance to the sporting body which is seeking to secure an international event. I understand that Fáilte Ireland has engaged with the IRFU in this regard.

The bid has also been discussed with the Northern Ireland Minister for Tourism, Arlene Foster MLA, and Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA. They have met

with the IRFU and have also indicated their support for a bid.

Sports Funding

11. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide details of the criteria to be applied by his Department, or by the Irish Amateur Boxing Association when assessing applications for the €1m allocated for clubs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22845/13]

13. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the special €1m sports capital fund announced recently for boxing clubs. [22766/13]

54. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide further information regarding boxing club grants; the way they will be distributed; the criteria that will be attached to applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22684/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 11, 13 and 54 together.

There was an allocation of €1.25m made to the IABA in 2011 to allow local boxing clubs throughout the country to improve their facilities with special emphasis on clubs developing facilities for female boxers. The maximum amount allocated to each of the boxing clubs was €25,000. This scheme was funded by my Department and administered by the IABA. Under this initiative 51 boxing clubs were in a position to improve their facilities.

I recently announced an additional provision of €1m for the extension of the above scheme. Meetings have been held with the IABA to discuss the terms and conditions attaching to this allocation and they are being finalised at present.

Public Transport Provision

12. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the actions he has planned to ensure that Bus Éireann, Iarnród Éireann and Bus Átha Cliath have a viable future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22961/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Priority Questions Nos. 1 and 2 which I answered earlier.

Question No. 13 answered with Question No. 11.

Transport Costs

14. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the action he will take to reduce sea transport costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22966/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy will

be aware, shipping costs are subject to myriad of factors. In particular, they are subject to external global factors such as fuel costs and currency fluctuations. The steady rise in fuel prices has impacted negatively on the shipping industry. In 2011 alone, oil prices rose sharply with bunker prices spiking by 40% over the course of the year. In 2012 oil prices continued to rise, remaining above \$100 per barrel for the second year and exacerbating already challenging conditions for shipping. Currency fluctuations also had a negative impact. In 2012 the euro depreciated against both the US dollar and UK pound by 7.6% and 6.5% respectively.

In addition, the shipping industry in EU Member States face the introduction of new lower sulphur limits in marine fuel from January 2015 within designated Sulphur Emission Control Areas (SECAs). Although there is no SECA in the seas around Ireland, shipping engaged in voyages to France and other European destinations beyond the Irish sea, will face an increase in the cost of fuel.

In relation to the costs imposed on the shipping industry by port companies, as the Deputy will be aware port companies are required to operate in a commercial fashion and in competition with each other. This position is re-enforced in the recently published National Ports Policy.

The Competition Authority is currently in the process of carrying out a study of the ports sector in Ireland, as part of which it is reviewing inter and intra-port competition. I expect that the Competition Authority will publish the results of this market study in 2013. I have committed that my Department will deliver a reasoned response to any recommendations made to the Department within six months of publication.

All shipping companies servicing routes to and from Ireland are independent commercial companies that are market driven. Many companies have, over recent years, introduced greater efficiencies to reduce their overall operating costs in order to continue to provide services. Despite the difficulties that the industry faces, Ireland offers a diverse range of maritime links to and from the State to facilitate trade and tourism providing vital income streams to the Irish economy. Over 90% of Ireland's trade moves by sea and Ireland is also one of the best served countries in Europe for passenger ferry services with links that are frequent and competitive.

There are currently 22 shipping operators providing a mixture of daily to weekly scheduled shipping services from Ireland. This includes 4 companies providing year round scheduled passenger services between Ireland and the UK and France. The Irish Maritime Transport Economist published in April this year by the IMDO is a good source of further information on trade and shipping for those with an interest in this area.

Subsidising international shipping services is contrary to EU State Aid and Competition Law, and the principles of free and fair trade.

Free Travel Scheme Administration

15. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the discussions, if any, his Department has had with the Department of Social Protection regarding a review of the operation of the free travel scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22993/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The question relates to the review of the operation of the Department of Social Protection's free travel scheme. With regard to the review, an Inter Departmental Working Group was established last year to carry out a review of the operation of the current Free Travel Scheme. The purpose of this review is to examine and report on the current operation and future development of the Free

Travel scheme. The Group, chaired by the Department of Social Protection as lead Department, also includes representatives from my Department, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the National Transport Authority (NTA). The Group has had three meetings and I understand that the work of the Group is expected to conclude by mid-2013.

I note that Deputy Dooley's party proposed a reduction of €5 million or 7% to this scheme in 2013. This proposal was not taken up, and there was no reduction to this scheme in 2013.

Penalty Point System

16. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the measures being taken to harmonise the penalty points regime on an all-island basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22940/13]

88. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on measures to harmonise the penalty points regime on an all-island basis. [22686/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 16 and 88 together.

The work on the mutual recognition of penalty points is focused on the four road traffic offences of speeding, drink/drug driving, non - wearing of seatbelts and using a mobile phone while driving. A detailed timetable for the process was agreed last October at a meeting of the North South Ministerial Council. It includes the key milestones for the drafting, passage and enactment of the required parallel primary legislation in both jurisdictions by the 31 December 2014 to allow for the introduction of the process across the island of Ireland. Although widely accepted as challenging, officials on both sides are committed to the agreed timetable.

Steering and working groups comprising representatives of the relevant stakeholders in both jurisdictions are continuing to meet to bring the required work forward and decide on how the necessary key deliverables will be achieved legislatively and operationally.

Both groups are confident that, despite the fact that disqualifications arising from the accumulation of penalty points are dealt with differently in both jurisdictions, provision can be made in the required primary legislation to deal with such disqualifications.

To achieve the December 2014 deadline, a significant volume of work is required, including putting in place the necessary administrative arrangements and IT systems and agreement on data sharing protocols and procedures. Complex issues will also have to be addressed in both jurisdictions with a view to establishing a workable system which is perceived as proportionate and equitable and which attracts widespread public support throughout Ireland.

Tourism Promotion

17. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to increase conference tourism awareness of Ireland during the G8 Summit in June 2013 at the Lough Erne Resort, Fermanagh; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22979/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department's role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national policy. It is not directly involved in the marketing of Ireland as a visitor destination, or in providing

support to specific tourism sectors. These matters are the responsibility of the State tourism agencies.

The hosting of the G8 Summit in Fermanagh will have a positive effect on the island of Ireland as a whole in terms of raising the profile of the island of Ireland, in particular as a destination for hosting high level events and conferences. This has the potential to help boost visitor numbers to the island of Ireland and so help support the tourism industry in 2013 and beyond.

I am informed that Tourism Ireland is already engaged in a marketing programme to capitalise on the event. For its part, Fáilte Ireland is working closely with the local industry in the Border counties to maximise the opportunities presented by the event.

It is anticipated that the summit may also bring more immediate benefits for the North West and Border Counties as many of the overseas media and officials accompanying the G8 participants will be accommodated in the border region as well as in Northern Ireland.

Question No. 18 answered with Question No. 8.

Cycling Policy

19. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way he will support initiatives that aim to improve the urban cycling experience for commuters in large urban areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22975/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): The Programme for Government set out its commitment to invest in the National Cycle Policy. As you would expect, the greatest potential for increasing cycling numbers will occur within urban areas and my Department is aiming to improve the urban cycling experience through direct investment in cycling infrastructure.

In 2012, I launched a €65 million multi-annual investment programme for sustainable transport measures to cover the period 2012-2016. The majority of this funding will be invested in cities and towns around the country under the Smarter Travel Areas and Active Travel Towns Programmes. Cycling infrastructure and the promotion of cycling are key elements of each of these Programmes.

Funding is also being made available for the development of the National Cycle Network with the aim of improving urban, interurban and rural cycling facilities. Significant investment has already been made in 2012 and 2013 with €7 million allocated to 18 projects across Ireland. As this phase of the programme will expire at the end of 2013, it is my intention to initiate a new funding call later this year to provide, through a competitive process, a further tranche of funding for the remainder of the years to 2016.

My Department also works closely with the National Transport Authority (NTA) which provides funding to local authorities for the development of cycling infrastructure in the regional cities and Greater Dublin Area. The NTA has published a comprehensive design manual for the provision of cycle routes, particularly in urban areas, and this is available at www.cyclemanual.ie. Dissemination of best practice and facilitation of appropriate cycle infrastructure design training are also key roles of the Smarter Travel Local Authority Network developed by my Department.

In addition to all these initiatives, my Department and the NTA are also committed to expanding the very successful Dublin Bikes scheme and work is well advanced on finalising proposals to introduce similar schemes in regional cities.

Question No. 20 answered with Question No. 10.

Road Improvement Schemes

21. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the efforts he is making to push forward the A5 road project and ensure that his Department lives up to its commitments in view of recent difficulties. [22898/13]

65. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update in his Department's commitment to the completion of the A5 road project; and the money that has already been spent on this project. [22899/13]

78. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the communications he has had with the Stormont Executive in view of the recent difficulties halting the A5 road project and its vital role in improving infrastructure in the north west. [22903/13]

83. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the efforts he is making to progress the A5 road project and ensure that his Department lives up to its commitments in view of the recent difficulties. [22901/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 21, 65, 78 and 83 together.

These relate to the A5 road project. The Government's commitment to the A5 project, as outlined at the North South Ministerial Council in November 2011 remains in place. At that NSMC plenary session it was noted that the Irish Government would provide £25 million in 2015 and in 2016 towards the A5 road project. This is further to the £22 million that the Irish Government has already contributed to the project as part of the planning process. This brings the Exchequer commitment to £72 million.

The Northern Ireland Road Service had planned to start construction on two of the approved sections of the A5 in Autumn last year. However, following publication of the necessary statutory orders in advance of construction, the Minister for Regional Development's decision to proceed with the A5 was challenged by a group known as the Alternative A5 Alliance.

While the Northern High Court rejected the majority of the applicants' grounds of challenge, one was upheld. The judge found that an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Directive should have been carried out on the scheme. On that basis at a further hearing on 8 April 2013 the judge confirmed he would quash the Orders relating to the A5 scheme.

The project was discussed at the North South Ministerial Council Transport Sectorial on 17 April 2013 and the Minister for Regional Development now plans to undertake the environmental assessment required under the Habitats Directive. This is a necessary first step to progress the project and it must be allowed to run its course. Contact between my Department and the Northern Ireland Road Authorities is ongoing under the aegis of the North South Ministerial Council.

Proposed Legislation

22. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the progress of the Sports Ireland legislation and the anticipated date of publication; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22846/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): The Sport Ireland Bill provides for the establishment of a new sports organisation, Sport Ireland, to replace the Irish Sports Council and the National Sports Campus Development Authority. The Heads of the Bill are being finalised and should be ready to go to Government in the near future for approval to have the Bill drafted. I anticipate that the Bill will be published before the end of this year. The Sport Ireland Bill will combine the main functions of the Irish Sports Council and the National Sports Campus Development Authority.

Light Rail Projects Status

23. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will confirm the progress of Ireland's application for European Investment Bank loan funding for the Luas cross city project; if he has identified other infrastructure projects which he is considering making an application for funding to the EIB; if he will list such projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22689/13]

36. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the possibility of borrowing funds from the European Investment Bank to allow for the progression of the Metro North project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22830/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 23 and 36 together.

Following agreement with the Department of Finance, which takes the lead role on EIB matters, engagement has commenced with the EIB regarding a loan for Luas Cross City. The National Transport Authority, which is the sanctioning authority for the project, is taking the lead role in providing the detailed information and data required by the EIB. When I met senior officials from the European Investment Bank recently, I took the opportunity to outline my Department's priorities for investment in Transport Infrastructure in the medium to long term. We discussed the application for Luas Cross City and a presentation on the project was made to the visitors. The EIB officials are very supportive of the Luas link. I expect the application to have a positive outcome. Given the constraints in Exchequer funding, I do not have any other major public transport projects I can submit for EIB funding. The EIB has expressed interest in the DART Underground but due to the cost of this project it can only proceed as a PPP project and with a very significant Exchequer contribution. I will review this project in advance of the next capital plan. In relation to roads, the EIB has contributed to the recently agreed PPP for the N11 Arklow - Rathnew and Newlands Cross project. EIB funding will also be sought for the other three road PPPs announced under the 2012 stimulus package - the N17-N18 Gort to Tuam road, the N25 New Ross bypass and the M11 Gorey to Enniscorthy road.

Light Rail Projects Status

24. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the development of the Luas cross city including an estimated time

of completion, final cost; the measures planned to deal with congestion caused by construction work during the project. [22900/13]

31. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the timetable for the completion of the Luas cross city project; the amount the project will cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22990/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 24 and 31 together.

These questions relate to the Cross City Luas project. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including the proposed Luas Cross City line. This line is a priority project under the Government's five-year capital plan, which is known as the Infrastructure & Capital Investment Programme 2012-2016 under the Medium-Term Exchequer Framework. In November 2012, following consideration by the Government, I asked the NTA and the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) to proceed with the procurement and contractual arrangements so the enabling works for the project would commence by mid-2013 at the latest. I understand that work has already commenced on a building condition survey which will establish a baseline record of the condition of properties along the Luas Cross City line. The procurement process for the advance works, such as Heritage Works, Cellars Investigation and Utility Diversions, is also well advanced. The award of Heritage and Cellars Investigation contracts is imminent, with work targeted to begin in June 2013. The tender documents for the Utility Diversions Contracts were also issued recently. These works are due to start in September or October 2013.

A Traffic Forum has been established for the project comprising representatives of the RPA, the NTA, An Garda Síochána, Dublin City Council and Dublin Bus. The primary role of the Traffic Forum is to develop traffic management arrangements aimed at minimising the construction impacts of the new Luas line on all road users. I understand that traffic management plans for the various works elements are progressing well and are being considered at the Traffic Forum meetings. There will also be ongoing local liaison arrangements as the project proceeds. I have established a Project Group to address at a strategic level issues which arise during delivery of the project. The group, which I chair and has met on two occasions, and will enable me to liaise directly with key stakeholders including business representatives and will ensure I am informed of any significant traffic management issues affecting the delivery of the project. A dedicated Luas Cross City website will be launched shortly. The estimated cost of the project is €368 million, which includes almost €20 million that has been spent to date. Funding has been included in my Department's capital allocation to 2016 to cover the cost of commencing the main construction works in 2015 and for pre-construction enabling works in 2013 and 2014. The project is scheduled for completion in late 2017.

Swimming Pool Projects

25. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans, apart from the €5.6m allocated in the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme for the development/improvement of swimming pools, to allocate additional funds in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22849/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): Under the current round of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme, grant aid to a maximum of €3.8 million is provided to local authorities towards the capital cost of new swimming pools or the refurbishment of existing pools. Some 47 projects have been completed

and 11 other projects are at various stages of development. Some €7.7 million was paid out last year in respect of swimming pools. Some €5.6 million is available this year, all of which is expected to be paid out to grantees. In 2011, €10.94 million was allocated to 56 pools under an energy upgrade and enhanced disabled access initiative. A further €3.36 million was allocated to 20 pools in 2012 under this initiative. This means that the total allocated under this initiative was €14.3 million. The current round of the Programme was closed to new applicants on 31 July 2000. No decision has been taken on the timing of a new round of the Programme.

Road Maintenance

26. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on the recent allocation of funding for repair works on local and regional roads; his views on whether a particular percentage of funding should be ringfenced by each local authority for annual road maintenance and upkeep in view of the state of many roads; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22667/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities' own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority. The Department has allocated a total of €350.462 million for regional and local roads in 2013, a reduction of almost €28 million on the 2012 funding. Increasingly, regional and local road grant funding to local authorities is being directed towards the maintenance and repair of regional and local roads and low cost safety works. This will remain the position in the coming years.

The Specific Improvement Grants Scheme is being discontinued from 2014 onwards in order to maximise the funding available for repair and strengthening work. In lieu of the Specific Improvement Grant Programme, applications will be sought in mid-2013 for minor bridge repair works (which is a subset of the current Specific Grant Programme) for 2014. This is in line with focusing moneys on road and bridge maintenance and strengthening. The grants programme is structured to allow Councils reasonable flexibility in using grants while also ensuring there are clear outputs for the moneys allocated in terms of length of road maintained or rehabilitated. In addition, I announced that local authorities would be afforded additional flexibility this year by allowing Councils to transfer resources into their discretionary grant.

Given the harsh reality of the financial position, the main focus will have to be on the maintenance and repair of roads. It will be necessary for local authorities to decide how best to manage their road budgets within the funding available. It is also important to reiterate that the role of Exchequer grants for regional and local roads is to supplement local authorities in their spending in this area. The contribution made by local authorities has fallen in recent years both in real and percentage terms. In 2008, local authorities provided over €405 million in own resources expenditure for works on regional and local roads, representing 40% of the total amount on these roads in 2008 including State grants. This own resources expenditure has dropped to €137 million in 2012 or 27% of the total expenditure on roads, with the State providing €377 million in 2012 or 73% of the total expenditure last year. I appreciate that many local authorities are trying to implement savings. It is important that sufficient priority is given by local authorities to road maintenance in own resources allocation.

Question No. 27 answered with Question No. 8.

Regional Airports

28. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on discussions with the management of Ireland West Airport, Knock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22679/13]

41. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the work being carried out to maximise the potential growth of Ireland West Airport Knock and to secure its future as a key piece of infrastructure in the north west region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22676/13]

64. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the level of funding and supports provided by his Department in 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013 for Ireland West Airport Knock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22677/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 28, 41 and 64 together.

These questions deal with Ireland West Airport Knock and I would like to thank the Deputies for raising this subject and for affording me the opportunity to update the House on developments. As Deputies will be aware, the Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) Study Group was established following a meeting of the Airport Board with the Taoiseach, myself, Minister of State Ring and local representatives on 28 January this year to examine how best the future of the airport can be secured and to explore realistic options for growth. The Group was established, under the Chairmanship of Deputy John O'Mahony, whom I would like to thank for agreeing to take on that role.

Membership of the Group is comprised of representatives of the Airport Board and management, Mayo County Council, regional Business and Tourism sectors and of the Departments of Transport, Tourism & Sport; Finance, Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and Enterprise Ireland. The Group, while taking account of available funding and State Aid and Competition rules, is examining how the airport can survive and be further developed having regard to the implications for other regional airports. Two meetings of the Group have taken place on 12 April and 3 May in Knock and Dublin respectively. Good progress was made at these first two meetings but it is recognised that a substantial body of work needs to be carried out before the Group can complete its report.

A Request for Tender for a consultancy study on some elements of the Group's work, which will be funded jointly by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mayo County Council and the airport, was published on the etenders website www.etenders.gov.ie on 8 May. A specific work programme and timetable for completion of the other aspects of the Group's work has been established and I am expecting a final report in the Autumn.

As regards the level of funding provided to IWAK in recent years, under the Regional Airports Programme, €431,907 in operational (Opex) subvention was provided to IWAK in 2011 and €589,644 in 2012. Applications from regional airports for Opex funding for 2013 will be invited later this year. Funding for capital works at IWAK under the Capex grant scheme amounted to €233,282 in 2011 and €699,007 in 2012. Capex funding of €2,039,927, including an additional €650,000 announced last week, has been approved for drawdown at IWAK in 2013, while a further €1,710,993 has been approved for drawdown by IWAK in 2014.

In addition, Tourism Ireland is investing in cooperative marketing campaigns to drive inbound tourism on IWAK routes, with expenditure of over €500,000 in 2011 supporting campaigns worth €1m, expenditure of €1,150,000 supporting campaigns worth €1.85m and spend so far this year of €420,000 to support campaigns worth over €800,000. Opportunities for further campaigns continue to be explored with carriers.

Both the Taoiseach and I have also encouraged the exploration of possibilities of cooperation between airports. In that regard I am aware that the Chairman of Shannon Airport Authority, Rose Hynes has initiated discussions with both IWAK and Kerry Airport on how existing co-operation can be further strengthened.

Sale of State Assets

29. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on his plans to sell off State assets under his control including the public stake in Aer Lingus. [22894/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Deputy's question relates to the sale of State assets. The State's 25.1% shareholding in Aer Lingus is the only asset within my remit identified for possible sale under the State Assets Disposal Programme. The Government's decision in February 2012 was to seek to sell the shareholding when market conditions are favourable and on terms and at a price that are acceptable to Government. The Government continues to seek opportunities to dispose of the shareholding. However, the correct circumstances have not arisen to date.

In the meantime the Government will continue to manage its shareholding in a responsible manner to protect the State's interests and with the aim of maximising the value of the shareholding. I have no plans to dispose of any other State assets at this time.

Rural Transport Programme Issues

30. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the management of the rural transport programme; if he will outline the criteria used in awarding contracts and the average value of contracts awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22957/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): As Minister of State for Public and Commuter Transport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to the Rural Transport Programme (RTP). Following the Government Decision of 26 January 2012 in relation to integrated local and rural transport, responsibility for the management of the RTP was assigned to the National Transport Authority (NTA). Noting this I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Under proposals to restructure the RTP which are aimed at strengthening the Programme by ensuring a more efficient delivery structure which will maximise integration with other state transport services and make the Programme a sustainable part of the public transport system, there will be revised contract arrangements. I am awaiting proposals on a new structure for the delivery of rural transport from the NTA when they have concluded their deliberations and discussions but I am hopeful that I will be in a position to recommend a new structure in the near future which will allow for the maximising of spend on services and the reduction of ad-

ministration costs.

Question No. 31 answered with Question No. 24.

Departmental Bodies

32. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the impact assessments he requires agencies under his control to undergo when implementing cutbacks resulting from plans and budgetary measures put in place by his Department; and if these include the potential threat of industrial action. [22904/13]

61. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the impact assessments he requires agencies under his control to undergo when implementing cutbacks resulting from plans and budgetary measures put in place by his Department; and if these include the potential threat of industrial action. [22897/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 32 and 61 together.

Budgetary or other measures set by my Department for a State Body under the Department's responsibility would, where relevant, be reflected in the business and financial planning or strategic planning processes of the body concerned. My Department has regular meetings with each State Body. Such meetings would discuss a range of issues related to the State body and would, if relevant, include the impacts of such measures on the operations or services of the State Body. However, management of the impacts would be a matter in the first instance for the body itself. A potential threat of industrial action, if considered possible or likely, would be expected to be considered by the Board and management of the State Body. The means of addressing the potential industrial action would be a matter for the body concerned.

Sports Facilities Provision

33. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a progress report on the development of facilities at the National Sports Campus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22851/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The primary aim of the National Sports Campus is to provide state-of-the-art facilities for Irish sports men and women to train and prepare for competition at the highest level. A lot of progress has been made since its foundation, including the National Aquatic Centre, the Institute of Sport and the FAI Headquarters. I am very pleased to say that a significant amount of work is taking place at present which will see further elements of the Sports Campus completed this year. Work is ongoing on the development of multi-sport all-weather pitches and a pavilion, which will be open to all national governing bodies and also local communities under the management of the sports campus. The pitches are expected to be completed by September with the pavilion scheduled for completion by the end of the year. Training facilities for high-performance athletes in equestrian and modern pentathlon sports are expected to be completed by August.

Agreements are in place between the National Sports Campus Development Authority (NSCDA) and the FAI, GAA, IRFU and the Irish Hockey Association to develop facilities for each of their sports. It is expected that at least two of these organisations will commence work on their facilities this year.

15 May 2013

A new Irish Sport HQ has been completed and will be officially opened later this month. The building will accommodate 19 National Governing Bodies of Sport, all of whom will have completed their relocation to the new building by this week.

This year is the 10 Anniversary of the opening of the National Aquatic Centre and it is continuing to perform well. Since it opened in 2003 the Centre has recorded over 7 million visits.

Proposed Legislation

34. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will amend Part 2 of the Public Transport Regulation Act 2009 governing the licensing of public bus passenger services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22678/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have no plans to amend Part 2 of the Public Transport Regulation Act 2009.

Tourism Policy

35. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he has taken to pursue all-island tourism co-operation; his future plans in regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22856/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Tourism was specifically identified in the Good Friday Agreement as one of the key areas for North/South cooperation and consequently is one in which the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) meets in Sectoral format. The Council meets to make decisions on common policies and approaches in the area of tourism, including decisions on policies and actions to be implemented by Tourism Ireland Limited, the body responsible for promoting the island of Ireland overseas as a tourist destination.

The most recent NSMC meeting in Tourism Sectoral format took place on 28th November 2012 in Armagh. Amongst the agenda items for this meeting was Tourism Ireland's Draft Business Plan for 2013. The Council also discussed major tourism initiatives including The Gathering Ireland 2013 and the Derry - Londonderry UK City of Culture 2013, and noted the major role which Tourism Ireland is playing in the overseas promotion of them. At the meeting, a paper on the Great Britain market was also discussed.

The next NSMC meeting in Tourism Sectoral format is scheduled to take place on 26th June in Armagh. Amongst the anticipated discussion items will be Tourism Ireland's Annual Report for 2012, a review of the 2013 tourism season to date (including major tourism initiatives North and South) and the tourism prospects for the remainder of 2013 and beyond.

There is also ongoing cooperation between the tourism agencies and Government Departments north and south in a number of other areas including the selection of suitable tourism projects to benefit from Peace/INTERREG funds and in work to harmonise and share tourism statistics north and south. I look forward to this work continuing and to availing of any other suitable opportunities for north/south cooperation in the tourism sector in the future.

Question No. 36 answered with Question No. 23.

Driving Licence Issues

37. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will intervene to establish the reason the Road Safety Authority will not accept hard copy photographs for the issuing of new driver licences. [22674/13]

89. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is satisfied with the reasons put forward by the Road Safety Authority not to accept hardcopy Garda certified photographs for the issuing of new driving licences. [22675/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 37 and 89 together.

The new national driver licensing system under the Road Safety Authority (RSA) involves three outsourced elements, overseen by a 'specialist unit' based in the RSA headquarters in Ballina. The three outsourced elements are: a card production facility, a front office for engaging with the customer, and a back office to process applications. This system will not be fully up and running until September of this year. In the meantime, the Motor Tax Offices continue to perform front office functions on behalf of the RSA. During this transition period, applicants can still provide their photos as heretofore.

Once the new system is fully operational, there will be a different system for providing photo ID. The capture of the photograph is included in the fee for the licence, and the SAFE2 ID will be implemented, at which point the only option will be the digital photo taken at the front office network.

I understand from the RSA that when it published the Request for Tenders for the front office contract they asked tenderers to put forward a preference for scanning or digital capture of photographs. All three tenderers opted for digital capture, as it is the most effective, secure and efficient process.

The operation of the tender processes was a matter for the RSA, and I had no involvement in it. The contractors for the front office, and the back office and card producer, have already been procured.

Community Involvement Scheme

38. **Deputy Helen McEntee** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the newly created community involvement scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22960/13]

47. **Deputy Helen McEntee** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the total value of CIS applications and a breakdown on a county basis; when a decision will be made on the allocation of funds and the amount of funding that will be allocated. [22959/13]

60. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the total value of CIS applications and a breakdown per county; when a decision will be made on allocation of funds; and the amount of funding that will be allocated. [22673/13]

73. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the total number of CIS applications per county and the cost of same; the amount of funding that will be allocated; and when an announcement may be expected. [22769/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 38, 47, 60 and 73 together.

In February this year, my Department launched a pilot Community Involvement Scheme which will be based on private contributions towards works on local and regional roads within the range of 20% to 50% depending on the amount and nature of the community contribution. This enables works to be carried out on less prioritised roads sooner than would have been otherwise possible.

My Department recently received applications from 25 county councils and 1 city council for funding under this scheme of grants. All of these applications are being assessed in my Department and it is hoped to announce the allocations to local authorities shortly. The final allocation will not be known until all of the applications have been fully assessed.

Details of the number and cost of applications received from each local authority are outlined in the table below:

Local Authority	Number of Applications	Overall Cost of Applications - €	Allocation sought from Dept. - €
Carlow County Council	13	274,186	191,930
Cavan County Council	54	1,299,575	1,039,590
Clare County Council	26	717,527	574,022
Cork County Council	28	842,506	674,004
Donegal County Council	8	494,600	367,220
Galway County Council	53	1,016,840	508,333
Kerry County Council	9	324,899	259,919
Kildare County Council	2	50,675	40,540
Kilkenny County Council	7	432,580	346,064
Laois County Council	14	303,475	243,121
Leitrim County Council	15	436,440	348,832
Limerick County Council	22	463,200	369,810
Longford County Council	2	64,904	51,923
Louth County Council	21	741,650	593,320
Mayo County Council	45	1,804,280	999,640

Local Authority	Number of Applications	Overall Cost of Applications - €	Allocation sought from Dept. - €
Meath County Council	11	1,937,335	1,549,868
North Tipperary County Council	36	1,222,949	978,359
Offaly County Council	3	59,950	42,970
Roscommon County Council	12	190,380	151,879
Sligo County Council	3	293,000	213,000
South Tipperary County Council	21	1,033,625	800,380
Waterford County Council	2	380,000	304,000
Westmeath County Council	10	301,100	211,780
Wexford County Council	9	654,092	398,813
Wicklow County Council	1	160,000	80,000
Waterford City Council	1	15,000	12,000
Total	428	15,514,768	11,351,317

Harbour Authorities Staff

39. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to problems with the pension fund of the Dun Laoghaire Harbour company in view of the fact that the workforce have raised concerns regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22944/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company operates a defined benefit pension scheme. As is common across the broader State commercial sector, the State commercial port companies, including Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company, traditionally offered their employees membership of defined benefit pension schemes. All port companies have now closed their defined benefit schemes to new members and instead new employees are offered membership of defined contribution arrangements.

As recognised in the National Pensions Framework, there are “significant problems with the typical current design for funded defined benefit schemes”. The defined benefit scheme in operation at Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company shares the problems of these schemes generally.

As reported in the Company’s most recently published accounts for 2011 the scheme was underfunded. The 2012 accounts will not be published until later in the year but I would expect the position in relation to the funding status of the scheme to remain unchanged.

Underfunded schemes must engage with the Pensions Board and prepare a funding proposal in line with the requirements of the Pensions Acts. I understand that the Company is currently

preparing its proposal to the Board in line with this statutory requirement.

Tourism Industry Issues

40. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the tourism performance in 2013 to date and his expectations for the remainder of 2013. [22765/13]

46. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to address the fact that the number of nights spent in Ireland by overseas travellers decreased by 4.7% in 2012, down from 50.3 million to 47.9 million; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22858/13]

48. **Deputy Joe O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the tourism performance to date in 2013; his expectations for the remainder of 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22688/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 40, 46 and 48 together.

Figures published by the CSO show that there were over 6.5 million overseas visits to Ireland in 2012 representing a minor increase (0.2%) on the 2011 total. It should be noted that the number of core tourism visits grew strongly with holiday trips up by 3.8% and business trips up by 7.7% compared to 2011. While overall bednights fell in 2012, this was primarily due to a fall of nearly 10% in numbers staying with friends or relatives. The number of overseas hotel bednights, the most valuable in terms of revenue and jobs, actually grew by 13% in 2012.

I am pleased that the positive trend has continued into 2013 suggesting that the Gathering Ireland 2013 is having a real impact. The most recent figures from the CSO show very strong growth of 7.4% for the first quarter of 2013 compared to 2012, an increase of over 86,000 extra trips. All of our main overseas markets have shown growth in the first quarter with overseas visits from Mainland Europe up 13%, visits from Great Britain up 1.4%, visits from North America up 16.7%, while visits from the rest of the world grew by 5.4%.

The overall target for the year of The Gathering was to increase the number of overseas visits by 325,000. The figures for the first quarter suggest that we are well on target to achieve and even exceed this as the increase to date is over 25% of the total increase targeted. The overall sentiment for travel to Ireland is good with particularly encouraging signs for visit numbers from Mainland Europe and the USA, supported by significant growth in transatlantic air access for the peak summer period. Tourism Ireland will continue to roll-out a major consumer marketing campaign to promote Ireland and "The Gathering Ireland 2013" in all our key markets and ensure our targets will be achieved.

Question No. 41 answered with Question No. 28.

Departmental Agencies Issues

42. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the Employment Control Framework figures for each of the agencies under the aegis of his Department at the end of 2012; the expected figure for 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22866/13]

69. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is satisfied that the reduction of head count within the agencies of his Department governed by the Employment Control Framework is generating the required pay savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22867/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 42 and 69 together.

The published Revised Estimates Volume (REV) for 2013 outlines the resourcing details on a Programme Level for both the Department and the Agencies under its aegis as set out in the table below. As my Department are currently engaged in discussions with the individual Agencies on their respective Employment Control Framework (ECF) targets, I am not in a position to provide the details on each individual Agency ECF target for 2013 at this juncture. The Department has written to each Agency about the targets and the consequential reduction in payroll allocations and has highlighted that the achievement of both payroll savings and numbers reduction is a key element of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the joint EU – IMF programme for Ireland.

Table 1

The staff number for the Commission for Aviation Regulation, as non exchequer financed non-commercial Agency, is not included in above.

Programme	Bodies Included	2012 Staff Resources (Outturn)	2013 Staff Resources (Proposed)
Programme A - Civil Aviation	Department	48	45
Programme B - Land Transport	Department, Medical Bureau of Road Safety, Road Safety Authority, National Transport Authority, National Roads Authority, Railway Safety Commission	687	647
Programme C - Maritime Transport & Safety	Department	213	195
Programme D - Sports & Recreation Services	Department, Irish Sports Council, National Sports Campus Development Authority	77	71
Programme E - Tourism Services	Department, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland	551	496
Total		1,576	1,454

Question No. 43 answered with Question No. 9.

Civil Aviation Regulation

44. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress that has been made on the development of a new civil aviation policy; if such a policy will take cognisance of the issues affecting residents who live adjacent to small airfields and the regulations needed to protect their quality of life; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22958/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): This question relates to the development of a new civil aviation policy.

A consultation paper on the development of a new civil aviation policy was published on my Department's website on 1 March this year inviting submissions from stakeholders and interested parties by 30 June 2013. Following receipt of submissions a draft National Aviation Policy Statement will be issued in the second half of this year, with a view to a final policy document being published in early 2014.

The consultation paper covers eight broad areas: Airports, Air Services, Regulation and Governance, Aircraft Leasing and Finance, Aerospace, Education and Training, General Aviation and Sustainability. The issue of airport noise is covered in the Sustainability section. The range of issues set out in the consultation document is my no means an exhaustive list and I look forward to hearing the views of all interested parties during the consultation.

If the Deputy, or his constituents, have particular issues that they believe should be considered within the new policy, I would encourage them to make a submission by deadline.

The Gathering Expenditure

45. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a breakdown of the way the €7 million allocated by his Department for The Gathering will be spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22850/13]

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

Question No. 46 answered with Question No. 40.

Question No. 47 answered with Question No. 38.

Question No. 48 answered with Question No. 40.

Disused Railway Land

49. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the actions his Department has taken to reaffirm the ownership rights of Iarnród Éireann of disused railway land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22986/13]

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

Road Safety Statistics

50. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the level of funding that was allocated to the Road Safety Authority in 2012; the number of fatalities on our roads in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22995/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): According to the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) for the Public Service for 2012, published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and available on that Department's website, the funding allocated to the Road Safety Authority for 2012 was €13,885,000. The REV did not provide an allocation for capital funding for the Road Safety Authority in 2012. Provisional figures provided by the Garda National Traffic Bureau and published on the Garda Website, indicate that there were 162 fatalities on our roads in 2012.

Question No. 51 answered with Question No. 9.

Road Safety Strategy

52. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will elaborate on the actions he and his Department and agencies have taken to combat injuries and fatalities on Irish roads to date in 2013. [22951/13]

80. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in view of higher than expected levels of fatalities and injuries experienced on Irish roads to date in 2013, the actions he or his Department are considering to enhance safety for all road users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22911/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 52 and 80 together.

I recently launched the Road Safety Strategy 2013 - 2020, which has full Government approval. The Strategy, which builds on the success of previous strategies, contains 144 actions to be implemented over its lifetime. Without taking the emphasis off reducing road fatalities, it also focuses on reducing the number and severity of serious injuries resulting from road traffic collisions.

The Strategy sets a very ambitious target of reducing road collision fatalities to 25 per million population or less by 2020. It also sets a provisional target for the reduction of serious injuries by 30%, from 472 in 2011 to 330 or fewer by 2020, a reduction to 61 serious injuries per million population. The Road Safety Authority is responsible for the overall implementation of the Strategy and must report to me annually on progress on its implementation.

In addition, the Road Traffic Bill 2013, currently being drafted, contains a number of measures aimed at improving driver behaviour on our roads. The Bill will provide for additional Graduated Driver Licensing measures, the testing of incapacitated drivers following a road traffic collision where death or injury has been caused, changes to the penalty points regime and intoxication impairment testing for drivers, aimed primarily at drug driving. I hope to publish the Bill in the coming weeks.

Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company

53. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in view of the proposal to put Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company under the aegis and in co-operation with

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Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, if he will agree to a meeting with representatives of the workforce as they have requested; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22943/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The publication of a new National Ports Policy in March 2013 represents an important change in approach towards the Government's management of ports as important assets and provides an overarching vision for the future development of the sector. The Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company has been designated as a port of regional significance and will be transferred to local authority control in due course.

My Department will initiate discussions with the port company, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and the local authority to determine the most suitable method of transfer. The Department will also be required to introduce enabling legislation to enable the transfer to take place by amending the current Harbours Acts 1996-2009, as appropriate.

As you can appreciate, as ports are commercial companies I do not get involved in the day to day operations of any port company or in direct meetings with their workforce. However, if the workers have any proposals in relation to the transfer for the Harbour Company to the local authority, I shall have them considered as part of the transfer process.

Question No. 54 answered with Question No. 11.

Road Safety Issues

55. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the work of the task force set up to address rising numbers of road fatalities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22672/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I assume that the Government task force referred to by the Deputy is the Ministerial Committee on Road Safety. This Committee met recently, soon after the publication of the Road Safety Strategy 2013 - 2020. The meeting discussed the current trends in road fatalities.

While I am very concerned at the current trend in road fatalities, it is too early in the year to try and identify patterns. It is however a reminder to everyone that we must guard against complacency where road safety is concerned.

The successful implementation of the Actions in the Road Safety Strategy, with its very ambitious target of reducing road fatalities to 25 per million population or less by 2020, will assist in reversing the current upward trend in road fatalities.

While not taking the emphasis of reducing the number of road fatalities, the Strategy also focuses on reducing the number of serious injuries resulting from road traffic collisions by 30% from 472 in 2011 to 330 or fewer by 2020.

Sports Facilities Provision

56. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he intends to publish the National Sports Facilities Strategy; and if he will make a state-

ment on the matter. [22848/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): A draft National Sports Facilities Strategy was published as a discussion document on my Department's website in September 2012. A final strategy, taking account of submissions received, will be published shortly.

Tourism Capital Investment Programme

57. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide specific details of the strategic investments his Department plans to make under the Tourism Capital Investment Programme; if he will outline the way the €19 million will be spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22854/13]

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

Transport Costs

58. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures he will take to alleviate the cost disadvantage that Ireland has in relation to all freight transport modes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22977/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I refer the Deputy to Priority Question No. 4 for answer today Wednesday, 15th May 2013 which set out my position on this matter.

Traffic Management

59. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the traffic management system at Palmerstown/Kennelsfort Road Junction is very close to malfunction and requires a major overhaul and, if this work is not carried out, it will have a huge impact on traffic in Dublin and on the M50; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22671/13]

82. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a major crisis is pending in relation to traffic management and funding to address the issue regarding the traffic management of the N4 system which will have a massive effect on Dublin City traffic if it malfunctions which is predicted by South Dublin County Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22670/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 59 and 82 together.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility

of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritization of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

This section of road was recently downgraded from national road status (previously the N4) to regional road status – R148.

In July last year, applications were invited for consideration for funding under the Specific Improvement Grant Scheme. Local authorities were asked to ensure that their total cost of applications did not exceed their 2012 grant allocation. In South Dublin County Council's case this would allow the Council to apply for funding of €800,000 under this grant category. The R148 project was not among the priority projects submitted by the Council within the expenditure limit allowed.

South Dublin County Council may fund this project from its Discretionary Grant. The Council has been allocated €736,775 under this grant category in 2013. I also wrote to local authorities earlier this year offering them more flexibility in their regional and local road grants. Councils have the opportunity to use up to 30% of their Restoration Improvement Grant and reallocate it to their Discretionary Grant. In South Dublin County Council's case this will amount to €556,641 should they wish to avail of this flexibility which would bring the total Discretionary Grant available to the Council to €1,293,416. I understand the estimated cost of these works are approximately €300,000.

It is open to South Dublin Council to apply to transfer some of its Specific Grant funding for 2013 to this project or alternatively to fund this project from its Discretionary Grant or own resources.

Question No. 60 answered with Question No. 38.

Question No. 61 answered with Question No. 32.

Tourism Policy

62. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he has taken to conduct a review of tourism policy; the specific areas the review will focus on; if he will outline its key aims and objectives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22853/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy will be aware, commencing a review of tourism policy is one of my Departmental Priorities for 2013. In this regard, I intend to publish a consultation document this summer to seek the views of all interested stakeholders and consumers.

Following the review, involving a period of analysis and consultation, I plan to issue a specific, overarching tourism policy statement to provide the necessary direction to support a competitive and sustainable tourism industry and give clear direction to the tourism agencies for carrying out their specific operational programmes.

The policy statement will take account of the many factors likely to impact on Irish tourism. These will include expected developments in international economic and trading conditions and growth prospects for international passenger transportation and global tourism. The new tourism policy will also take account of current and medium-term prospects for the national

economy. In the context of limited resources, the targeting of financial support only at the highest priorities may require difficult choices.

I want to ensure that the tourism policy is robust, well-founded and workable and has the broad support of key stakeholders, including the Tourism industry. This will ensure that it provides the best framework to support and enhance the competitiveness and strength of the Irish tourist industry into the future. To this end, in the review of tourism policy I want to secure the views of stakeholders both inside and outside the tourism industry, in Government and elsewhere. The consultation document that I will publish this summer will facilitate all relevant parties in engaging meaningfully with the review. I believe that the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Transport and Communications, which covers tourism, could also have an important role in the consultation process. I would also welcome any contribution from the Deputy or their party to the consultation process as well.

The submissions received in response to our consultation exercise will inform my final statement of tourism policy. This will then provide a robust foundation for the subsequent development of a broader tourism strategy and action plan.

Question No. 63 answered with Question No. 7.

Question No. 64 answered with Question No. 28.

Question No. 65 answered with Question No. 21.

Road Safety Issues

66. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update in the statewide audit of speed limits in order to address issues raised by this audit; and the efforts he has made to work with his counterparts in the Stormont Assembly to harmonise speed limits North and South in the interests of safety. [22895/13]

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

As the Deputy will be aware, there is significant existing co-operation on road safety matters between the authorities on both sides of the Border. At the North South Ministerial Council in October 2012, Minister Attwood and I agreed a detailed timetable for the mutual recognition of penalty points in the areas of speeding, drink/drug driving, non-wearing of seatbelts and using a mobile phone while driving. The timetable agreed will be challenging as it will require significant legislative and operational work but officials on both sides are committed to the agreed timetable. There are many complex issues that will have to be addressed in both jurisdictions with a view to establishing a workable system which is perceived as proportionate and equitable and which attracts widespread public support throughout Ireland.

This is the immediate priority for North South legislative co-operation and harmonisation and will require considerable work. While the harmonisation of speed limits with Northern Ire-

land would obviously be desirable there are significant complications to be addressed to arrive at this position, mainly the fact that speed limits in the North are set in imperial measurement units, while we use the metric system of measurement.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

67. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he expects to distribute the €13.5m in the sports capital programme 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22847/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): There is €13.5m in the subhead in 2013 to cover payments to Sports Capital Programme grantees. This will be disbursed over the course of the year.

Tourism Industry Issues

68. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his 32-county strategy for a lighthouse tourism trail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19160/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department's role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national policy. It is not involved in the administration of tourism-related funding programmes or in support to specific tourism sectors, which are the responsibility of Fáilte Ireland. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for further information and direct reply. It is not involved in the administration of tourism-related funding programmes or in support to specific tourism sectors, which are the responsibility of Fáilte Ireland. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for further information and direct reply.

I am advised that the Commissioners of Irish Lights are currently in discussion with the Special EU Programmes Body about a cross-Border project to develop the tourism potential of lighthouses along the northern coast. Fáilte Ireland, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and a number of other public bodies are supporting the Commissioners of Irish Lights in relation to the project, which will facilitate the visitor to explore the best of our land and sea scapes.

I look forward to seeing this project progressed by the participating bodies at an early date.

Question No. 69 answered with Question No. 42.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

70. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in view of the high demand by local and regional sporting clubs to access funds under the successful 2012 Sports Capital Programme, if he will outline the future plans he has to support this community and voluntary sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22912/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): The most recent round of the Sports Capital Programme was launched last March. The Deputy will be aware that this was the first round of the Programme since 2008.

The Department received 2,170 applications for funding under the 2012 Sports Capital Pro-

gramme, the highest number of applications ever received. The allocations were announced last December. There were 648 allocations totalling €31m.

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

Ports Development

71. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for investments in Irish ports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22991/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In March 2013 I published a new National Ports Policy which is available from my Department's website. This document outlines a roadmap for the sector's future development. With regard to future investment, there is no Exchequer funding available for port infrastructure development. Rather, as is stated in the National Ports Policy, the individual port companies must fund development proposals themselves without recourse to the Exchequer. This is settled Government policy and no Exchequer funding has been provided to the port companies since the conclusion of the National Development Plan 2000-2006 funding programme. No budget line exists for such funding and were it decided to provide such funding, it would give rise to significant competition and state aid concerns.

The new Policy is clear that the response to future national port capacity requirements should be led by the three Ports of National Significance (Tier 1) - Dublin, Cork and Shannon Foynes port companies, when, where and as required. There is also a role for the two Ports of National Significance (Tier 2) - Port of Waterford Company and Rosslare Europort to develop additional capacity to aid competitive conditions, particularly within the unitised sectors.

While Exchequer funding is not available there are of course a variety of commercial funding options open to the companies, notwithstanding the current difficulties in the financing markets. National Ports Policy encourages greater private sector involvement and investment in our key Ports of National Significance and there may be possibilities arising through, for example, the use of concession type arrangements or other public-private partnership arrangements. In addition I raised the possibility of investing in our ports with officials from the European Investment Bank on their recent visit. Furthermore I was happy to endorse funding applications made by Dublin, Cork and Shannon Foynes port companies under the EU TEN-T programme earlier this year.

In relation to the Ports of Regional Significance, they will continue to develop in line with regional requirements. Those Ports of Regional Significance that are currently under the aegis of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will transfer to Local Authority control over the coming years. The future investment in those ports shall be a matter for the Local Authorities concerned.

Tourism Industry Issues

72. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the degree to which he and or his Department has studied tourism development in other jurisdictions within the EU and without; the extent to which market research has been utilised to determine the issues most likely to attract visitors; if architectural heritage and cultural themes have been utilised sufficiently in this country; if the attraction of national monuments and or sites could be enhanced by any particular strategy with a view to dramatically increasing national and in-

ternational interest in such locations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22953/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's question to the tourism agencies for direct reply. Will the Deputy please advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within ten working days.

Question No. 73 answered with Question No. 38.

Safety at Sea Issues

74. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will initiate a cross-departmental review of maritime safety and investigate the possibility of putting in place a maritime safety strategy modelled on the road safety strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22680/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): One of my Ministerial Priorities for 2013 is to implement a Maritime 'Safety at Sea' initiative.

As part of the on-going work within my Department there is a constant focus on enhancing safety and the promotion of a culture of high safety standards within all sectors of the maritime community. Our Safety at Sea agenda is constantly being developed in line with developments across the maritime sector in terms of internationally recognised safety Conventions, safety standards, Codes of Practice, and the promotion of a culture of safety among those who go to sea for leisure or to earn their living. The importance of ensuring the provision of search and rescue response capability is also vital.

As part of this on-going work, in conjunction with my colleague Simon Coveney TD Minister for Agriculture and the Marine, I have been developing measures aimed at improving safety at sea for the fishing industry. Our Departments are working together with Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) to bring forward proposals for an Enhanced Safety Equipment and Training Scheme for Fishermen. Options on grant-aid of safety equipment, such as Electronic Position Indicating Radio Beacons, Personal Locator Beacons, are being assessed. Stronger enforcement of safety regulations and more comprehensive safety training requirements in this scheme will deliver a significant positive change in relation to safety in the fishing sector.

My Department is currently considering the need for a cross - Governmental strategy on maritime safety and how such a strategy could be progressed in an integrated way for the sector. I expect to complete this consideration shortly and on foot of which will present proposals to Government. The focus of any strategy will be on the development of a culture of safety amongst seafarers and the crucial role of regulation and enforcement, particularly in relation to vessel inspection and certification and the certification and training of seafarers.

Public Transport Provision

75. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the role Transport for Ireland has played in progressing the public transport service; the progress the body has made to date on real time information for public transport services; the costs of establishing this real time service; the further steps that will be taken by that body in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22983/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. Following the establishment of the National Transport Authority (NTA) in December 2009, the implementation and development of infrastructure projects in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), such as Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) as well as the development and implementation of a single transport brand, come under the remit of the NTA.

Noting this I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Will the Deputy please advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

The Gathering Initiatives

76. **Deputy Joe O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the Gathering 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22687/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I am pleased to report continued good progress on the Gathering Ireland 2013 - Ireland's biggest ever tourism initiative. The overall target is to attract at least 325,000 extra overseas visits to Ireland in 2013. If this target is achieved, it will generate an additional €170 million in revenue this year, based on historic spending patterns. Recent figures from the CSO show visit numbers for the first quarter of 2013 up over 86,000 compared to the corresponding period of 2012. This represents an encouraging start to 2013.

In terms of resources, the 2013 Estimates allocations to Fáilte Ireland include a special provision of €7 million which was specifically provided for The Gathering. This amount is to be used exclusively to fund the promotion, development and legacy of the event and complements support for the initiative from the tourism agencies' mainstream activities and from national and local partners.

The general response from the public and tourism stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive. There are now over 3,500 individual gatherings confirmed on the Gathering website. These include clan gatherings, festivals, special sporting events and concerts taking place all across the country throughout the year. Along with well-established events and festivals, we are also supporting a specially targeted set of events for the Gathering, such as the very successful New Year's Eve Event in Dublin, while over 6,000 overseas visitors took part in the People's Parade in Dublin during the St. Patrick's day festivities.

Obviously the ambitious targets for overseas visits and associated revenue can only be achieved if people in our main source tourism markets are aware of the initiative. Tourism Ireland continues to mount a major consumer campaign to promote The Gathering to the people across the world that feel linked by family, friends or otherwise with Ireland. The agency is undertaking cooperative activity with the major airlines and ferry operators to highlight the value fares that are on offer. My colleague, Minister Michael Ring recently launched a brand new app for iPhones and android devices which has been specifically designed for The Gathering Ireland 2013. The "Gathering Gestures" app which is free to download has been created by Tourism Ireland and offers a variety of offers to ensure our overseas visitors get even more from their holiday here.

While progress to date has been encouraging, as I have previously stated, all tourism stakeholders must continue to work hard to ensure that the full potential of the Gathering is realised.

Adventure Centres

77. **Deputy Ray Butler** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to introduce legislation to regulate commercial centres that provide activity sports, for example, canoeing, kayaking and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22682/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Adventure Activities Standards Authority Act, 2001 made provision for the establishment by the Minister for Marine and Natural Resources of an Adventure Activities Standards Authority, which would have responsibility for the regulation of adventure centres. However, the Act was not commenced and the body was not subsequently put in place.

Following detailed consideration of the matter it is now intended that the measures outlined in the Adventure Activities Standards Authority Act, 2001 do not represent the most suitable approach to deal with this issue, and it is proposed that this legislation will be repealed, and this matter be addressed by incorporating provisions in the forthcoming Sports Ireland Bill. The Sports Ireland Bill will merge the Irish Sports Council and the National Sports Campus Development Authority and it is proposed that the new body, Sports Ireland will be required to maintain a register of all adventure centres. The legislation will make it an offence to operate as an adventure centre if not on the register and allow Sports Ireland to set standards and charges for inclusion on the register.

The Heads of the Sports Ireland Bill are currently receiving consideration within my Department. It is hoped to bring these Heads to Government in the next while, and once the Heads of the Bill have been approved by Government, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications will be invited to consider the matter before the drafting of the Bill itself begins.

Question No. 78 answered with Question No. 21.

Public Transport Provision

79. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will outline any adverse implications that upcoming planning permission expirations in relation to the development by the Spencer Dock Development Company at Spencer Dock, Dublin 1 may have upon future plans by the State to construct key elements of the DART underground rail interconnector at the site or adjacent to it; the way he intends to deal with these matters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22770/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The DART Underground has been postponed but will be reviewed in the context of the next capital programme which will cover the period from 2016 onwards. The project still remains a key element of the overall transport integration strategy.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. Following the establishment of the National Transport Authority (NTA) in December 2009, issues concerning the planning and development of infrastructure projects in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), such as the Dart Underground Project, come under the remit of the NTA.

Noting this I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Will the

Deputy please advise my private office if she does not receive a reply within 10 working days?

Question No. 80 answered with Question No. 52.

Sports Funding

81. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide specific details of the total amount of money spent to date on development of the National Sports Campus; the way the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22852/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The National Sports Campus Development Authority (NSCDA), which is funded by my Department, was established in 2006 as the statutory body with responsibility for the development of the National Sports Campus at Abbotstown, Blanchardstown.

The total capital funding allocated by my Department between 2000 and 2012 for the development of the National Sports Campus is €96.2m, including capital funding to Campus and Stadium Ireland Development Ltd (CSID), the body which preceded the NSCDA. The capital allocation for this year is €7.965m.

I have referred the Deputy's question to the Authority for direct reply in relation to details of the total amount spent on the development to date and the way the funds were spent. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a reply has not been received within ten days.

Question No. 82 answered with Question No. 59.

Question No. 83 answered with Question No. 21.

National Car Test

84. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on the operation of the National Car Test system; the current waiting time for a motorist for an NCT at each of the testing centres; if he is satisfied with the length of time it takes to receive an NCT appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22666/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The subject matter of this question is the responsibility of the Road Safety Authority and I have referred the question to them for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my Office if a reply has not been received within ten days.

Tourism Industry Issues

85. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way his Department proposes to address certain skill shortages in the catering sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22669/13]

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.

15 May 2013

Question No. 86 answered with Question No. 9.

Question No. 87 answered with Question No. 8.

Question No. 88 answered with Question No. 16.

Question No. 89 answered with Question No. 37.

Employment Rights Issues

90. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in view of the fact that employment in the accommodation and food services sector showed an increase in 2012 and that 123,100 people now work in the industry, if he accepts that decent pay and working conditions are vital if the sector is to develop, and that to date this has not been the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22855/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The wider tourism and hospitality industry employs an estimated 185,000 people and it has traditionally provided a range of careers with diverse skills and with varying levels of pay and remuneration. I have no role in setting the level of pay or working conditions in the sector. However, the Government has taken a number of measures to reduce the cost base of the sector and encourage employment, including the VAT cut to 9%, the reduction in employers PRSI, and raising the exemption threshold for the Universal Social Charge which particularly benefits seasonal workers.

Question No. 91 answered with Question No. 9.

Question No. 92 answered with Question No. 10.

Question No. 93 answered with Question No. 9.

Rail Network

94. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to expand access to the rail network across the State; and his views on recent EU statements which indicate a move towards increased privatisation of rail networks which would only make the State's limited service worse. [22905/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): European legislation that is already in place provides for access to the rail network for the provision of certain services. Specifically there is access to the network for the provision of rail freight services since 2007 while access for the provision of international rail passenger services is possible since 2010.

The European Commission announced a package of proposals last January aimed at delivering a better quality and more choice in railway services across Europe. Among the proposals announced is the opening of domestic rail passenger markets from 2019 onwards. The package also contains a proposal that would lead to all public service obligation contracts being awarded by means of a competitive tender process from December 2019.

The discussions on these latest proposals have not commenced. I have therefore not yet taken a position. The proposals are being scrutinised by my Department and the approach to be taken will have regard to the views of interested parties.

Emigration Data

95. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in view of the report by the National Youth Council of Ireland which indicates that 300,000 persons have emigrated in the past four years, if he will outline his strategy for dealing with the Irish diaspora. [23149/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I welcome the report of the National Youth Council of Ireland as a contribution to the ongoing debate on engagement with our overseas communities. However, I believe that the report would have more accurately reflected the Government's extensive assistance to emigrants had the Council sought the views of the Irish Abroad Unit of my Department during their research.

While the Government is committed to implementing policies which will in the future ensure that no Irish citizen has to endure emigration by economic necessity, we have also been extremely robust in ensuring that those who are emigrating today receive assistance from the Government and Government supported organisations at home and abroad.

Today, our Diaspora engagement policy has two key strands, namely the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP) and the Global Irish Network.

The Emigrant Support Programme provides direct assistance to Irish emigrants, both long-standing and new. 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 €100 million under the Programme. At present, we work with almost 200 Irish community organisations in over 20 countries and despite the economic situation, I ensured the ESP budget for 2013 - €11.6 million - remained at the same level as in 2012.

The programme provides extensive funding to organisations that act as first port of call for new emigrants, including the GAA, the London Irish Centre, the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre in Toronto and several similar groups in Australia. We also support a wide range of business and graduate networks around the world.

Among the Irish based organisations who receive ESP funding is Crosscare Migrant Project which offers pre-departure services to Irish citizens considering emigration. Crosscare also provide training to mainstream service providers on emigration and returners' issues and work in conjunction with Irish welfare organisations abroad (many also funded by ESP) and statutory and voluntary service providers in Ireland including the probation service, Salvation Army and Safe Home.

Officials from my Department have been in contact with the National Youth Council of Ireland this week to discuss some of the findings and recommendations from their report with a view to seeing if there are areas the NYCI and the Department might be able to cooperate on in future.

The second strand of our diaspora engagement programme is our partnership with the Global Irish Network, a group of over 300 of the most influential Irish connected business figures drawn from almost 40 countries, which provide invaluable advice, facilitation and practical assistance to the Government and Irish companies. The development of the Global Irish Network has transformed the strategic relationship between Ireland and its Diaspora and I look forward to working with them again at the 3rd Global Irish Economic Forum that will take place in Dublin Castle in October.

Consular Services Expenditure

96. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 48 of 2 May 2013, if he will provide an analysis, by type of allowance, of the €8,709,948 allowances paid to headquarter staff working at diplomatic missions in 2012. [23167/13]

97. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 48 of 2 May 2013, in respect of the €8,709,948 allowances paid to headquarter staff working at diplomatic missions in 2012, if he will confirm the total of allowances paid against vouched receipts. [23168/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 96 and 97 together.

Foreign Service Allowances are designed to offset the additional costs that arise for officers when they are temporarily posted abroad. The three main components of the Department's system of foreign services allowances are as follows.

Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) is designed to defray costs associated with living in cities where the cost of living is higher than in Dublin, based on data provided by an independent external consultancy. Because COLA is linked to salary and notional net take-home pay it has been reduced in recent years in line with salary reductions in the civil service and with increases in income taxes.

Local Post Allowance (LPA) provides assistance towards the additional indirect costs arising from the representational role of officers. This allowance, which varies according to marital status and grade, is payable at all locations abroad. Officers serving in designated "hardship" posts may also be entitled to a hardship allowance as part of their LPA. Where payable, this hardship element takes account of factors such as personal security and political tension, health, environmental factors, climate and isolation.

Children's Foreign Allowance (CFA) compensates officers for additional costs incurred with regard to their children aged under 18, or under 21 and in full time education.

The table sets out details of the amounts paid under each heading in 2012. As each element is calculated for each individual officer based on location, grade and family circumstances, and paid with salary, the question of vouching does not arise.

The two other allowances listed in the table below (Foreign Allowance and Displacement Allowance) are part of previous systems of Foreign Service Allowances which have now been replaced for almost all officers by the system comprising COLA, LPA and CFA as described above.

Name of Allowance	Amount paid in 2012
Cost of Living Allowance	€2,367,275.10
Local Post Allowance	€5,547,143.84
Children's Foreign Allowance	€744,756.20
Displacement Allowance	€17,576.05
Foreign Allowance	€33,197.74

Teachers' Remuneration

98. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he intends to intervene in the case of a number of Irish teachers forced to flee from Tripoli in Libya, who are seeking payment of their teaching contracts owed to them by ISM International; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23290/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I understand that the teachers' dispute with the ISM in Tripoli has been ongoing for some time. The case, however, has only been brought to the attention of my Department in the past week. The issue is currently being handled by the Department of Education and Science and the State Examinations Commission, which has been in direct contact with the ISM in Tripoli regarding the unpaid monies. Officials from my Department have also been in touch with the SEC regarding the matter and to offer whatever assistance may be considered helpful.

Departmental Legal Costs

99. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23314/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade acts as the Agent of the Government in proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights. As such, officers in the Legal Division of my Department provide input into such proceedings in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General and external counsel. The cost of retaining external counsel for the State is borne by the Office of the Attorney General. Legal proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights are principally in written form, but in those cases where the proceedings involve oral argument travel costs are incurred by my officials in travelling to and from Strasbourg. In the event of the State losing a case before the European Court of Human Rights and legal costs being awarded to the applicant, such costs are borne by the relevant line Department. My Department has not been the responsible line department for any proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights from the years 2005 to 2012 and so has not incurred any legal costs during that period. Travel costs have been incurred in acting as Agent of the Government as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Case	Date of Hearing	Travel Costs
D v Ireland	6 September 2005	€2,096.15
A, B, C v Ireland	9 December 2009	€1,297.70
McFarlane v Ireland	3 March 2010	€1,139.91

The Office of the Chief State Solicitor acts as the Agent of the Government in proceedings before the European Union Court of Justice and the General Court. I am not aware of any proceedings before these Courts from the years 2005 to 2012 for which my Department was the relevant line Department and incurred legal costs. Travel expenses were incurred, however, in an officer from my Department attending two hearings where legal issues relevant to my De-

partment arose as set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Case	Date of Hearing	Travel Costs
Case C-459/03, Commission v Ireland	8 November 2005	€2,459.23
Joined Cases C-584/10 P, C-593/10 P and C-595/10 P, Commission v Kadi	16 October 2012	€1,103.29

Northern Ireland Issues

100. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on recent reports of children as young as seven marching in Easter parades in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17252/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The incident referred to by the Deputy occurred at an Easter Parade commemoration in the Ardoyne area of north Belfast last month. This parade, which was organised by disparate strands of anti-Agreement republicanism, involved very young children who were pictured parading in paramilitary style clothing including black gloves, beret and black sunglasses. Regrettably, this is not an isolated example of terrorist supporting organisations and groups attempting to draw young persons back into a tradition of violence and in conflict with the forces of law and order. Like every right thinking person, I condemn utterly such exploitative use of young children to glorify past violence and terrorism. To perpetuate a cycle of violence and the use of violence for political ends is to perpetrate an abuse of children. Ireland has long urged and endorsed the protection of children in conflict and post conflict situations. We have committed ourselves in the Paris Declaration of 2007 to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups as a cornerstone of our foreign policy. This deplorable incident reminds us that it is essential, particularly during this decade of centenaries, that historical events in Ireland are commemorated responsibly in a way which secures peace and advances reconciliation despite the legacy of violence which is an inescapable part of our history.

Northern Ireland Issues

101. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the apparent increase in dissident activity in Northern Ireland and in particular the recent threats to the Deputy First Minister; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17253/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The threat which the so-called ‘dissident republican’ groups present is a matter of shared concern North and South. There is a strong, shared resolve to take all necessary actions within the law to bear down on such groups. Combating their activities has always been and remains a priority for the Government and the Garda authorities. In this regard, the Garda authorities continue to work closely with their PSNI counterparts in combating the violence and criminal activities of these groups and in seeking to improve community safety for everybody on this island. Threats of the type to which the Deputy refers, against elected public representatives, are to be deplored not only because they threaten the safety of an individual but also because they are an attack on democracy and free speech, which are the hallmarks of a civilised society.

Questions - Written Answers
Good Friday Agreement

102. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he is satisfied that both Governments are delivering on all of the commitments in the Good Friday Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17255/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Government remains firmly committed to ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. In contacts with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and with the Northern Ireland Executive, I have stressed, and will continue to do so, the importance of implementation of all aspects of the Agreement. The North South Inter-Parliamentary Association – as provided for in the Agreement - met for the second time in Plenary at Stormont last month. The Association will provide a forum for regular and formal discussions between Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Members of both Houses of the Oireachtas on issues of mutual interest and concern, as envisaged in the Agreements. The Association will meet twice yearly on a rotational basis. An important commitment under the Good Friday Agreement was realised in October 2012 with Digital Switchover on the island of Ireland on 24 October 2012, when TG4 and Radio na Gaeltachta became available in Northern Ireland.

One important outstanding provision of the Agreement is a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland which takes account of the separate and specific context of Northern Ireland. I believe that all parties in this House will share my frustration at the lack of progress on a Bill of Rights and I will continue to engage actively with the British government and the Northern Ireland Executive on this issue. Some of the contentious issues around parades, flags and identities have at their heart rights issues and a Bill of Rights is the key to dissolving the obstacles to progress on these issues. I would also encourage all the political parties on the island of Ireland to give serious consideration to the advice of the Joint Committee of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Irish Human Rights Commission on an all-Ireland Charter of Rights.

Recent events have recalled and positive role that civil society continues to play in Northern Ireland and points to the valuable role that could be played by the Civic Forum envisaged by the Agreement and I will continue to encourage it's development.

St. Andrew's Agreement

103. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he is satisfied that both Governments are delivering on all the commitments in the St Andrew's Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17256/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Government remains committed to the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and St Andrews Agreement. Progress has been made on a number of important elements of the St Andrews Agreement, including a review of the existing North South bodies, whose three terms of reference were to examine the bodies in terms of efficiency and value for money, to look at the case for additional North South bodies and areas of co-operation and a replacement for the Irish Lights Agency. Terms of Reference one of the St Andrews Agreement Review has essentially been completed. The Second and Third Terms of Reference of the Review look to the future of North South co-operation. This has not progressed as rapidly as I would have wished and was a subject of discussion when I met recently with the First and Deputy First Minister. I hope that we will be in a position to make substantial progress at the next NSMC Plenary in July. In addition, the North South Inter-parliamentary Association has been established and

held its second meeting last month. While the North South Consultative Forum is still outstanding, it continues to be raised at NSMC Plenary meetings and will be considered further with our Northern colleagues. Minister Deenihan and Minister of State McGinley regularly discuss Irish Language issues with Minister Ní Chuilín. The Government will continue to encourage progress on these issues, including during my ongoing schedule of close contact with the Secretary of State, and with the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Northern Ireland Issues

104. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the progress being made on the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [17257/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Government remains firmly committed to ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Good Friday and St. Andrew's Agreements. In contacts with the British government, we will continue to stress the importance of implementation of all aspects of the Agreements, including of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland which takes account of the separate and specific context of Northern Ireland. I will also continue to urge all the parties in the Assembly to engage in constructive discussion with a view to reaching agreement on the substance of a Bill of Rights. A Bill of Rights drawn up by agreement between the main parties of the Assembly could set out precisely and formally the rights upon which a shared society for Northern Ireland can be based. Some of the contentious issues around parades, flags and identities have at their heart rights issues and a Bill of Rights is the key to dissolving the obstacles to progress on these issues. As I said in a speech in Belfast last year:

Human rights and equality are fundamental to building a stable future for the island of Ireland. They are necessary for a solid, unshakeable, foundation for a lasting peace. A clear expression of these rights in a formal Bill of Rights can act as a touchstone.

I believe that all parties in this house will share my frustration at the lack of progress on a Bill of Rights and I will continue to engage actively with the British government and the Northern Ireland Executive on this issue.

European Affairs

105. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he accepts the latest European Movement Ireland accountability survey; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22452/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): European Movement Ireland aims to promote public discussion and debate about developments in the European Union including through the publication and dissemination of information materials, such as its annual Accountability Report. I welcome this report, now in its third year, by which EMI aims to track Ireland's engagement with Europe through a series of statistical indicators. These indicators range from measuring Irish input at the pre-legislative stage of EU policy formation, European Parliament and Oireachtas engagement, to the stage of final decision-making at the Council of the European Union. This year's report also includes a chapter on the Stability Treaty Referendum. I note a number of welcome developments over the past year. There was a significant increase in Ministerial attendance at Council meetings

and in 2012 average Irish ministerial attendance at Council stood at 97%. There has been a large increase also in the number of pre-Council briefings of Oireachtas Committees. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Union Affairs met a total of 36 times during 2012. Inevitably, a report of this nature places a particular focus on recording quantifiable outputs but I hope these will inform a rigorous and qualitative assessment of Ireland's engagement with the European Union and to identify areas for improvement. I see the value of this report not just in the statistical information provided but more generally in contributing to better public understanding and oversight of EU matters.

Human Rights Issues

106. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide an update on the human rights abuses by the Malian military as reported by human rights organisations. [21287/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Government is very concerned about the human rights situation in Mali and has highlighted the matter on a number of occasions at EU level and with our partners in the international community. The EU Foreign Affairs Council has repeatedly called on all parties in Mali to abide by international human rights and humanitarian law standards. This message is reinforced when meeting with members of the Malian Government in international fora, including at the Donor Conference on Mali which is taking place in Brussels today. The Council has also emphasised the importance of progress on the political track and the implementation of the transition roadmap which has been agreed by the Malian Government and Parliament. Especially important will be the holding of free and fair elections in the coming months and implementation of a meaningful national dialogue and reconciliation process. EU Foreign Ministers have also welcomed the announcement by the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court of the opening of an investigation into the situation in Mali. Ireland engages actively in discussions on Mali at the United Nations. In this context, we have welcomed the report in February by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which outlined evidence of serious human rights violations by both the Malian military and by militant groups in the north of the country. The report also highlighted issues which must be addressed in the response to the current crisis in Mali if lasting peace and stability is to be achieved, including, notably, the serious underlying and long-neglected ethnic tensions in the country.

At the 22nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, in March 2013, the Council adopted by consensus a resolution on assistance to the Republic of Mali in the field of human rights. The resolution was cosponsored by Ireland. It established a mandate for an independent expert on the situation of human rights in Mali, with a view to assisting the Government of Mali in its efforts to promote and protect human rights, and to act upon the recommendations set forth in resolutions of the Human Rights Council. The Council repeated its call for an immediate halt to all human rights violations and acts of violence and for strict respect of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also called upon all forces and armed groups present within the territory to ensure that international human rights law and international humanitarian law are strictly respected. On 22 January 2013, Mali was reviewed under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the Human Rights Council. During this review, Ireland recommended that Mali adopt and implement measures to ensure that international human rights standards are observed by the Malian Armed Forces, in particular the absolute ban on torture and ill-treatment and to ensure that all reports of torture and other ill-treatment are investigated effectively with those responsible being brought to justice. Ireland also recommended that Mali take all feasible measures to protect children from recruitment by state-allied and non-state armed groups,

including contributing information, analysis and recommendations to the UN and other stakeholders to support and strengthen their efforts to ensure that international standards are upheld.

Recognising the need for human rights training for the Malian army, Ireland is contributing six trainers and two HQ personnel to the EU Training Mission which is working to support strengthening and reform of the Malian army. Ireland is also committed to supporting international and domestic efforts in the area of electoral preparations and human rights monitoring, working in partnership with other donors and civil society.

Property Taxation Exemptions

107. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Finance if local authorities are exempt, for any period of time, from having to pay the local property tax. [23259/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Local authorities will be liable to pay the Local Property Tax (LPT) on their properties in the same way as any other residential property owner, unless the properties in question are used to provide special needs accommodation. This refers to people who require support to enable them to live in the community, such as sheltered accommodation for the elderly or the disabled. The Revenue Commissioners have published guidelines to assist local authorities in identifying special needs accommodation. Where an LPT liability arises, the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, as amended, deems all local authority residential properties to be in the lowest valuation band for the initial valuation period (2013 to 2016) and also allows such bodies to defer their 2013 LPT liability until 2014. This is to allow such bodies to put in place arrangements for the payment of the tax and for the valuation of their properties.

Motor Fuels Issues

108. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which he continues to engage with the road haulage representatives in the context of the extent to which high fuel prices here place the industry at a disadvantage in comparison with other European countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23353/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy will be aware that I engaged on a number of occasions last year with the Irish Road Haulage Association and, out of that engagement, a working group was set up between Department officials, Revenue, the IRHA and public representatives to examine the issue of fuel prices. In Budget 2013 I announced that I would be introducing a commercial diesel relief thus allowing qualifying hauliers to reclaim a proportion of the mineral oil tax paid on auto-diesel purchased for qualifying vehicles.

Provision was made in this year's Finance Act to allow for this relief which will apply to purchases made on or after 1st July this year and the amount to be repaid will vary by reference to the price at which auto-diesel is purchased, subject to a maximum repayment of 7.5 cent per litre.

The Revenue Commissioners, who are charged with implementing the repayment scheme, met with representatives of the Irish Road Haulage Association (IRHA) on 10th April 2013 to outline the operation of the scheme and to answer queries. The Revenue Commissioners expect to hold further meetings with the IRHA and other transport operator representatives in preparation for the commencement of the scheme.

Health Levy Issues

109. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Finance if the stamp duty collected by means of the health insurance levy has resulted in a surplus in the years 2009, 2010 and 2011; the amount of such surpluses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23111/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Health Insurance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 was introduced to make the cost of private health insurance accessible to older people, to support the Government’s policy of community rating of health insurance. Community rating, in principle, provides that everybody is charged the same premium for a particular health insurance plan, irrespective of age, gender and the current or likely future state of their health. This measure is in response to the Supreme Court’s decision in July 2008 to strike down elements of the previous risk equalisation scheme as *ultra vires*. It was intended that the measure would be cost neutral over its duration – that is, the cost of the age related income tax credit would be met by the yield from the health insurance levy, which is a Stamp Duty. The scheme was initially intended to run for three years but was extended for a further year before being replaced by the current permanent risk equalisation scheme under the Health Insurance (Amendment) Act 2012.

I am assuming the Deputy is asking whether the yield from the health insurance levy exceeded the cost of the age related income tax credit in the years in question. However, it is more appropriate to look at the interim scheme as a whole, rather than individual years. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the annual yield for the years 2009 to date from the health insurance levy, and the cost of age related income tax credits paid out over the same period, are as follows.

Year	Age-Related income tax-credit cost	Stamp Duty health insurance levy yield
-	€m	€m
2009	216	197
2010	308	318
2011	333	347
2012	436	437
2013 to date	68	169
Totals	1,361	1,468

As can be seen from the figures, in 2009 the health insurance levy yield was €19m below the age related income tax credits paid out; in 2010 the levy yield was €10m in excess of the cost of the credits; in 2011 the levy yield was €14 m in excess of the cost of the credits; and in 2012 the levy yield was €1m in excess of the credits. While the levy yield in 2013 to date is significantly higher than the credits paid out, no further levy will be received in respect of the interim scheme while payments of age related credit will continue until January 2014 in respect of policies paid by instalment. The interim scheme is still broadly on target to be revenue neutral.

Under the new permanent risk equalisation scheme, the health insurance levy continues to be collected as a Stamp Duty but it is paid into the new Risk Equalisation Fund rather than the Exchequer. The age related income tax credits have been replaced by “risk equalisation credits” which operate outside the tax system. It is also intended that the permanent scheme will be cost neutral – that is, the cost of the risk equalisation credit will be met by the yield from the health insurance levy. The projected turnover (levy yield/credit cost) of the new scheme is c.

€500m per annum.

Financial Services Regulation

110. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a breakdown of funding levies paid by each regulated body to the Financial Regulator in 2010, 2011 and 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23119/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have to inform the Deputy that, for reasons of confidentiality, the Central Bank are unable to provide information on the levies payable by individual firms. For information, the gross annual funding requirement represents, for each industry category, the proportion (50% in most cases) of the budget for financial regulation activities attributable to that category. This is then adjusted for any under/over recovery of costs from that category in the previous year in order to arrive at the net annual funding requirement for the category in question. The attached table provides an analysis of changes in the amount of levies recouped from industry categories over each of the years 2010 to 2012.

There are number of exceptions to the 50/50 funding arrangement including covered credit institutions which fund 100% of the cost of their prudential regulation and 100% of the cost of the PCAR and PLAR reviews and Credit Unions whose levies are capped at 0.01% of their total assets as at 30 September in the previous year.

Net Annual Funding Requirements

	INDUSTRY CATEGORY	2012 nAFR €000	2011 nAFR €000	2010 nAFR €000
A	Credit Institutions	€44,900	€53,364	€21,216
B	Insurance	€12,013	€9,741	€7,609
C	Intermediaries	€2,729	€2,629	€2,506
D	Securities Firms	€6,591	€5,175	€3,242
E	Collective Investment Schemes and Service Providers	€5,538	€4,883	€4,078
F	Credit Unions	€1,398	€1,442	€1,440
G	Moneylenders	€300	€352	€309
H	Approved Professional Bodies	€44	€44	€35
I	Exchanges	€206	€196	€150
J1	Bureaux de Change & Money Transmitters	€79	€155	€136
K	E-money Providers	€0	€0	€0
L	Default Assessment	n/a	n/a	n/a

	INDUSTRY CATEGORY	2012 nAFR €000	2011 nAFR €000	2010 nAFR €000
M1	Retail Credit Firms & Home Reversion Firms	€107	€146	€236
N	Payment Institutions	€985	€837	€684
		€74,890	€78,964	€41,641

Financial Services Regulation

111. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a breakdown of monetary penalties imposed, including directions to refund or withhold moneys charged or paid, on each regulated body by the Financial Regulator in 2010, 2011 and 2012 [23120/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): A breakdown of the monetary penalties imposed as part of entering into settlement agreements with the Central Bank under Section 33AV of the Central Bank Act 1942 (as amended) is set out in the following table.

There have been no directions issued by the Central Bank to refund or withhold monies charged or paid during the period 2010-2012. It should be noted, however, that the Central Bank generally expects, as part of the process of reaching a settlement with a firm, that the firm rectifies the regulatory breach in question. In that respect, during the period 2010-2012, six regulated entities gave refunds to affected customers as part of the process of entering into a settlement agreement.

The Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Bill which completed Committee stage last month provides for a system of customer redress where financial service providers engage in misconduct that is widespread or recurring and which causes customers loss or damage.

2012

-	Settlements		17	
-	Monetary Sanctions		€8,492,900	
-	2012	PRISM Rating	Monetary Sanctions	Date of Settlements
-	Aviva Insurance Europe SE (ENF1)	H	€1,225,000	17/12/2012
1	Aviva Life & Pensions Ireland Limited (ENF1)	H	€1,225,000	17/12/2012
2	Community Credit Union (ENF2)	ML	€21,000	13/12/2012
3	Dolmen Stockbrokers Limited (ENF2)	ML	€20,000	12/12/2012

15 May 2013

-	Settlements		17	
4	ICON plc (ENF2)	N/A	€10,000	21/11/2012
5	Ulster Bank Ireland Limited (ENF1)	H	€1,200,000	14/11/2012
6	Ulster Bank Ireland Limited (ENF1)	H	€760,000	14/11/2012
7	Gerard Geraghty t/a Geraghty & Co (ENF2)	L	€1,100	25/10/2012
8	Maurice Buckley t/a Maurice Buckley Insurance Investment Services (ENF2)	L	€800	24/10/2012
9	Irish Mortgage Corporation t/a Moneyzone (ENF1)	L	€65,000	23/10/2012
10	Bank of Ireland Mortgage Bank (ENF1)	UH	€120,000	02/10/2012
11	UBS International Life Limited (ENF2)	MH	€65,000	19/06/2012
12	Alico Life International Limited (ENF1)	ML	€3,200,000	29/03/2012
13	Hitachi Capital Insurance Europe Limited (ENF1)	L	€25,000	27/03/2012
14	Merrion Stockbrokers Limited (ENF1)	MH	€65,000	21/03/2012
15	Aviva Health Insurance Ireland (ENF1)	ML	€245,000	09/03/2012
16	Aviva Life & Pensions Ireland Limited (ENF1)	H	€245,000	07/03/2012

2011

-	Settlements	10	
-	Monetary Sanctions	€5,050,000	

Questions - Written Answers

-	Settlements	10	
-	2011	Monetary Sanctions	Date of Settlements
-	Combined Insurance Company of Europe Limited	€3,350,000	16/12/2011
1	Susquehanna International Securities Limited	€60,000	13/12/2011
2	J & E Davy t/a Davy	€50,000	08/12/2011
3	McSharry & Foley (Sligo) Ltd	€10,000	24/10/2011
4	Goldman Sachs Bank (Europe) plc	€160,000	08/09/2011
5	Pan Index Limited	€40,000	25/08/2011
6	Aviva Investors Ireland Limited	€30,000	20/07/2011
7	MBNA Europe Bank Limited	€750,000	21/06/2011
8	Scotia bank (Ireland) Limited	€600,000	02/06/2011
9	Patricia Clinton t/a Innovative Mortgage Service and Mr Frank Clinton	N/A	11/03/2011

2010

-	Settlements	8	
-	Monetary Sanctions	€2,248,700	
-	2010	Monetary Sanctions	Date of Settlements
-	Allied Irish Banks plc	€2,000,000	17/12/2010
1	NCB Stockbrokers Limited	€100,000	16/12/2010
2	The Endowment Policy Purchasing Company Limited	€23,500	09/11/2010
3	Inveralmond Insurance Limited	€26,600	07/09/2010
4	Creation Insurance Limited	€26,600	06/09/2010
5	Culleton Insurances Limited	€27,000	15/06/2010
6	Allied Irish Banks, p.l.c.	€40,000	21/05/2010

15 May 2013

-	Settlements	8	
7	Jim Mannion & Co (Insurances) Ltd	€5,000	17/02/2010

Mortgage Interest Relief Extension

112. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider extending the mortgage interest relief on houses purchased between 2004 and 2008 as announced in Budget 2012. [23125/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware the Programme for Government contained a very specific commitment to examine a proposal to increase mortgage interest relief to 30% for first time buyers who bought between 2004 and 2008. In Budget 2012, this commitment was fulfilled. It is not my intention to widen the parameters of the commitment contained in the Programme for Government.

As you will appreciate, I receive numerous requests for the introduction of new tax reliefs and the extension of existing ones, but I must be mindful of the public finances and the many demands on the Exchequer, given the significant budgetary constraints. Tax reliefs, no matter how worthwhile in themselves, reduce the tax base and make general reform of the tax system that much more difficult.

IBRC Loans

113. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation breached the terms of its Commitments Letter to the European Commission by issuing a further €5 million loan to a person (details supplied) in 2012 to pay legal costs, when their debt with IBRC amounted to approximately €900 million in personal and corporate accounts at the time. [23153/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Special Liquidators that they are not in a position to comment on individual cases. The information requested is confidential and it would not be appropriate for the Special Liquidators to release such information.

The terms of the European Commission Commitments letter are contained in the Commission Decision of 29.06.2011 and published at –

(http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/cases/235764/235764_1251125_112_6.pdf). I am not aware of any breaches by IBRC of the Commitments contained in that decision.

IBRC Staff

114. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if former or existing staff transferred to the National Asset Management Agency with Irish Bank Resolution Corporation are free to work with borrowers or has a cooling off period been imposed; if former or existing staff have to seek his Department's permission to take up roles with investment firms or with individuals-companies who have substantial loans with the IBRC. [23154/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There is no requirement for any IBRC

employee to obtain permission from my Department to take up any offer of employment with investment firms or with individuals/companies who have substantial loans with the IBRC. However, I am advised by the Special Liquidators that there is a clause in all employment contracts of employees of IBRC that prevents them from disclosing or using any confidential information gained in the course of their employment with IBRC. I am advised by the Special Liquidators that they are unaware of any IBRC employees joining such organisations.

In addition, Ethics in Public Office Acts apply to current and former executives and other office holders in the IBRC where the salary earned by those employees is not less than the maximum salary of a higher executive officer (general service grade, Class B PRSI) in the Civil Service (c.€55,415). Codes of Conduct issued under these Acts require that former office holders should act in a way which ensures an unfair advantage would not be conferred in a new appointment, by virtue of for example, access to official information the office holder previously enjoyed.

Banking Sector Issues

115. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm the net interest margin at Allied Irish Banks at the end of June 2012, September 2012, December 2012 and March 2013. [23155/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been informed by AIB that the bank's net interest margin for December 2012 is 0.9% or 1.22% excluding Eligible Liabilities Guarantee (ELG) fees and all relevant disclosures can be found on page 23 of AIB's 2012 Annual Accounts published on 27th March 2013. With respect to June 2012, net interest margin was 0.9% or 1.24% excluding ELG fees and this information is published on page 8 of AIB's 2012 Half Yearly Financial Report.

Banking Sector Issues

116. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 130 of 7 May 2013, if the two advisors providing advice to both sides of the transaction whereby €1.2 billion of EBS loans were given by Allied Irish Banks to the AIB pension scheme in August 2012, were from the one firm, KPMG. [23156/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As I have previously advised the Deputy for commercial confidentiality reasons AIB has confirmed that it does not publicly disclose the details of contracts with individual external service providers. However, the bank can confirm that for the purpose of asset valuation, separate advisors were used by AIB and the Trustees of the AIB Pension Fund.

NAMA Debtors

117. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the position adopted by the National Asset Management Agency in response to individual voluntary arrangement proposals in Britain by its debtors. [23158/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by NAMA that all such proposals are considered on a case by case basis by reference to the objective of maximising debt repayment to NAMA.

NAMA Debtors

118. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance pursuant to section 2 (viii) of the National Asset Management Agency Act 2009 which provides for NAMA to contribute to the social and economic development of the State, if NAMA can outline how it regards its responsibilities and objectives in the context of the National Monument Site at 14-17 Moore Street in Dublin city centre. [23159/13]

Minister for Finance(Deputy Michael Noonan): As is NAMA's practice, and in compliance with Sections 99 and 202 of the National Asset Management Act 2009, NAMA does not comment on individual assets under the control of its debtors.

Departmental Expenditure

119. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the fees paid by Anglo Irish Bank to the law firm Matheson Ormsby Prentice in respect of advice and services connected to the so-called Maple 10 or Anglo Golden Circle transaction in 2008. [23160/13]

120. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the fees paid, both directly and indirectly by Anglo Irish Bank to Morgan Stanley in respect of advice and services connected to the so-called Maple 10 or Anglo Golden Circle transaction in 2008. [23161/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 119 and 120 together.

Due to commercial confidentiality and sensitivities, and also solicitor/client confidentiality, the Special Liquidators do not propose to provide details of amounts due and paid by Anglo Irish Bank to Matheson Ormsby Prentice and/or Morgan Stanley in 2008.

Tax Yield

121. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Finance the amount received from the carbon tax in 2012; if he will provide a breakdown of the amount that came from home heating and the amount from motor vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23172/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the net receipts for carbon tax in 2012 are set out in the table below. As home heating fuel can be kerosene, Marked Gas Oil, LPG or Natural Gas and as end use is not determined at the time of supply it is not possible to accurately provide the breakdown between receipts from home heating and motor fuel that the Deputy requests. Auto-diesel and Petrol carbon tax receipts would, in the main, be from motor fuel.

Fuel Type	Net Receipts - €
Auto Diesel	130,778,847
Petrol	74,622,264
Aviation Gasoline	48,548
Kerosene	49,412,885
Marked Gas Oil	54,721,071
Fuel Oil	2,319,299

Fuel Type	Net Receipts - €
LPG (Other)	8,516,147
Auto LPG	25,094
Natural Gas	44,510,054
Total	353,954,210

Pension Provisions

122. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Finance if it is the case that a person (details supplied) in County Waterford could stand to lose their pension as is outlined; if an alternative to this is being considered; if an alternative measure will be implemented; the options open to this employee to prevent a loss of pensions' savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23264/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware the pension arrangements for the staff of Permanent TSB are a matter for the management of that company and for the trustees of the relevant pension schemes. The development of alternative proposals would also be a matter for the company and the trustees. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the implications for an individual arising out of any proposed restructuring by Permanent TSB of its defined benefit pension schemes. I understand that a proposal by the company to the trustees in relation to the defined benefit pension schemes may be referred to the Labour Court which is a matter for the interested parties.

Tax Reliefs Availability

123. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance if it is permissible for a registered charity to include political donations for tax relief purposes. [23287/13]

128. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance if it is permitted for a registered charity to make a political donation and still receive tax relief on their income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23337/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 123 and 128 together.

The charitable tax exemption scheme is administered by the Revenue Commissioners. In order to avail of the exemption, a body or trust must be established for charitable purposes only and must apply all of its income to charitable purposes. The Deputies are most likely aware that while bodies that hold a charitable tax exemption are not permitted to make donations that directly support political parties or candidates, they are however, permitted to apply their funds to activities that advance or promote their charitable purposes. Depending on the circumstances, these can include certain political lobbying and advocacy activities in support of their charitable purpose.

Procedures are in place to ensure that bodies that are granted charitable tax exemption are subject to periodic reviews to ensure that the terms of the exemption continue to be fulfilled. All relevant matters, including matters which have been brought to the Revenue Commissioners attention, are taken into account in the context of such reviews.

In regard to the specific issues raised by the Deputies, the Revenue Commissioners have indicated that in order to determine if any such item of expenditure satisfies the terms of a

charitable tax exemption it is necessary to examine that expenditure, the context in which it was incurred and the charitable objects of the body incurring the expenditure in detail.

If the Deputies wish to provide specific details then the Revenue Commissioners will investigate the issue/s to ensure the terms of the exemption/s in question are being adhered to.

Household Charge Collection

124. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Finance further to persons who did not pay the household charge in 2012, if this charge with penalties will be deducted at source by the Revenue Commissioners in addition to the local property tax should they fail to pay for either one or both; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23288/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they are currently in discussions with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) regarding receipt of the final database for those who have paid the Household Charge by 1 July 2013. The Commissioners anticipate that they will receive the final register later in the year.

By virtue of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended), where the Household Charge for 2012 has not been paid by 1 July 2013, the outstanding amount will be increased to €200 and will be treated as a charge to Local Property Tax (LPT). As a consequence, the same methods, including deduction at source, that are available to Revenue to collect LPT from those who do not comply with their LPT obligations will be available to recover the €200 Household Charge arrears.

When the final database of those who have paid the household charge is provided by the LGMA at some point after 1 July 2013, Revenue will identify those who have not paid the charge and, in due course towards the end of the year, start collecting the additional €200 LPT liability.

For those who have yet to pay their Household Charge liability, the amount due including late payment fees and interest is currently €144. I would strongly recommend that those who have not paid it to do so as soon as possible or face additional costs.

Departmental Expenditure

125. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23313/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): My Department had no litigation cases in the General Court in Luxembourg and in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012. During that same period, officials from my Department attended the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg on 17 occasions.

Legal costs incurred by the State for cases before the European Court of Justice are borne by the Chief State Solicitor's Office, and as it is not possible to disaggregate these costs in respect of individual Government Departments, it is not possible to include them in this response.

My Department has been unable to obtain the full information in relation to travel costs requested by the Deputy in the time available. I will shortly write to the Deputy directly with the information.

Tax Yield

126. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of extra revenue per annum that would be generated if a new third rate of income tax of 45% was introduced on incomes over €80,000 per annum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23328/13]

127. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of extra revenue per annum that would be generated if a new third rate of income tax of 50% was introduced on incomes over €125,000 per annum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23329/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 126 and 127 together.

As the Deputy is aware the Programme for Government contained a very specific commitment to examine a proposal to increase mortgage interest relief to 30% for first time buyers who bought between 2004 and 2008. In Budget 2012, this commitment was fulfilled. It is not my intention to widen the parameters of the commitment contained in the Programme for Government. As you will appreciate, I receive numerous requests for the introduction of new tax reliefs and the extension of existing ones, but I must be mindful of the public finances and the many demands on the Exchequer, given the significant budgetary constraints. Tax reliefs, no matter how worthwhile in themselves, reduce the tax base and make general reform of the tax system that much more difficult.

Question No. 128 answered with Question No. 123.

Tax Rebates

129. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Finance if there is a set time for processing flat rate addition refunds from the Revenue Commissioners; if he will investigate the reason refunds due to Irish breeders (details supplied) are taking longer than normal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23361/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the procedure for the company in question to receive a flat-rate addition refund under the European VAT Refund (EVR) system requires it to firstly apply to the UK HMRC. HMRC review the refund application, approve it and forward it electronically to Revenue. The allowed time under EU Directive 2008/9/EC for processing such claims is up to four months from the date of receipt of a claim. However, if it is necessary for Revenue to request additional information in respect of a claim, the maximum time limit can be extended up to eight months.

Revenue has confirmed that it received the claims in question via electronic transmission in January 2013 and April 2013. The claims required certain clarifications from the company and discussions in this regard are ongoing. I am assured by Revenue that the claims are receiving immediate attention and payment will issue as soon as the required clarifications are received.

EU-IMF Programme of Support Issues

130. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will deal with the major

imbalance in Ireland's contribution to the current Europe wide financial crisis. [23364/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will recall the EU-IMF Programme of Financial Support provided funding for essential public services at a time when the State could not access financial markets at reasonable rates. The Government's commitment to the Programme does not, and has not stopped us from seeking and agreeing changes to aspects of the programme. A series of burden reducing measures were negotiated by the Government and have been put in place since early 2011. First we have achieved a reduction in interest on EFSF and EFSM funds and on bilateral loans. The interest rates on EU funding mechanisms (the EFSF and EFSM) were reduced in 2011 and are now provided at rates close to the cost of funding. The maturities of these loans were extended at the same time. The interest rate reductions for the EFSF and the EFSM have also been reflected in the rates charged on Ireland's bilateral loans from the UK, Sweden and Denmark. It is estimated that the interest rate reductions on the EU funding mechanisms and the bilateral loans are worth of the order of €9 billion over the initially envisaged 7 ½ year term of these loans. The positive impact of these changes has been significant as demonstrated by the fact that the average interest rate charged on our programme borrowing at the outset of the programme in 2010 was 5.82 per cent, whereas by end-March 2013, the National Treasury Management Agency has estimated that the all-in fixed euro equivalent cost of loans received under the EU/IMF programme was 3.32 per cent.

Second we have achieved an extension of the maturities of the loans. At the Ecofin and Eurogroup meetings in Dublin in April, EU and Euro-area Finance Ministers agreed in principle, to lengthen the maturities of the EFSF and EFSM loans to Ireland and Portugal by increasing the weighted average maturity of the loans by a further 7 years. The extension will smooth our debt redemption profile and lower our refinancing needs in the post-programme period, improving our long term debt sustainability.

Furthermore in February 2013 the Government successfully replaced the IBRC Promissory notes which had a weighted average life of c.7-8 years with Government Bonds with a weighted average life of c. 34-35 years at a lower funding cost for the State, resulting in significant annual interest savings. The Government have also removed Exceptional Liquidity Assistance and the inherent risk associated with short term borrowings which have to be rolled over on a fortnightly basis and have removed IBRC from the financial landscape.

In addition, there are quarterly reviews of the programme implementation and the Government have used these quarterly reviews to renegotiate various aspects of the programme, these include:

- a reversal in the reduction in the minimum wage;
- an agreement to reinvest proceeds from state asset sales in projects which are of a commercial nature, enhance employment and preserve long term fiscal sustainability;
- the acceptance by the Troika of the measures contained in the Government's *Jobs Initiative*;
- the securing of the Troika's agreement to the replacement of the fiscal adjustment measures incorporated in the original agreement for the 2012-14 period by measures that the Government considers to be more growth- and employment-friendly.

The success of our overall approach to date is illustrated by the NTMA's highly successful sale of €5 billion in ten year bonds in March. We are now in the final year of our programme of support, and the Government will continue to seek improvements in our programme conditions as appropriate to support a durable and successful exit.

Education Schemes

131. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a health care assistant course run by a private company (details supplied) under the auspices of his Department does not provide jobseekers with supports equivalent to those provided on similar courses run directly by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23123/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): In the design of the Momentum scheme, consideration was given to the question of additional payments/supports but in the current difficult economic circumstances, it was decided that no additional payments, other than the retention of social welfare benefits, was warranted. This approach was discussed between the relevant Government Departments when the Programme was being designed last year.

Teachers' Remuneration

132. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a teacher (details supplied) in County Galway will have their salary corrected and backdated in line with scale set out under Circular 0008/2013. [23073/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): An official from the Primary Teachers Payroll Section of my Department has been in contact with the person concerned regarding the issues raised by the Deputy and outlined the current position to her.

School Enrolments

133. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline the catchment areas for school enrolment in two particular areas (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23078/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The question of enrolment in individual schools is the responsibility of the managerial authority of those schools. My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places. This may result, however, in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

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

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

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) is the statutory agency which can assist

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

As the Deputy may be aware, I announced at this year's Teacher Union Conferences that I will shortly bring to Government draft heads of a bill – the Education (Admission to School) Bill 2013. I will seek to publish the Bill in draft form to allow a full public discussion, including inputs from the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection and the education partners. I also intend to publish draft regulations that I plan to make when the Bill is enacted. In bringing forward these proposals, it is not my intention to unnecessarily intrude into how schools do their business. My policy objective is to ensure that every child is treated fairly and that the way in which schools decide on applications is structured, fair and transparent. As the Bill and the Regulations will be published in draft form, they will also be subject to a lot of detailed scrutiny before becoming law. I will be reflecting carefully on the views expressed in the consultation process to ensure they strike the right balance between school autonomy and fairness in our education system.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

134. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the considerable concern among parents of children with Down's syndrome regarding access for their children to resource hours under the terms of the Special Education Circular 02/05; if in particular he will address the issue whereby children with Down syndrome who have a mild learning disability currently have no access to resource hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23112/13]

136. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the supports that are available in mainstream schools for children with Down syndrome; the number of persons with the disorder that are attending mainstream schools in 2013, and the comparative number for 2010, 2011 and 2012 and the cost of special needs assistant support for the same years. [23126/13]

137. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason children with Down syndrome removed from the disability category post 2005; and if he has any plans to reverse this decision. [23127/13]

150. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if we will reclassify Down syndrome as a disability in all cases so as to ensure that all children with this condition are provided with resource teaching hours which was the pre-2005 position; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23327/13]

151. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will revisit the lack of resource teaching hours for children with Down syndrome in national schools. [23365/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 134, 136, 137, 150 and 151 together.

The Deputy will be aware of this Government's ongoing commitment to ensuring that all children with special educational needs, including children with Down syndrome, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs. The policy of my Department is to secure the maximum possible level of inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, or where a special school or special class placement may be

required to ensure such placements are provided for.

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

It should be noted that the introduction of the GAM in 2005 did not change the position in relation to the allocation of supports for children with Down syndrome who had mild general learning difficulty. Prior to the GAM introduction, Circular 08/02 set out that the level of additional support to be provided for children who present with a particular syndrome e.g. Down Syndrome, will be determined following consideration of psychological or other specialist reports which details the nature and degree of the child's special educational needs. The allocations made were differentiated on the basis of the extent of general learning difficulty of the child.

Pupils with Down syndrome may be allocated resources under the category of mild general learning disability, or under the categories of moderate general learning difficulty or Assessed Syndrome, in conjunction with another Low Incidence disability. There is not presently a distinct disability category of Down syndrome for resource allocation purposes. As such, it is not possible to advise of the number of children with Down syndrome who are attending mainstream primary education.

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

Teacher Recruitment

135. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will lift the teaching cap in relation to a college (details supplied) in Dublin to allow the college to move into developing new courses, consider Irish certification and fund Irish as English degree courses are funded and consider equality for students with a proper grants system; if he will also consider changing the status of further education colleges in view of the fact that they are under secondary school status and from first hand experience the college does not provide secondary level education, it is much more unique in it's education provision [23117/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The College referred to by the Deputy is operated as an approved Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) centre by City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC). Resources are allocated by my Department under the PLC programme to CDVEC and further distribution of these resources to colleges under it's remit, including this college, is a matter for CDVEC. The application process for the next academic year has recently been completed and providers have been notified of their allocation. There has been no increase in the number of places allocated to CDVEC.

There is a need to ensure that further education resources are focused on the delivery of

further education while at the same time maximising the progression opportunities for learners in further education to higher education.

Questions Nos. 136 and 137 answered with Question No. 134.

Student Grant Scheme Administration

138. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will publish the external review of Student Universal Support Ireland business processes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23130/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The external review of Student Universal Support Ireland's was commissioned by the City of Dublin. Therefore the arrangements for the publication of the report will be a matter for City of Dublin VEC.

Home Tuition Scheme

139. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will justify the changes in the July provision of home tuition for children with autism, whereby siblings will be treated as a group and not be provided with the one to one tuition that they had previously received. [23151/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the July Education Programme is available to all special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism who choose to extend their education services through the month of July. My Department also provides for a July Programme for pupils with a severe/profound general learning disability. Where school based provision is not feasible, 10 hours per week home based provision may be grant aided to eligible pupils. Therefore the home based scheme is designed to support children who are not in a position to attend school, and it is generally the case that the Tuition is provided at the child's place of residence. In the vast majority of cases therefore, there will be 1 child in receipt of tuition with 1 tutor providing tuition. However in a small number of cases where there are qualifying siblings, a combined allocation is made. As Home Tuition is intended to compensate for school based provision it is reasonable to reflect the school grouping principle and allocate to siblings accordingly. For example, in a school setting one teacher is allocated to a class of six pupils with autism. Accordingly it is considered appropriate that a tutor can provide collective tuition to members of one family in the home at the same time.

Further clarity on this issue has been included on the information note accompanying the application forms for the home based scheme this year.

Schools Building Projects Status

140. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) in County Dublin will receive the funding they require for much needed upgrading and refurbishment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23171/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning. Stage 2b of the project which includes Planning Permission, Fire Certification, Disability Access Cer-

tification (DAC) and the preparation of tender documents has been approved. The project is listed on the five year school building programme to go to construction in 2015/16.

Student Grant Scheme Application Numbers

141. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of applicants for third level education grants in County Kerry; the number of students that have been paid grants and college fees to date; the number that were refused; the number of students who sought an appeal and were accepted as valid appeals; the number of students that have been requested to supply further information; the number of applications that are still pending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23246/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand from Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that, as at close of business on 14th May 2013, it had received 2,557 student grant applications for Co. Kerry, for attendance at both further and higher education. 1,356 have been paid their maintenance or had their entitlement to fees confirmed (where they were awarded a 'fees only' grant).

Some 991 applications from Co. Kerry have been refused or cancelled. There are 8 applications currently with SUSI for processing. 10 applications are awaiting further documentation from the student. These students are being contacted by SUSI as part of their close out strategy for applications for the 2012/13 academic year to confirm that they are still seeking a grant. Some 255 appeals have been received by SUSI to date from Co. Kerry.

Schools Building Projects Status

142. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the new school build will commence in respect of a school (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23247/13]

143. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a proposed new primary school (details supplied) in County Wexford will proceed to tender stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23267/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 142 and 143 together. The building project referred to by the Deputies is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning.

Stage 2b of the project which includes Planning Permission, Fire Certification, Disability Access Certification (DAC) and the preparation of tender documents was recently completed and approved.

The project is listed on the five year school building programme to go to construction in 2014/15.

Departmental Legal Costs

144. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General

Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23311/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): There were no costs incurred by my Department in respect of the need to travel to either Luxembourg or Strasbourg for litigation purposes, during the period 2005-2012.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

145. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 428 and 429 in which he stated that tuition was further approved for the child to which the Deputy has referred until the date that the new class physically opened on the basis that he was unable to access placement during this period, if he will provide a copy of the documentation sent to the parent that recorded this approval of the home tuition at that time. [23322/13]

146. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 428 and 429 if he will clarify his answer in which he stated that the National Council for Special Education identified placements for the children referred to by him in June 2011 in view of meeting (details supplied); if he will provide a copy of the actual documentation that records when these apparent placements were communicated to the parents from June 2011 or subsequently after that date. [23323/13]

147. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 428 and 429 if he will clarify his answer where he stated that his approval was provided notwithstanding that the child had not been enrolled by then and remains not enrolled in the school despite the identification of the placement by confirming that this school had in place on or before 17 October 2011, that is, the date on which the home tuition ceased, a school policy covering the ASD unit in line with the requirements of the 1998 Education Act and that a copy of this policy had been sent to the parent on or before 17 October 2011 as had been requested by the parent. [23324/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 145 to 147, inclusive, together.

Copies of the documentation requested by the Deputy can be released to her once she has obtained and provided to the relevant section in my Department the appropriate consent from the parent in question. As outlined to the Deputy previously the NCSE identified placements in June 2011 for the children to whom she referred in her April parliamentary question on the issue. Home tuition was approved for these children for a 4 week period from the start of the 2011/2012 school year as the placements previously identified by NCSE had been assigned to other children and were no longer available.

The meeting referred to by the Deputy took place in July 2011 at which point parents in attendance were advised of a number of placements available. Some placements identified earlier to parents were at this point no longer available. Following this meeting a number of additional placements were identified by the NCSE. One of these placements was in a special classes for autism approved by NCSE. While this placement was identified in September 2011, it did not open until December 2011 as the school needed additional time to prepare itself. In the light of this, Home Tuition was further approved for the child to whom the Deputy has referred until the date that the new class physically opened on the basis that he was unable to access placement during this period. This approval was provided notwithstanding that the child had not been en-

rolled by then and could not have attended on 14th of October because of this fact. Enrolment of the child in the school was a matter for the parents of the child and the school's Board of Management. The availability of the school's documented policies to the parent is a matter for the school and the parents.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

148. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the concerns of boards of management and parents' associations of smaller fee-charging schools in relation to the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio; if his attention has been drawn to the serious impact such increases will have on such schools, particularly schools under the patronage of Protestant Churches; his views on whether such schools provide a very important educational resource for many children in rural areas; the proposals, if any, he has to assist such schools remain viable; his views on whether those schools play an important role in the plurality and diversity in educational provision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23325/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Government has protected frontline services in schools to the greatest extent possible in the recent budget and there will be no reduction in teacher numbers in primary schools and in free second level schools for the 2013/14 school year as a result of the recent budget. The DEIS scheme for disadvantaged schools is also fully protected with no overall changes to staffing levels or funding as a result of the budget. However, at a time of severely reduced resources, priorities have to be made. In an effort to ensure fairness in the education system, the PTR in fee charging second level schools will rise by two points to 23:1 in September 2013.

However, these schools have the resources, through fees charged, to employ teachers privately. This is an option which is not available to schools in the free education scheme. A report on the analysis of the tuition income of fee-charging schools carried out by my Department was recently published and shows that the schools in question have €81m in discretionary income that schools in the free scheme do not have. It is important to note that the report does not contain any policy proposals at this stage. However, even after the Budget changes are implemented, the discretionary income available to these schools will still be quite considerable.

I would like to assure the Deputy that this Government recognises the importance of ensuring that students from a Protestant or reformed church background can attend a school that reflects their denominational ethos while at the same time ensuring that funding arrangements are in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. With regard to the fee-charging Protestant schools, an arrangement exists whereby funding is provided by my Department to the Secondary Education Committee (SEC), an organisation run by the churches involved in managing the Protestant secondary schools. The SEC then disburses funds to the Protestant fee-charging schools on behalf of pupils who would otherwise have difficulty with the cost of fees and who, in the absence of such financial support, would be unable to attend a second level school of a reformed church or Protestant ethos. Funding amounts to €6.5 million annually. This fund ensures that necessitous Protestant children can attend a school of their choice.

State Examinations Issues

149. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will expedite the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[23326/13]

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

Questions Nos. 150 and 151 answered with Question No. 134.

Departmental Legal Costs

152. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23318/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question I can confirm that no staff, since the formation of my Department, attended the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg or the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg as a result of litigation in 2011 and 2012.

Trade Agreements

153. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will outline all pending trade negotiations that Ireland is involved with, either directly, or indirectly through the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23084/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): As trade negotiations are a matter of EU competence, Ireland's involvement in trade negotiations is as an active contributor to overall EU policy. The overarching theme of the Irish Presidency is the contribution of trade to growth, jobs and economic recovery; consequently I attach great importance to promoting the EU's external trade agenda. As we know from national success in export performance, trade can also be a powerful engine for Growth and Job Creation in Europe. Increasing trade is one of the few ways to bolster economic growth without the necessity of drawing on severely constrained public finances. The contribution of external demand to GDP is the EU's most important source of growth for the moment, as domestic demand components - both public and private - remain weak. In fact, the contribution of trade to GDP in 2012 (+0.9 percentage points) cut the depth of the recession in the EU by a factor of four, helping compensate for the downward pull of other economic variables. The contribution of external demand to economic growth is bound to increase in future, as 90% of global economic growth in the next 10-15 years is expected to be generated outside Europe, a third of it in China alone. Trade policy is therefore an essential component of the EU's growth compact. More trade is also essential to job creation: About 30 million jobs in the EU depend on sales to the rest of the world, an increase of 10 million since 1995. On average, each additional €1 billion of exports supports between 8,000 to 15,000 additional jobs across the EU.

Negotiations underway or planned could boost EU GDP by more than 2% or €250bn -equivalent to the size of the Austrian or Danish economy — and support an increase of more than 2 million jobs related to trade across the EU.

The trade negotiations currently underway are set out below.

EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

President Obama endorsed the launch of free trade talks with the EU in his State of the Union address on 9 February. This followed on from the work of the EU-US High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth that concluded a comprehensive agreement addressing a broad range of bilateral trade and investment issues, including regulatory issues, and contributing to the development of global rules, would provide the most significant mutual benefit.

The EU Council is considering a negotiating mandate to give to the Commission to start the talks. The Irish Presidency has prioritised this process of seeking agreement from EU member states on the final mandate. The negotiating mandate was discussed in depth at the highly successful Informal Trade Ministers meeting that I hosted in Dublin on 17-18 April.

The EU-US mandate will be the subject of intensive discussion over the coming weeks and it remains the Presidency's strong intention to seek to agree a mandate at the Foreign Affairs Council (Trade) on 14 June.

EU-Canada

Negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with Canada (CETA) are almost concluded. Negotiators are currently meeting in order to progress the final stages of an agreement, however no date is set for a final Ministerial meeting to conclude the agreement.

EU-Japan

Negotiations on a free trade agreement between the EU and Japan were launched on 25 March. The first round of negotiations was held in Brussels from 15-19 April and was conducted in a positive atmosphere. The aim is for a comprehensive agreement in goods, services and investment eliminating tariffs, non-tariff barriers and covering other trade-related issues, such as public procurement, regulatory issues, competition, and sustainable development.

EU-Singapore

This agreement is the EU's second ambitious agreement with a key Asian trading partner, after the EU-Korea FTA, and the first with a member of the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Once fully implemented, the deal will open up markets on both sides in a number of sectors, including banking, insurance and other financial services industries. Although the substantive negotiations have now concluded, negotiations on Investment Protection provisions are continuing.

EU-ASEAN

Talks on trade agreements with other ASEAN countries (in addition to Singapore) are at various stages of maturity. Talks are underway with Vietnam and Malaysia with trade negotiations with Thailand likely to start in a matter of weeks.

EU-India

Negotiations with India, a key strategic partner for the EU, are continuing and may hopefully conclude in the coming months.

Eastern Neighbourhood

Negotiations on Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) are progress-

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ing well with Armenia, Georgia and Moldova. Negotiations with Ukraine have been concluded and the agreement is awaiting political endorsement on both sides.

Southern Neighbourhood

Negotiations on a DCFTA started with Morocco in the week beginning 22 April 2013. Preparatory meetings have been arranged with Jordan and Tunisia.

Mercosur

Negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement with Mercosur are continuing on a technical level.

Gulf Cooperation Council

Negotiations are underway and have been for some considerable time.

World Trade Organisation

Preparations continue for the 9th Ministerial Conference (MC9) of the WTO in Indonesia in December. Discussions on a package of deliverables are centred on Trade Facilitation and trade development initiatives for Least Developed Countries.

Other Agreements

Negotiations on a new International Technology Agreement are also taking place at the WTO. This agreement will extend the range of electronic products that can be traded tariff free among signatories to the agreement. It is expected that talks will be substantially concluded by the end of 2013.

In addition, very early negotiations on an International Services Agreement have commenced among some of the world's largest exporters of services. Work on this agreement is at the early stage of development and a final conclusion is not expected until 2014 at the earliest.

Job Initiatives

154. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will direct that a dedicated jobs plan, similar to the one in place for the south east, would be put in place for County Kerry, in view of the economic crisis in the county, the total lack of FDI in recent years, the loss of large employers such as Amann Industries, Aetna, Glen Dimplex, Sara Lee without a Government led response, the significant unemployment and emigration problem, the unfavourable tax regime to attract FDI compared to our neighbours in County Limerick, the distortion of FDI performance figures for Kerry by being included with Cork, the poor road access to the county from Cork via the substandard Ovens to Ballyvourney road and from Limerick via delays at Adare, Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23140/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): On foot of the job losses announced by the Talk Talk company in Waterford in September 2011, I asked the agencies and stakeholders in the South East region with coming up with a set of actions to address the long-standing unemployment problem in Waterford and the region generally. The specific recommendations contained in the South East Employment Action Plan, produced by Forfas, are being progressed by a Forum representing the agencies and key stakeholders in the region.

The unemployment rate in the region has remained stubbornly high and has been consistently above the national average for many years. I believe the problem is particularly pronounced in Waterford County and City. The number of unemployment blackspots in Waterford has remained constant in the period 1996-2006 whereas other urban areas such as Dublin and Cork have seen sharp decreases. It is clear that the solution to this problem requires focused action.

A number of positive developments have followed on foot of this initiative including a number of significant jobs announcements for the South East e.g. the Eishtec Call Centre in Waterford city created 280 Enterprise Ireland-supported jobs; a further 65 Enterprise Ireland-supported jobs new jobs were created by Dawn Meats as a result of a 5 year €300m contract with McDonald's restaurants; the two local Waterford City and County Enterprise Boards have created 59 new jobs; and Danone Baby Nutrition in Wexford announced an investment of €20m in its manufacturing facility which will create around 45 new jobs at its plant.

I met with the Forum on 28 March last in Waterford to hear about further progress made by agencies and stakeholders in the region, and to discuss how we can move forward on outstanding actions and other challenges.

Notwithstanding the success of this initiative, I consider that it is neither practicable nor effective to establish jobs task forces or specific jobs plans around the country as a general mechanism to address high unemployment. I believe that to embark on such a course would involve diverting the various State Agencies from their on-going efforts to create jobs. A considerable administrative commitment is involved in servicing any additional committees and groups which may be set up and, given the constrained staff resources facing all public sector bodies at present, I am strongly of the opinion that establishing such additional groups, except in very exceptional circumstances, would not be in the best interests of using the State's resources effectively.

Although the county has seen a number of company closures IDA Ireland continues to compete for high quality investments for Kerry. At the end of 2012 there were 12 IDA Ireland supported companies in Kerry with total employment of circa 1,600 people. IDA will continue to engage with these companies in respect of operational sustainability, job retention and, in certain cases, expansion opportunities.

Enterprise Ireland activity in Co. Kerry is focussed on the creation of new jobs through supporting entrepreneurs to set up new High Potential Start-Up Companies. In 2012, there were 132 Enterprise Ireland-supported companies in Co. Kerry, employing 3,318 people in a full time basis and a further 132 on contract or part time employment.

All the State enterprise agencies will continue to actively pursue initiatives to facilitate development and job creation in Co. Kerry.

Job Initiatives

155. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if it is possible for his Department to support an incubation unit project to create jobs at the Clonshaugh Industrial Estate, Dublin, to replicate an enterprise centre for the northside of Dublin similar to the Guinness enterprise centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23268/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department through Enterprise Ireland has, in the past, approved funding towards Community Enterprise Centres in Dublin, including centres at Ballymun, Coolock and Darndale.

I am informed by Enterprise Ireland that based on the most recent information that the

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agency has on occupancy rates that Darndale is at full occupancy, while Coolock and Ballymun are at 75% occupancy. However, as tenancy levels are variable, Enterprise Ireland advises that interested parties should contact the relevant centre directly, as they have the best view of upcoming availability.

Enterprise Ireland's Incubation Unit Programme is campus based and there are a number of incubation units in the Universities and Institutes of Technology in North Dublin such as, DCU Invent on DCU's campus; Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown and National College of Ireland, in the IFSC. Enterprise Ireland has advised that these Incubation Centres tend to be close-to-full in terms of occupancy. In these circumstances, interested parties should contact the relevant incubation centre directly for information on the future availability of enterprise space.

If however, the individual concerned wishes to start a micro-enterprise in Clonsilla, he should contact Dublin City Enterprise Board which promotes the establishment of micro-enterprises (i.e. enterprises employing less than 10 persons); provides financial support to viable projects, and provides business advice and training. Dublin City Enterprise Board can be contacted at <http://www.dceb.ie/> for information and advice.

The Board also promotes enterprise space that it is aware of in its area and a map of the incubation centres that the Board are promoting is available at:

<http://www.dcebenterpriseuide.com/Enterprise-Space/Enterprise-Centres>

Departmental Expenditure

156. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23316/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Officials in my Department are currently compiling the information sought by the Deputy. However, in the time available since this Question was tabled, my Department has not been able to collect the information requested by the Deputy.

Once the available information is collated, I will arrange for it to be forwarded to the Deputy.

Youth Guarantee

157. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection when the pilot youth guarantee scheme will commence in Ballymun, Dublin; the resources that have been allocated to this scheme; the length of time this scheme will run for; the number of young persons who will benefit from this scheme; the details of the consultation that have taken place with residents in relation to this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23086/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Under the EU Commission's recent call for proposals for preparatory actions under the 'Youth Guarantee', the Department of Social Protection in conjunction with local groups has sought EU funding to pilot a Youth Guarantee Scheme in a local area. The pilot YGS will look to develop an activation approach tailored to the needs of young people in a deprived urban area and then test it within a specific geographical location (Ballymun).

It is intended that the pilot YGS will, in respect of the target group of young people, guarantee access to career guidance/assistance leading to identification of an individual career plan for the young unemployed person with follow-through to training, education, work experience or full-time employment. Depending on the needs of the young individual the steps in the career plan might include personal assessment, job search assistance, skills training, work experience internships, but the objective in all cases will be to lead the young person to employment placement or further education or training. A particular focus of the pilot YGS will be to involve, and build links with, employers in the locality and the immediate hinterland in order to ensure that the guidance and training elements of the YGS are tailored to the needs of the local labour market and also to generate work placement/experience opportunities for the YGS participants.

The European Commission is currently evaluating the high number of proposals received for the Youth Guarantee funding call for proposals. Due to technical constraints, the evaluation process is delayed. Nevertheless, we expect a finalisation of the evaluation process by June at the latest. The total cost of the project is EUR 302,279, we are seeking EUR 250,000 EU contribution. The project should start after signature of the grant agreement, expected within six months of the submission date. The duration of project will be 12 months maximum.

It is proposed that the principal target group for participants will be unemployed persons aged 18 to 24 years. It is proposed that the YGS will apply to an intake of c 90 young people per month drawn from two streams.

(i) Young people who are coming on to the Live Register during the period of the pilot and who are registering at the Ballymun office. We expect this cohort to be of the order 60 young people per month. The intervention will commence once the young person has established eligibility to a Jobseekers claim. Not all of the target cohort will require an intervention over and above an initial needs assessment.

(ii) It is also intended to target young people who have already been unemployed for some time. Currently, there are approximately 360 young people who are wholly unemployed and on the register in Ballymun for a year or more. This group will be targeted for intervention at a rate of c 30 per month over the life of the pilot. (In months where the intake of cohort (i) is less than 60 the intake of long term unemployed young people will be increased and vice versa).

The YGS will be developed through co-operation of all of the relevant stakeholders including the PES (DSP), education and training providers, voluntary and community groups, employers and youth organisations. As part of the bid for this funding the Department of Social Protection consulted with Ballymun Youthreach (CDVEC) Centre of Education Ballymun; Ballymun Job Centre/Local Employment Service Network; Ballymun Adult Read and Write Scheme; Ballymun Regional Youth Resource Limited; Ballymun Community Training Centre; Trinity Comprehensive School; Ballymun Youth Action Project Ltd.; The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) and IBEC with a view to establishing a partnership as required by the terms of reference of the proposal.

The Local Implementation Team will comprise representatives of relevant stakeholders, including the Department of Social Protection, FAS, CDVEC, Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership, Ballymun Job Centre/Local Employment Service Network, North Dublin Chamber of Commerce, Ballymun for Business, EQUAL Youth, and a representative young person (to be identified).

Social Welfare Eligibility

158. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a self employed person who is unemployed and ceased trading will be permitted to sign on for pension contribu-

tions credits; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23072/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): PRSI credited contributions are an integral part of the social insurance system. For the most part they are linked to having an underlying entitlement to a social welfare payment while temporarily detached from the labour force or having entitlement to statutory leave e.g. parental or maternity leave. The primary purpose of PRSI credits is to secure social welfare benefits and pensions of employees by covering gaps in insurance where they are not in a position to pay PRSI such as during periods of unemployment, illness, etc.

The class at which a contributor paid his or her last PRSI contribution determines entitlement to credited contributions. Credits are usually awarded at the same rate as your last paid PRSI contribution. For example, Class A PRSI contributions may entitle a person to all insured DSP benefits, provided they satisfy the qualifying conditions. Credits are not available to a person who has only Class S contributions.

People who cease to be covered by compulsory social insurance, may opt to protect their existing long-term social insurance pension entitlements by becoming insured on a voluntary basis and paying voluntary contributions. Payment of voluntary contributions does not provide social insurance cover for short term benefits such as jobseeker's benefit. A person who wishes to become a voluntary contributor must satisfy certain contribution conditions and must apply to become a voluntary contributor within 12 months after the end of the contribution year in which he/she was last compulsorily insured. A person cannot be a voluntary contributor while also an employed contributor or in receipt of credited employment contributions.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

159. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress to date in respect of an appeal for domiciliary care allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23076/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 29th April 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Money Advice and Budgeting Service Funding

160. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will outline in tabular form the breakdown in funding her Department has provided to the Money Advice and Budgeting Service for each year from 2005 - 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23077/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Money Advice and Budgeting

Service (MABS), under the aegis of the Citizens Information Board, provides a high quality personal service to assist people who are over-indebted and need help and advice in coping with debt problems, in particular those on low incomes and people living on social welfare payments. Responsibility for MABS transferred to the Citizens Information Board (CIB) in July 2009 and funding now forms part of the overall CIB allocation. Funding to MABS from 2005 to 2012 is set out below.

Year	Allocation (€m)
2005	13.62
2006	16.42
2007	17.67
2008	17.95
2009	17.67
2010	18.22*
2011	18.36*
2012	18.31*
2013	19.00*

* As part of the total CIB allocation

Social Welfare Appeals Status

161. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an invalidity pension appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23081/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 13th March 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Social Welfare Appeals Status

162. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on their application for job seekers benefit; the reason for the delay in making a decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23085/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal, by the person concerned, was registered in that office on 27th March 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a sum-

mary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Social Welfare Appeals Status

163. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on an appeal for illness benefit in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23087/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Payment of illness benefit to the person concerned was disallowed by a Deciding Officer following an examination by a Medical Assessor of the Department, who expressed the opinion that he was capable of work. An appeal was registered on 3rd April 2013 and the Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that, in accordance with statutory requirements, the Department was asked for the documentation in the case and the Deciding Officer's comments on the grounds of the appeal. In that context, an examination by another Medical Assessor will be carried out. The person concerned will be notified when arrangements for the examination have been completed.

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

Questions Nos. 164 to 167, inclusive, withdrawn.

Family Income Supplement Eligibility

168. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if family income supplement payment of a person (details supplied) will automatically be reviewed when they lose their lone parent allowance in July; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23122/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Family Income Supplement (FIS) payment is designed to provide cash income for employees with families who are on low earnings. Once the level of FIS payment is determined, it continues to be payable at that rate for a period of 52 weeks, provided that the person remains in full-time employment. However, the rate of payment will not change if there is an increase or decrease in the recipient's income during that period.

The person concerned had their FIS payment renewed with effect from 9 May 2013 for 52 weeks. Their entitlement will be re-examined from the expiry date of this 52 week period in light of their circumstances at that time.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

169. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Social Protection when will a person (details supplied) in County Mayo receive a decision on their application for invalidity pension;

and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23141/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 13th March 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 01st May 2013 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Question No. 170 withdrawn.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

171. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on their application for domiciliary care allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23146/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received from the person concerned on 9 April 2013. This application has been forwarded to one of the Department's Medical Assessors for their medical opinion. Upon receipt of this opinion, a decision will issue to the person concerned. It can take up to 8 weeks to process an application for DCA.

Social Welfare Appeals Reviews

172. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 317 of 30 April 2013, the length of time it took to review each of the 39 appeals conducted by the Chief Appeals Officer in the past year. [23175/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that the information in relation to the time taken for each of the 39 reviews is not available.

Processing times in relation to appeals are measured and reported by an ICT system in the Appeals Office. Reviews by the Chief Appeals Officer are not tracked on this system.

When a review is requested, the files in question are recalled from the Department and, following the review, all papers are returned to the Department.

Question Nos 173 and 174 withdrawn.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

175. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) has been refused jobseeker's payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23255/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was refused jobseeker's benefit by a Deciding Officer of the Department on the grounds that he was not available for full-time work and was not genuinely seeking full-time employment.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned together with the relevant Departmental papers were received by that office on 03 May 2013 and that the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Disability Allowance Appeals

176. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason for the delay in a revised decision on disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23256/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person's claim is with the deciding officer for review and she will be notified shortly in writing of the outcome.

Question No. 177 withdrawn.

Departmental Expenditure

178. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs her Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23319/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The extent to which my Department has been involved in litigation at the Courts of Justice of the European Union or the European Court of Human Rights is very limited. During the period in question my Department was represented at two cases; one in relation to a referral from the Irish Courts and one where Ireland was intervening in a case in which we had an interest in the decision of the Court. Travel expenses for these cases amounted to €911.37 in 2012 and €595.36 in 2011. Any legal costs associated with the cases were incurred by the Office of the Attorney General and/or the Chief State Solicitors Office.

Invalidity Pension Application Numbers

179. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will publish in tabular form for the years 2008 - 2012 inclusive, the number of new applications for the invalidity pension that were received; the number of these applications that were refused and of these the number that were granted on appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23332/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A breakdown of invalidity claims awarded and disallowed is not available from December 2010 - 2011. A dual payments system was in operation from December 2010 until all claims were migrated onto a new computer platform in May 2011.

Invalidity Pension Claims

Year	Received	Awarded	Disallowed	Total Decided
2008	7757	5431	2165	7596
2009	7475	4580	2933	7513
2010	8774	3445*	3411*	7614
2011	14621	2107#	4697#	12829
2012	11510	6352	11423	17775

*Breakdown for period January 2010 - November 2010 inclusive.

#Breakdown for period June 2011 - December 2011 inclusive.

Invalidity Pension Appeals - 2008 - 2012

Year	Appeals Allowed	Appeals Partly Allowed	Revised Deciding Officer Decision(*)	Total with Favourable Outcome
2008	233	1	78	312
2009	243	1	82	326
2010	341	6	185	532
2011	408	6	345	759
2012	1,031	4	474	1,509

(*) Where a person has received a decision to disallow a payment, it is open to them to ask for a review by a deciding officer. These figures reflect those cases where a disallowed claim was revised on review by a deciding officer prior to determination by an Appeals Officer. Generally these cases arise where a person submits additional information, not already considered, in support of their claim following a decision to disallow.

Child Benefit Rates

180. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the present rates of child benefit will be maintained in Budget 2014; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23334/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The importance of child and family income supports is underlined by the fact that in 2013 my Department will spend over €2.8 billion on supports to families and children through payments such as Child Benefit, the Family Income Supplement, qualified child increases on weekly social welfare payments, and the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance. This accounts for approximately 14 per cent of expenditure on social protection.

The Revised Estimates for my Department provide for expenditure of €1.912 billion on child benefit in 2013 or 9.4% of total expenditure.

The Deputy will be aware that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Expenditure Report 2013 published last December provides for additional new expenditure reduction measures of €440 million to be achieved in 2014 in the Department of Social Protection budget.

The Government have not made any decisions to date in relation to measures to be introduced in 2014, including measures relating to child and family income supports such as Child

Benefit.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

181. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will be made on an application for disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23367/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The application, based upon the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds and the person concerned was notified in writing of this decision on 8 February 2013.

The person submitted further medical evidence in support of her claim and a review of her application is underway. Once a decision is made on this review the person will be notified of the outcome.

Seirbhísí Aeir

182. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil i gceist aige Staidéar Socheacnamaíoch a thionscnamh le tábhacht na seirbhísí aeir go dtí Oileáin Árann a scrúdú; má tá cén uair a cheapfar comhairleoirí leis an staidéar a dhéanamh; cén uair a bheadh súil an staidéar a bheith críochnaithe; cé na téarmaí tagartha a bhainfidh leis an staidéar; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [23289/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Táthar i mbun ullmhúcháin faoi láthair chun téarmaí tagartha don staidéar a réiteach agus chun comhairleoirí a cheapadh chun tabhairt faoin staidéar. Tá súil tús a chur leis an staidéar go luath.

Departmental Expenditure

183. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23307/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Since the formation of my Department in June 2011, expenditure of €769.58 has been incurred as a result of travel and subsistence expenses relating to litigation in the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg. No costs have been incurred in relation to the General Court in Luxembourg or the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. This information is, as requested, set out in tabular form below.

Legal costs arising were met by the Office of the Attorney General.

Year	Date	Court attended	Travel and Accommodation	Legal	Total
2011	-	-	Nil	Nil	Nil
2012	11 September	Court of Justice of the European Union	€ 769.58	Nil	€769.58

Year	Date	Court attended	Travel and Accommodation	Legal	Total
2013	-	-	Nil	Nil	Nil

Broadband Services Speeds

184. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23269/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The broadband service contracted under National Broadband Scheme (NBS) was designed as a basic, affordable, scalable product in keeping with EU State Aid clearance for the Scheme. Under the terms of the contract which my Department has in place with 3, the NBS service provider, the NBS mobile wireless service is required to offer minimum download and upload speeds of 2.3Mbps and 1.4Mbps respectively, subject to a maximum contention ratio of 18:1. The NBS satellite service, which is utilised in a small number of cases for technical reasons associated with the location of the premises, offers minimum download and upload speeds of 3.6Mbps and 384 kbps respectively, subject to a maximum contention ratio of 48:1.

As regards service quality, my Department has well-established monitoring arrangements in place to ensure that the NBS delivers the minimum specified service or better to all users. The NBS contract guarantees service levels and imposes a service credit regime on 3, with significant financial consequences in the event that minimum specification service levels are not met. The NBS contract also provides that where NBS customers do not receive the minimum guaranteed service, as set out in the terms and conditions of their contract, they are entitled to service rebates.

Should any NBS customer experience problems with the NBS service, they are advised to contact 3's customer care centre, 24 hours a day 7 days a week, by phone at 1913 (free of charge), via email to nbssupport@three.ie or by post to 3 Customer Services, Hutchison 3G Ireland Limited, PO Box 333, Dublin 2. I note that the customer in question has contacted the customer care centre, but is not satisfied with the response received.

My Department has a role where customers have fully utilised the established complaints process and consider that their complaint has not been resolved. My officials operate a dedicated NBS mailbox, which NBS customers can contact by email at nationalbroadbandscheme@dcenr.gov.ie, with any comments or complaints they may have about their NBS service. My Department will then liaise with 3 personnel at its Head Office in Dublin to remedy any service performance issues. In this instance, my officials had, directly upon receipt of the correspondence from the person referred to in the Question contacted this NBS customer on Thursday, 9 May. The details of the complaint were forwarded to 3, which advises that they have contacted the customer and commenced a thorough investigation of the issues raised. My officials will remain in touch with 3 and the customer until such time as the service issues are resolved.

Renewable Energy Exports

185. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the amount of money his Department has spent to date on the wind energy project in the Midlands following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the British and Irish Governments; the amount his Department intends to spend; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23301/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):

No current or capital programme expenditure has been incurred by my Department arising from the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Energy Cooperation between the Governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom. Administrative costs relating to this work are covered from the administrative budget of my Department.

Exploration Industry Data

186. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if there will be a need for the State to carry out seismic surveys if unitisation was applied; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23302/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): In the event that a future producing oil or gas field were to extend over more than one exploration authorisation, or more than a single jurisdiction, then the principle of unitisation would be of relevance. Existing geological and geophysical data, including seismic surveys, would in the first instance inform the unitisation process.

Departmental Expenditure

187. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23309/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department incurred a sum of €480 in travel costs in 2008 in connection with attendance at a European Court of Justice case in Luxembourg. My Department is not aware of any other expenditure on legal or travel costs as a result of litigation in the courts mentioned during the years in question.

Property Taxation Administration

188. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the percentage of local property tax collected in County Kerry that will remain there; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23276/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Under section 157 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, commencing in 2014, the Minister for Finance will pay into the Local Government Fund an amount equivalent to the Local Property Tax paid into the Central Fund during that year. Questions concerning the use of Local Property Tax revenue raised in 2013 should be directed to my colleague, the Minister for Finance.

The Government has indicated an intention to move, from 2014, to 80% retention of all Local Property Tax receipts within the local authority area where the Tax is raised. The remaining 20% of the Tax collected nationally will be re-distributed on an equalised basis to local authorities within the context of the annual allocations of General Purpose Grants.

I expect the Local Property Tax to have multiple benefits, including a more sustainable and resilient system of funding for local authorities and therefore a sounder financial footing for the provision of essential local services; greater local scope for financial decision making concerning service provision - in particular, the inclusion of the local variation mechanism from 2015 will further increase the autonomy of local authorities; and, a strengthening of democracy at local level with a more active relationship between local authorities and local electorates. A stronger democratic relationship and clearer lines of accountability can only have a beneficial impact on service provision from the perspective of the service user.

I am pleased to include for your information details of the most recent household statistics for Kerry County Council.

County/City Council	Total Properties Registered	Estimated No. of Liable properties	Properties Registered as a % of Liable Properties
Kerry	47,148	58,792	80.19%

Rental Accommodation Scheme Criteria

189. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the Government will reduce eligibility for the rental accommodation scheme from 18 months in receipt of rent supplement to six months as per the Programme for Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23333/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The 18 month threshold, as referred to, is employed as a ‘rule of thumb’ to try to distinguish between persons who are seeking a short term income support and those who have a long term housing need. While in general a household must be in receipt of rent supplement for 18 months or more in order to qualify for RAS, housing authorities do, on occasion, accept households on to RAS where they have been less than 18 months on rent supplement. This occurs under exceptional circumstances and where a long term housing need can be demonstrated. Accepting persons into RAS before the 18 month period has elapsed has been applied in respect of homeless persons and for households with special needs. It has also been applied administratively where a landlord is bringing a number of properties across with tenants on rent supplement for different periods and where it has been relevant in facilitating persons moving back to employment.

It is considered, particularly in the current economic climate where unemployment is resulting in an increase in the numbers on rent supplement, that the 18 month threshold remains an appropriate juncture at which to review a household’s on-going need for support.

Septic Tank Inspections

190. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when funds will be made available to Longford County Council to assist in the necessary and urgent inspection and upgrade of septic a tank (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23096/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In December 2012 I announced my intention to introduce a grant scheme to provide financial assistance to households whose septic tanks and other domestic wastewater treatment

systems are deemed to require remediation following an inspection under the Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012. The grant scheme will only apply to owners of treatment systems which are the subject of an Advisory Notice issued by a water services authority following an inspection carried out under the 2012 Act. Full details of the scheme will be set out in regulations which I will make in advance of inspections commencing.

The 2012 Act assigns responsibility to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to make a National Inspection Plan for domestic wastewater treatment systems. The National Inspection Plan 2013: Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems was published by the EPA in February 2013. Details of the minimum number of inspections for each county are included in the Plan. It is the responsibility of the water services authorities (the 34 county and city councils) to implement the Inspection Plan in their functional areas and to select particular treatment systems for inspection having regard to the risk based approach in the Inspection Plan.

Property Taxation Exemptions

191. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason his Department changed the criteria for local authorities determining what represented an unfinished estate for the purposes of the local property tax; and the course of action open to have estates included on this list. [23150/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): An exemption from the local property tax applies to developments listed in the schedule to the Finance (Local Property Tax) Regulations 2013. The list of unfinished housing developments eligible for the exemption was compiled by local authorities utilising the categorisation employed for the purposes of the National Housing Survey 2012. The Survey was carried out over the course of summer 2012 by my Department in conjunction with local authorities and the Housing Agency.

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

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

Private Residential Tenancies Board Staff

192. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to the publication of the 2011 annual report and accounts for the Private Residential Tenancies Board, the reason agency staff costs of €869,429 were incurred in 2011 in a relatively small organisation which employs 30 full time staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23157/13]

193. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to the publication of the 2011 annual report and accounts for the

Private Residential Tenancies Board, if he will provide an analysis by recipient and amount of the €1,410,445 incurred in 2011 on legal and professional fees. [23166/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 192 and 193 together.

I have no function in the operational matters of the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB), an independent statutory body established on 1 September 2004 under the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 and, consequently, my Department does not collate the information requested.

The Act regulates the tenant-landlord relationship in the private rented residential sector and the PRTB is charged with the administration of the Act including, *inter alia*, the resolution of landlord-tenant disputes. As a quasi-judicial body the PRTB can incur legal costs in a number of areas including the enforcement of registrations and of determination orders made by the Board.

The PRTB is required under the Employment Control Framework to reduce its staffing complement to 33 by end-2013. In previous years the PRTB employed agency staff from time to time to meet its workflow requirements.

Local Authority Housing Issues

194. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that it was not until 2009 that those applying for rent supplement had to be on a local authority waiting list, prior to this the applicant brought in a SW3A form and it was signed automatically, the implication of this is that those persons who had their SW3A signed before 2009 assumed they were on the housing lists but unfortunately it has come to light that this is not the case therefore increasing numbers are making applications for housing having believed they were on the list for years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23257/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): To qualify for social housing support a household must meet the eligibility and need criteria set down in the Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011. This includes households who were on the social housing list prior to the introduction of the Regulations in 2011.

The issue of qualification for rent supplement is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Social Protection. When a household qualifies for rent supplement it does not automatically qualify for social housing support.

Local Authority Housing Issues

195. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if local authorities are allowed to put the local property tax onto rents of local authority tenants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23258/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Housing rents are set in accordance with a rent scheme adopted by each local authority. The making and amending of rent schemes is the responsibility of housing authorities as an integral part of their housing management functions.

The current arrangements for determining local authority rents will be substantially replaced on the coming into force over the next year of provisions of Section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. That section predates the Local Property Tax legislation and does not make provision for the new tax to be taken into account in the determination of rents.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Review

196. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update on the review taking place of the tenant purchase scheme; when will it be brought to conclusion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23260/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): While the 1995 tenant purchase scheme for existing local authority houses closed for new applications on 31 December 2012, two incremental purchase schemes remain in operation, one for newly-built local authority houses and the other for local authority apartments.

It is intended to advance the necessary legislative proposals as soon as practicable to underpin an incremental purchase scheme for existing local authority houses. Such a scheme will involve discounts for tenants linked to household income and a discount-related charge on the property that will dwindle away over a period unless the house is resold or the purchaser fails to comply with conditions of the sale. The precise terms of the new scheme will be set out in regulations when the necessary legislation is enacted.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Provision

197. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 140 and 176 of 28 February 2013, if he will explain his statement that Fingal County Council did not apply to upgrade the second phase of the sewerage pipeline upgrade for Rush in view of an application (details supplied) of 4 February 2013 [23266/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Portrane/Donabate/Rush/Lusk Sewerage Scheme is included in my Department’s Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP) 2010 – 2013, with some elements to advance to construction and others to advance through planning during the lifetime of the Programme.

Fingal County Council made a submission to my Department in February 2013 relating to the priority assigned in the WSIP to the Rush element of the scheme. The reply to Question No. 176 of 28 February 2013 stated that this request from the Council is under consideration in my Department. A decision will issue to the Council before the end of this month.

Property Repossessions

198. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if her Department will assist a person (details supplied) in County Kerry on the way they will regain a property that was repossessed by a financial institute; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23282/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I have no function in relation to the matter in question.

Register of Electors Issues

199. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the changes he anticipates regarding pending changes to the additions made to postal voters register supplement lists to be contained in the Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2013; the changes that will be made comparable to the current position regarding postal voters; if he has discussions with officials in his Department in relation to these changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23283/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government legislation programme for the summer session includes an Electoral (Amendment) Bill which will provide for amendments to the Electoral Act 1992 in relation to the date for applications for inclusion in the supplement to the postal and special voters lists in advance of elections and referendums. The Bill is in preparation and the detail will be published when the text is approved by Government.

Departmental Expenditure

200. **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 imposed on the services arising from the Memorandum of Understanding which he inherited from his predecessors; the way this is affecting the capacity to provide continued service throughout the sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23286/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): It is a matter for each local authority to determine its own spending priorities in the context of the annual budgetary process having regard to both locally identified needs and available resources. The elected members of a local authority have direct responsibility in law for all reserved functions of the authority, which include adopting the annual budget and authorising borrowing, and are democratically accountable for all expenditure by the local authority. Engagement between my Department and the local government sector on financial matters is well established and is ongoing across a number of channels, including through the County and City Managers' Association and its finance subcommittee. While expenditure in the sector is significantly reduced on 2010 levels, this reflects the difficult budgetary situation in the period and is not specifically attributable to the EU/IMF Programme of Financial Support for Ireland.

Departmental Expenditure

201. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23312/13]

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

Referendum Expenditure

202. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the measures that will be contained in the Electoral (Amendment) (Referendum Spending and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill to be brought forward later this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23335/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government Legislation Programme includes an Electoral (Amendment) (Referendum Spending and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill to provide for the disclosure of expenditure and donations at a referendum campaign and for the extension of the spending limit period that applies at Presidential, Dáil, European Parliament and local elections. This Bill will be progressed later this year and publication is expected in 2014.

Electoral Law

203. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total number of electoral pieces of primary and secondary legislation that are currently in use; if he has considered consolidating all electoral law into a single pieces of comprehensive primary and secondary legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23336/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): There are 31 Acts of the Oireachtas in force concerned with electoral matters and 77 related Statutory Instruments. I have no plans at this time to consolidate primary or secondary electoral law.

Asylum Support Services

204. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on efforts that are being made by his Department to reform the direct provision scheme for asylum seekers and refugees, the alternative options being considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23068/13]

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 direct provision system is not ideal but it is a system which facilitates the State providing a roof over the head of those seeking asylum or seeking other grounds to be allowed, on humanitarian grounds, to stay in the State. It allows the State to do it in a manner that facilitates resources being used economically in circumstances where the State is in financial difficulty. 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, the cost to the exchequer would be double what is currently paid under the direct provision system.

There are currently 4,698 persons accommodated in direct provision across 34 centres. I do accept that the length of time spent in direct provision and the complexity of the asylum pro-

cess 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.

Prison Building Programme

205. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he intends to meet with representatives of the local community regarding the development of an open facility by the Irish Prison Service at Harristown, County Roscommon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23133/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can advise the Deputy that a meeting with a group of local public representatives has been arranged for the coming days in relation to the proposed development at Harristown House at Castlerea Prison.

The Deputy will also be aware that the Director General of the Irish Prison Service met with a delegation of public representatives in relation to this issue at the Irish Prison Service Headquarters in March. In addition, the Governor of the prison and the Director of Operations for the Irish Prison Service attended a public meeting in Castlerea to discuss the matter and outline the proposals to members of the local community.

Prison Visiting Committees Issues

206. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will outline the specific plans to address concerns expressed in the prison visitors committee report on overcrowding and staffing shortages at Castlerea Prison, County Roscommon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23134/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I published the Castlerea Prison Visiting Committee Report on 7th May 2013. I would like to thank the Visiting Committee for their Report. The observation that Castlerea prison is a well run prison with professional staff and a high quality of medical care provided to prisoners is very encouraging. The Committee also acknowledged the good work done in the school as well as the work of the prison Chaplain.

I should point out that there is no reference to overcrowding in the Castlerea Visiting Committee Report for 2012. The average number in custody in Castlerea Prison in 2012 was 361, against a bed capacity of 351. This represents an average occupancy level of 102.8% and needs to be viewed in the context of the levels of overcrowding being experienced in prisons such as

Mountjoy, Cork, Limerick and the Dóchas Centre. Accordingly, the priority for the Irish Prison Service is to reducing the chronic overcrowding in Mountjoy, Cork, Limerick Prisons and the Dóchas Centre in the coming year.

In relation to staff shortages, I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that a new staffing structure and rosters were fully implemented in Castlerea Prison in November 2012 under the implementation of the terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 -2014 or the Transformation Programme as it is known. The new agreed staffing number for Castlerea is 211. As at 4 May 2013 there were 208 staff assigned to Castlerea which is only 3 below the authorised numbers and the Prison Service is awaiting a work training competition which should fill the vacant posts.

Crime Statistics

207. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of incidents of ramming of Garda vehicles over the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23135/13]

208. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of incidents of Gardaí being injured in incidents of ramming of Garda vehicles over the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23136/13]

209. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Gardaí fatally injured in ramming incidents since the foundation of the force; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23137/13]

(Minsiter for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 207 to 209, inclusive, together.

The Deputy will appreciate that the term ‘ramming’ is not provided for in Statute and as a consequence any investigations initiated as a result of injury or death of a member of An Garda Síochána as a result of a road traffic incident would be conducted pursuant to the relevant Road Traffic legislation and the offences set out thereunder.

In the circumstances I am advised that details of the number of fatal or non-fatal injuries as requested by the Deputy are not readily available and would require a disproportionate amount of Garda time and resources to compile.

I am advised that since late 2009 the number of incidents of the kind referred to by the Deputy reported as causing damage to cars has been recorded. The number of such cases is as follows; 66 in 2010, 55 in 2011, 61 in 2012 and 16 in 2013 up to 14 May. Information prior to that period is not readily available.

Garda Transport Provision

210. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the additional safety features Garda vehicles have, given their increased risk of ramming; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23138/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy will be aware, the specific arrangements made by An Garda Síochána in relation to the provision of vehicles are dealt with by the Garda Commissioner. In that context the Commissioner determines the appropriate vehicles to be procured, including the relevant specifications for operational pur-

poses.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the safe operation of the Garda fleet is a priority within the Force, for both Garda personnel and the general public. In addition I understand that a range of safety features operates across the fleet and that certain vehicles may also have further safety equipment, based on the range of the policing requirements to be met.

Electronic Tagging

211. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will explain delays in bringing forward legislation to provide for the electronic tagging of sex offenders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23139/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): My Department has been conducting an examination of the law on sexual offences generally. This includes a review of the Sex Offenders Act 2001. In that context, legislative proposals being considered include measures for the electronic monitoring of sex offenders in specific circumstances.

Having regard to competing legislative priorities, the review has been progressed as speedily as possible. This work is close to completion and I expect to bring a draft General Scheme to Government in the coming months with a view to seeking approval for drafting of the necessary legislation.

This will be wide-ranging legislation and is not limited to reform of the Sex Offenders Act 2001. Inter alia, it will also implement the recommendations of two Oireachtas committees, facilitate full compliance with the criminal law provisions of relevant EU, UN and Council of Europe legal instruments and reform the law on incest.

Crime Statistics

212. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 900 of 16 April 2013 and 286 of 7 May 2013, the steps a member of the public can take to check that a reported crime has been captured on the Garda PULSE system. [23162/13]

213. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 900 of 16 April 2013 and 286 of 7 May 2013, if only crimes in respect of which Gardaí have provided a crime number to the victim can be registered on PULSE. [23163/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 212 and 213 together.

I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to the matter referred to by the Deputy. I will contact the Deputy directly as soon as the report is to hand.

Citizenship Applications

214. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reasons for his decision made on 27 February 2013 (details supplied) to consider twenty-two Irish resident

children with siblings that are Irish citizens as not having an Irish association for the purposes of naturalisation. [23243/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Section 15 of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, specifies certain conditions which an applicant must fulfil in order to be eligible to apply for naturalisation. Section 16 of the Act provides that I can, in cases where the applicant is a parent or guardian acting on behalf of a minor of Irish descent or Irish association waive part or all of the statutory criteria when considering applications for naturalisation. In general, I only consider it appropriate to waive the statutory conditions for naturalisation where there are exceptional and compelling reasons why these conditions cannot be complied with and where there is no other option available to the applicant under the law. The usual manner by which children such as those referred to by the Deputy are granted citizenship is for a parent to become an Irish citizen in the first instance. Thereafter, it is open to the parent, if successful in their own application, to make an application on behalf of their children under the relevant provision. Such applications are dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

Visa Agreements

215. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce a special student visa for students from Turkey for English language training schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23270/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Since 2011, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, has established a pilot programme in Turkey in partnership with Marketing English in Ireland, MEI, a representative body of English language schools. This pilot project was put in place to contribute to positioning Ireland as a high quality destination for English language training. The programme has been extended for a further phase covering 2013 and 2014. INIS is open to negotiate and implement similar programmes for Turkey, a key market for English language education, with other high-quality ACELS accredited institutions.

Garda Investigations

216. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extra costs incurred by the Gardaí in investigating the horsemeat crisis. [23279/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote. In that context, I am informed by the Garda authorities that the information requested by the Deputy is not readily available and could not be compiled without a disproportionate use of resources which are required for other Garda purposes. In the circumstances I regret that I am not in a position to provide the information sought.

Departmental Expenditure

217. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23317/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): A breakdown of the legal and travel costs incurred by my Department in relation to the areas raised by the Deputy is set out in the table below.

Year	European Court of Justice Luxembourg Legal Costs (€)	European Court of Justice Luxembourg Travel Costs (€)	General Court Luxembourg Legal Costs (€)	General Court Luxembourg Travel Costs (€)	European Court of Human Rights Strasbourg Legal Costs (€)	European Court of Human Rights Strasbourg Travel Costs (€)
2005					12,100	
2006		2,110				
2007		976				
2008					15,125	
2009		444				
2010					12,100	884
2011					7,300	
2012					7,000	

I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, that in the period in question my Department incurred legal costs in a small number of cases heard before the European Court of Justice. The bill of costs for these cases also included legal costs relating to judicial proceedings taken in the Irish courts on which the European Court of Justice proceedings were predicated. Accordingly, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of the costs solely incurred in respect of the European Court of Justice hearings. I will communicate directly with the Deputy should this information become available.

Finally, I wish to inform the Deputy that, for the most part, the legal services sought by my Department are coordinated and paid for by the Office of the Attorney General and the Chief State Solicitor's Office and are therefore not included in the above table.

Community Return Programme

218. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of offenders currently participating in prison specific community return schemes; the prisons they have been released from; the particular scheme; the prisons in which these schemes are available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23339/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): One of the strategic actions contained in the Joint Irish Prison Service & Probation Service Strategic Plan 2013-2015 which was launched last week is the continued roll out of the community return programme, an incentivised scheme for earned temporary release under which offenders who pose no threat to the community are offered early temporary release in return for supervised community service.

This scheme has proven to be a great success and the initial feedback from the participants has been positive with many commenting on the supports and structure that it gives them on their release and how it has assisted in their transition back into the community. The work involved takes place in a supervised group setting on one of the many Community Service Sites located throughout the State. The placements operate on a non-profit basis, provide benefit to the community and many offer direct assistance to charitable organisations and local commu-

nity groups.

I am pleased to note that over 510 prisoners have taken part in the initiative since it commenced in October 2011 with 131 prisoners on community return on 14 May this year. This is the highest total at any one time since the programme commenced. Compliance has been almost 90%; and the 10% who did not comply with the terms and conditions of their release on Community Return were re-committed to prison immediately to serve the rest of their sentence in custody. The community return programme has been a positive development, and as well as allowing prisoners to complete their sentence by way of performing a service to the community, has significantly helped these prisoners to successfully resettle in their communities.

Those currently on the scheme were released from the prisons as set out in the following table.

Institution	Number on Scheme
Shelton Abbey	33
Loughan House	28
Wheatfield Prison	12
Training Unit	11
Limerick Prison	9
Mountjoy Prison	8
Midlands Prison	8
St Patrick's Institution	6
Cork Prison	5
Portlaoise Prison	4
Castlerea Prison	4
Dochas Centre	3
Total	131

Prisoner Releases

219. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide information on the availability of structured temporary release programmes in each prison; the number of offenders currently participating in these schemes in each prison; the number of offenders that have completed these programmes in each prison currently; the number of prisoners on unstructured temporary release within each prison in April 2012, October 2012, April 2013, the most recent figures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23340/13]

220. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of offenders within each prison that are on temporary release at present, not including those on a community return scheme; the number of offenders within each prison that are on temporary release and participating in a community scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23341/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 219 and 220 together.

The Deputy will be aware that the Criminal Justice Act 1960, as amended by the Criminal Justice (Temporary Release of Prisoners) Act 2003 provides that sentenced prisoners may be approved temporary release whether it be for a few hours or a more extended period. The Act sets out the circumstances when temporary release may be provided and what matters must be

taken into account.

The granting of temporary release is done by the officials in the Irish Prison Service Headquarters, on my behalf, and as such individual prisons do not operate their own schemes of temporary release. On 15 May 2013 there were 732 prisoners on temporary release or 14.2% of the total number of prisoners in the prison system. Some 131 of these prisoners are participating in the community return programme and 28 are on temporary release from an open centre. In addition, 229 prisoners had been sentenced for failure to pay a court ordered fine and 95 prisoners were serving sentences of less than 6 months.

The Deputy will be aware that the Irish Prison Service Three Year Strategic Plan 2012-2015 and the recently published Joint Prison Service/Probation Service Strategic Plan 2013-2015 includes commitments to ensure that all prisoners released early from custody are placed on appropriate structured programme of temporary release. The Community Return Scheme is a recently introduced initiative whereby carefully selected prisoners can be granted reviewable temporary release coupled with a requirement to do community service work such as painting, gardening or graffiti removal in a supervised group setting. The type of work involved is intended to assist the community and the scheme is involved with a large number of charitable organisations and local community groups.

The scheme, which was introduced on a pilot basis in October 2011, is applicable to suitably assessed prisoners who are serving sentences of more than one and less than eight years. Those participating are granted renewable temporary release having served at, or after, the 50% stage of their sentence with a condition of their release to undertake supervised community service.

In excess of 510 prisoners have taken part in the initiative since it commenced in October 2011 with 319 prisoners now having completed the programme. Today there are 131 prisoners on community return, which is the highest total at one time since the Programme commenced. Compliance has been almost 90%; and the 10% who did not comply with the terms and conditions of their release on community return were re-committed to prison immediately to serve the rest of their sentence in custody. The Community Return Programme has been a really positive development, and as well as allowing prisoners to complete their sentence by way of performing a service to the community, has significantly helped these prisoners to successfully resettle in their communities.

The Community Return Programme forms part of a wider structured release programme aimed at improving outcomes for prisoners. In addition to Community Return, the Unlocking Community Alternatives Scheme, UCAS, has been set up in Cork. The primary aim of this Scheme is to reduce the current recidivism rates of short term prisoners by arranging for additional support structures and provide for a more structured form of temporary release. This is a pilot scheme and will be reviewed in 12 months in order to assess whether it has had a positive impact on re-offending rates.

The Joint Prison Service/Probation service Strategy will also see a focus on working with short term sentenced prisoners - helping with issues such as housing, medical care, substance abuse, training needs, etc. The aim is to increase support to prisoners - prior to their release from prison, upon their release and then for a period after their release in order to help break the cycle of re-offending. Discussions have been ongoing, in this regard, with a number of external agencies and it is hoped that further initiatives will commence in the near future.

A breakdown of those on temporary release, those on the Community Return Programme and those who have completed the Community Return Programme is set out in the following table.

Institution	Temporary release (excluding Community Return)	Temporary Release to Community Return.	No completed Community Return
Mountjoy (M)	107	8	40
Mountjoy (F)	71	3	11
Training Unit	13	11	37
St Patrick's	15	6	11
Cloverhill	17	0	0
Wheatfield	82	12	17
Midlands	41	8	32
Portlaoise	2	4	1
Cork	119	5	21
Limerick (M)	47	7	26
Limerick (F)	24	2	0
Castlerea	48	4	3
Arbour Hill	0	0	0
Loughan House	8	28	32
Shelton Abbey	7	33	88
Total	601	131	319

Prison Accommodation

221. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide the latest information on the implementation of the cell share risk assessment tool proposed as part of the Irish Prison Service's three year strategic plan; the location at which it is currently operational; if he will provide a copy of the policy document on cell share risk assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23342/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am to advise the Deputy that policy on the placement of prisoners in shared accommodation is being developed as part of a comprehensive Standard Operational Policy on Committal Procedures in the Irish Prison Service. This is part of the Irish Prison Service's Three Year Strategic Plan 2012-2015. It is hoped the policy will be implemented by the end of 2013.

Community Return Programme

222. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which the successful implementation of the proposed structured community return programmes for offenders as outlined in the Irish Prison Service's three year strategic plan 2012-2015 is reliant on IPS staff accepting the latest public sector pay conditions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23343/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can advise the Deputy that the implementation of the Community Return Programme is not reliant on Irish Prison Service Staff accepting the latest public sector pay conditions in the proposed Public Service Agreement.

The community Return Programme, which was first piloted in 2011, has been rolled out nationally across all prisons. Almost 500 prisoners have taken part in the initiative since it commenced with 316 prisoners now having completed the programme. There were 131 prisoners on Community Return on 13 May this year, which was the highest total at one time since the Programme commenced. Compliance has been almost 90%; and the 10% who did not comply with the terms and conditions of their release on Community Return were re-committed to prison immediately to serve the rest of their sentence in custody. The Community Return Programme has been a really positive development, and as well as allowing prisoners to complete their sentence by way of performing a service to the community, has significantly helped these prisoners to successfully resettle in their communities.

Prisoner Rehabilitation Programmes

223. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date on which he expects the following strategies to be published: strategy for older prisoners, strategy for women prisoners, strategy for young prisoners, strategy for sex offenders and when he expects the strategy for prisoners requiring protection will be published; the extent to which the new assessment procedures will be catering for prisoners requiring protection; when this procedure will be operational in each prison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23344/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will be aware that I published the Irish Prison Service Strategic Plan 2012-2015 in April last year. The progress report on the Year 1 Implementation Plan of this Strategy forms part of the recently published Irish Prison Service Annual Report for 2012.

The Strategic Plan includes a number of Strategic Actions one of which (Strategic Action 3: Prisoner Programmes) includes a commitment that the Irish Prison Service will, in conjunction with other key stakeholders, devise specific strategies for younger prisoners, women, older prisoners, sex offenders, protection prisoners, violent offenders and those suffering from mental illness. Work on the development of these strategies is underway and they will be implemented over the lifetime of the Strategic Plan.

The Strategy also commits the Prison Service to introducing appropriate assessment procedures to inform their prisoner placement policy to ensure that prisoners are accommodated appropriate to their security status. I am advised by my officials that the roll-out of the various assessment tools is well under way and that the target of completion by 2015 will be met.

It is at the committal stage that the majority of prisoners are identified as being in need of protection. In many instances, the prisoner will identify himself as being in need of same and in other instances, either intelligence or the assessment of the governor will identify a prisoner as requiring protection.

Prison Accommodation

224. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the bed capacity of each prison in March 2012, December 2012, February 2013, March 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23345/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can advise the Deputy that the bed capacity of each prison on the dates requested are set out in the table.

Institution	Bed Capacity	Bed Capacity	Bed Capacity	Bed Capacity
-	1st March 2012	1st December 2012	1st February 2013	1st March 2013
Mountjoy (Male)	590	590	540	540
Mountjoy (Female)	105	105	105	105
Training Unit	127	127	116	116
St. Patrick's	217	217	217	191
Cloverhill	431	431	431	431
Wheatfield	670	700	700	680
Midlands	616	636	900	870
Portlaoise	311	291	291	291
Cork	250	250	210	210
Limerick (Male)	260	260	220	220
Limerick (Female)	34	34	34	28
Castlerea	351	351	351	351
Arbour Hill	148	148	142	142
Loughan House	160	140	140	140
Shelton Abbey	110	115	115	115
Totals	4,380	4,395	4,512	4,430

The bed capacities of prisons can change due to a number of different factors. In some cases the capacities can increase due to the opening of new prisoner accommodation as was the case in Midlands Prison at the end of 2012 when the capacity increased from 636 to 900 following the opening of a new 179 cell accommodation block.

Similarly, the capacity of a prison can be reduced temporarily due to the closure of a wing or landing as is the current case in Mountjoy Prison where the capacity has been reduced with the closure of the A Wing for refurbishment and Wheatfield where the bed capacity decreased by 20 spaces to facilitate the development of a committal unit.

As the Deputy is aware and as outlined in the Irish Prison Service Three Year Strategic Plan, it is the intention of the Irish Prison Service to seek to align the capacity of our prisons with the guidelines laid down by the Inspector of Prisons, in so far as this is compatible with public safety and the integrity of the criminal justice system.

In 2012 and in the first quarter of this year, priority has been given to reducing the chronic overcrowding in Mountjoy, Cork, Limerick Prisons and the Dóchas Centre. A new prisoner accommodation block in the Midlands Prison, which opened in December last year, has allowed the Prison Service to reduce the capacity and the number in custody in both Cork and Limerick Prison. In addition, the opening of a new 20 space accommodation block, which was formerly used as an administration building, has helped alleviate the overcrowding being experienced in the Dochas Centre.

Departmental Expenditure

225. Deputy Andrew Doyle asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide in tabular

form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23310/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Department of Defence has not incurred any legal or travel costs as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012. The Chief State Solicitor's Office and the State Claims Agency deal with all legal matters on behalf of the Department. It is usual for the Department of Foreign Affairs to manage cases in the European Courts and therefore any legal costs would be borne by that Department.

Live Exports

226. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will consider implementing a ban on the live exports which exceed eight hours in duration, and if he has concerns about the treatment of animals exported from Ireland to Libya or the Middle East once the animals have reached their destination. [23069/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland has a strict system of rules in respect of the transport of live animals both on national and international journeys. These rules are implemented in the context of Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005, which has made a significant contribution to animal welfare during transport. Provisions in the EU regulation relating to the training of drivers, the authorisation of transporters and improved vehicle specifications have all been very beneficial. The safeguards provided by the existing regulation are well considered and scientifically sound and experience has shown that animals can arrive in perfect health after a long journey if the specification on rests and feeding/watering as set down in Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005 are correctly observed.

The current Irish regulation in relation to the approval of ships for livestock transport is set higher than that which applies in other EU Member States. This is justified not only on sound animal welfare reasons but also because it reflects the nature of the shipping routes from this island. Detailed inspections are required before approval is given to ships transporting animals. The requirements for approval of dedicated vessels for the carriage of cattle by sea are contained in the Diseases of Animals (Carriage of Cattle by Sea) Orders, 1996 and 1998.

My Department has no jurisdiction in relation to standards of slaughter plants in other countries. However, it does support ongoing efforts by international organisations, such as the OIE, to improve welfare standards at slaughter plants worldwide. The live export trade provides alternative market outlets for certain categories of livestock, thereby serving a market demand and providing increased competition in the market place for cattle. My Department is conscious of the need to balance this trade with the requirements of the indigenous meat processing industry and seeks to ensure that any such trade is carried out to a high standard.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Application Numbers

227. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an application under the agri environment option scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23088/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Agri-Environment Options Scheme from the person named was received in my

Department on 22nd November 2012 and an acknowledgement letter has issued to the person named. The processing of all applications is nearing completion and I expect to be in a position to inform all applicants of the outcome very shortly. In the event that any queries arise on the application of the person named during this process officials in my Department will be in direct contact with the person named.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

228. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the outstanding balance of the 2011 agri-environment options scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23113/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from the 1st September 2011 and full payment totalling €533.77 issued in respect of 2011.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. Payments in respect of the 2012 Scheme year are subject to a similar administrative checking process. These checks have been successfully completed and full payment totalling €1,601.40 issued in respect of the 2012 scheme year – 75% payment issued on 14th February and the balancing 25% payment issued on 18th February 2013.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Payments

229. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue in relation to a suckler welfare scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry now that all further information requested has been submitted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23114/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named registered five animals for the 2011 Suckler Welfare Scheme and eighteen animals for the 2012 Scheme.

Following validation of recently received weaning information, payment issued for one of the 2011 born animals on 7 May 2013 and ten of the 2012 born animals on 2 May 2013. A further three of the 2012 born animals have only been weaned in the last 4 weeks and will be considered for payment as soon as possible, when compliance with all of the requirements of the Scheme has been verified.

Errors had been identified in relation to the remaining 2011 and 2012 born animals and letters regarding these errors issued to the applicant on 29 April 2013. The applicant has resolved errors in relation to one of the 2011 born animals and one of the 2012 born animals and payment will issue in respect of both of these animals shortly, subject to confirmation that all of the other terms and conditions have been complied with.

Payment cannot be considered for the remaining animals until all of the information requested on 29 April has been received.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

230. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will consider allowing farmers the option of an early draw down of part of their pay-

ment under the disadvantaged area scheme in view of the fodder crisis in view of the fact that many farmers need cash flow and have extended their credit as far as they can with co-ops and banks, similar to the provision he has made for 2,100 payments the under agri environment option scheme as not every farmer is in AEOS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23121/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Mindful of ongoing difficulties, I have decided that a formal request should again be made to the EU Commission seeking agreement to pay an advance from 16 October of the 2013 Single Farm Payment which, being the first day of the new EU financial year is the earliest potential payment date and almost two months ahead of the standard timeline. It will be recalled that my successful approach to Commissioner Ciolos for agreement to making an advance payment of the 2012 Single Farm Payment was prompted by the very wet weather experienced throughout last summer.

My Department will continue to make every effort to ensure that payments under the 2013 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme commence as early as possible in September, while taking into account of the need to adhere to the requirement in the governing EU Regulation, which provides that all eligibility checks must be finalised before full payments can commence.

In light of the difficulties experienced by farmers in sourcing fodder supplies, I announced the allocation of €1 million to fund the Imported Fodder Transport Scheme, which is designed to reduce the cost to farmers of imported forage (hay, silage, haylage) from outside the island of Ireland. In light of the continuing difficulties being experienced, I extended the duration of the scheme to Friday 24 May, a broadening of its scope to include maize silage and a doubling of the budget to €2 million. I am pleased to note that since the introduction of this Scheme that significant quantities of fodder have been imported and are reaching those in most need.

Following the issue of approximately 1,500 AEOS payments valued at €1.6m over the last two weeks, close to a further 600 AEOS payments valued at close to €1.5 million will issue this week. Both AEOS 1 and 2 payments will continue to issue in the weeks ahead as outstanding queries are resolved. This will bring the total paid out in respect of the 2012 application period to just over €40m.

To date approximately 29,200 of the remaining 30,200 REPS 4 participants have been paid a total of €167m in respect of the 2012 application period. An additional €1m will issue this week to a further 200 REPS 4 farmers.

I am, of course, keeping the situation under review in light of the ongoing situation.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

231. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in issuing an agri environment option scheme payment to a person (details provided) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23131/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1st September 2011 and full payment totalling €1,294.73 issued in respect of 2011.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme, a comprehensive administrative check of all applications, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. These checks have been successfully completed for

2012 and 75% payment totalling €2,913.14 issued to the person named on 13th May 2013. The balancing 25% payment will issue shortly.

Coillte Teoranta Harvesting Rights Sale

232. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in relation to the sale of the harvesting rights of Coillte, the impact, if any, that this will have on the people's millennium forests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23145/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The People's Millennium Forests Project was a flagship Millennium project sponsored by the National Millennium Committee and AIB and managed by Coillte in association with Woodlands of Ireland. This was the largest ever project directed at the expansion and enhancement of our native woodlands.

There were 16 sites involved in this project, 14 of which are in the Republic of Ireland and two in Northern Ireland. The mission of the People's Millennium Forests Project was to ensure that all future generations can enjoy the benefits of Ireland's native forests. I am aware that 12 of the 16 sites involved in the People's Millennium Forest Project form part of the Coillte forest estate.

Further to the Government's decision that a concession for the harvesting rights to Coillte's forests be considered for sale, NewERA, Coillte, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and this Department have worked to examine the financial and other implications of developing the potential of Coillte's forest assets. This examination included the identification of the forestry assets involved, the determination of their value and the consideration of a number of issues associated with the proposed sale of the harvesting rights. The protection of the People's Millennium Forests was one such issue. The overall analysis on the proposed sale of Coillte harvesting rights is currently being finalised. As I advised last week, a report on the process to date will be considered by the Government shortly.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

233. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a REP scheme 4 payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23169/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in December 2007 and received payments for the first three years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. These checks have been completed in this case and the 2012 75% payment amounting to €7,048.35 issued for payment on the 25th April 2013. The 25% balancing payment amounting to €2,349.44 issued for payment on the 01st May 2013.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

234. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he

will expedite an agri-environment option scheme 2 payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23273/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1st September 2011 and has received full payment totalling €1,319.00 in respect of 2011.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme, a comprehensive administrative check of all applications, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. The person named was selected for a ground inspection which took place on 15th November 2012. During this inspection, areas of non-compliance with the terms and condition of the scheme were noted in relation to the Natura option which will result in a penalty being imposed. On 7th February 2013, a letter issued to the person named outlining the nature of the penalty and the appeal option. To date, no appeal has been received by officials in my Department. Accordingly the application will now be processed for payment on the basis of the inspection findings.

Food Safety Authority Investigations

235. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the costs incurred by his Department in investigating the recent horsemeat scandal. [23278/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The following direct costs have been incurred, to date, by my Department arising from the recent investigation:

-	Costs
DNA testing	€83,714;
Phenylbutazone (bute) testing	€67,495;
Travel and Subsistence	€40,917;
Incidental expenses	€1,886.

Overtime costs of approximately €5,000 have also been incurred. In addition the Department diverted a very significant level of resource from other tasks to this investigation.

It is envisaged that DNA testing costs and expenses arising from additional official controls relating to the detection of non-compliances will be recouped from the food business operators concerned.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

236. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will open temporary offices in all towns in County Kerry in order to allow farmers to submit their single farm payment applications in view of the fact that it will speed up the process, as farmers are under pressure as a result of the fodder crisis, many of whom currently travel very long distances to be able to hand in their forms to his Department in Tralee; if he will take into consideration that the online service is not a viable option for a large number of farmers who need a Department office within a realistic commutable distance for applications as complex

and as important as the single farm payment and many are not computer literate and others due to poor health and medical conditions cannot travel to Tralee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23281/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In order to improve its service to farmers, the Department has decided that it will acknowledge – either by text message or by post – all SPS application forms received in 2013. This is intended to assist those farmers, who had forgotten to submit their application as happens in many instances every year. In some instances, farmers are unaware that they had forgotten to submit their application until they are informed that no application has been received when they make enquires about the non-issue of their payments during the autumn.

In order to be in position to carry out this process, it was necessary to provide that 2013 SPS forms together with entitlement related applications should be submitted directly to the Department's Single Payment Unit, Portlaoise.

Forms may be submitted on-line and an increasing number of farmers are availing of this option by submitting their application themselves or by using an agent approved by the Department. Such agents are either staff of Teagasc or agricultural consultants. In 2012 over 65,000 on-line applications were received and it is likely that over 70,000 will be received this year. I strongly urge farmers to use this option themselves or with the assistance of an approved agent. Such applications are easily traced, are acknowledged electronically and are more readily processed for payment.

In addition applications may be hand delivered or returned by post to the Single Payment Unit in Portlaoise in the pre-addressed envelope sent out to every 2012 applicant under the 2013 Single Payment Scheme. An Express Post receipt is attached to each return envelope sent out and provides an acceptable proof of postage for retention by the applicant. A registered post receipt is also an acceptable proof of postage if such is required by my Department. The option of posting the application form in the return envelope provided is available at all Post Officers throughout the country. The Single Payment Unit in Portlaoise will remain opened until midnight tonight to accept applications.

I am very aware that some farmers seek information from my Department when completing their SPS application forms. Anyone with a query of this nature should contact the designated lo-call number for their county as printed in the Terms & Conditions of the SPS circulated to all 2012 applicants at the beginning of April. Farmers are well aware of these numbers and thousands of queries are received every year on the Department's lo-call numbers during the period from the issue of the blank application forms until the closing date for the receipt of applications on 15th May.

The change in the procedure for the submission of paper applications will mean that many application forms will be received on an earlier date in the Single Payment Unit than in previous years. This in turn will greatly assist the early scanning of forms and the issuing of acknowledgements to farmers and indeed the processing to completion of such applications.

Animal Mortalities

237. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department has conducted any analysis on the level of animal mortality over the past number of months due to the extended winter and poor quality feeding; if there is any analysis into the prevalence of fluke in the national herd; and the steps he proposes to take to address this matter.

[23291/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The number of cattle mortalities in the first three months of this year was up 26% on the same period last year. It should be noted that the operation of the National BVD Eradication Programme would have been responsible for some of this increase.

An increased incidence of liver fluke infection in sheep and cattle was anticipated in 2012 because of the increase in rainfall during the year. The risk was the subject of a liver fluke forecast and alert in a press release issued by my Department in October 2012 which is available on the DAFM website at:- <http://agriculture.gov.ie/press/pressreleases/2012/October/title,67193,en.html>.

Losses in Sheep due to liver fluke infection, (accounting for 24.3% of cases submitted for post-mortem diagnosis to the Regional Veterinary Laboratories), were elevated this Spring when compared to previous Springs, bearing in mind that the peak incidence of deaths attributed to liver fluke in sheep occurs in the Autumn of each year. There was also an increased incidence of liver fluke infection in cattle, the more common effect of which is production loss such as reduced milk production and / or reduced weight gain rather than deaths.

The Department's Veterinary Laboratory Service continues to be available to help farmers by providing diagnostic services on referral by private veterinary practices. In addition, in response to difficulties being experienced by farmers in sourcing fodder, I introduced a scheme on the 24th April last – the Imported Fodder Transport Scheme – to assist with transport costs in response associated with importation of forage from abroad. The scheme has been extended to 24 May 2013. Furthermore, 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.

Stocking Densities

238. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in view of the bad weather this year, if he intends, on a one year only basis to relax the stocking density rule for the disadvantaged area scheme; if he will consider a stocking density of a 15Lu/ha for five consecutive months reasonable, averaged over nine months instead of 12 months; his views on whether this would help farmers who traditionally purchase stock in April to sell in November and are a vital part of the livestock trade and who will not be able to purchase livestock this year until June due to the weather; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
[23292/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am particularly conscious of the difficulties facing farmers, prompted by the prolonged period of adverse weather, which has cumulated in severe fodder shortages in many areas. In response, I have introduced a specific Scheme, the Imported Fodder Transport Scheme, designed to assist towards the transport costs of imported fodder and maintenance of stocking levels. The situation has prompted action by the wider industry and farm bodies, which is very welcome. In keeping the situation under constant review, I decided, given the ongoing shortages in some areas, to extend the Imported Fodder Transport Scheme to 24 May and to double the funding available to €2 million. Simultaneously, my Department's Emergency Welfare System continues to respond to individual emergency situations.

Mindful of ongoing difficulties, I also decided that a formal request should again be made to

the EU Commission seeking agreement to pay an advance from 16 October of the 2013 Single Farm Payment which, being the first day of the new EU financial year is the earliest potential payment date and almost two months ahead of the standard timeline. It will be recalled that my successful approach to Commissioner Ciolos for agreement to making an advance payment of the 2012 Single Farm Payment was prompted by the very wet weather experienced throughout last summer.

With specific regard to the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, the 2013 Scheme, as already announced, is focussed on the protection of the smaller and most disadvantaged. It must also be borne in mind that the minimum stocking density requirement is equivalent to one ewe per eligible forage hectare and can not in any way be regarded as onerous. It will be recalled that, in response to budgetary realities, it was decided to re-focus the Scheme, with greater consideration been given to those contributing most to achieving the aims of the Scheme, which are: ensuring continued agricultural land use, thereby contributing to the maintenance of a viable rural society; maintaining the countryside; maintaining and promoting sustainable farming systems, which, in particular, take account of environmental protection requirements.

Given the restrictions faced by those farming in recognised Disadvantaged Areas and mindful of the aims of the Scheme, as outlined, it will be readily appreciated that appropriate stocking levels are crucial. In this regard, balance must be struck between the need to ensure that at least the minimum is done to ensure the land is adequately utilised and grazed, while at the same time being sufficiently aware of the natural constraints. In this regard, it is clear that the minimum stocking levels currently set under the Scheme achieve this twin objective. Thus, the terms of the 2013 Scheme remain as previously announced. Farmers with genuine fodder-related stocking difficulties may avail of the force majeure provisions of the Scheme.

Rural Development Programme Funding

239. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the schemes that were proposed under the Natura 2000 element of the rural development programme 2007-2013; the reason that there has only been a spend of €89,717,139 out of an allocation of €528,582,998 to date; if he intends to spend the balance of the money provided under this heading and if not, if the money has been transferred to other programmes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23293/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the initial Financial Plan for the Rural Development Programme an indicative amount of €528m was allocated to Natura 2000. The Natura measure provides for compensation to farmers for disadvantages in their farming activities arising out of three Directives, the Habitats Directive, the Wild Birds Directive and the Water Framework Directive. Natura 2000 forms an integral part of the REPs and AEOS agri environment schemes and applicants with Natura designated land are prioritised under AEOS.

Participation in agri environment schemes, including Natura, is voluntary on the part of farmers, and expenditure is therefore demand-led. Actual demand under this measure has proven to be significantly less than was provided for, with expenditure to date amounting to €89.7m. The financial provision for Natura is currently being revised to reflect actual spend to date and expected spend to the end of the Programme. This will involve a re allocation of funds across the agri environment and LFA schemes in Axis two of the Programme without changing the overall spend under this Axis.

Rural Broadband Scheme Issues

240. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 21 of 8 May 2013, the reason there was no reported spend under the broadband element of the rural development programme 2007-2013; if it is intended to spend this money in the next two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23294/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Rural Broadband Scheme (RBS) was launched in 2011 in recognition of the fact that despite the widespread availability of broadband throughout Ireland, there still remained individual premises that were unable to receive a service. This Scheme was aimed at making a basic broadband service available to un-served premises in rural areas, not already covered by the National Broadband Scheme. An amount of €13,413,000 EAFRD funding was allocated to the scheme which came within the remit of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

During the scheme development process existing commercial internet service providers indicated their ability to provide a broadband service to almost all of the qualifying applicants under the scheme. Consequently there has been no need for any disbursement of public money and no related draw-down of EU funding was necessary. The EAFRD funding originally made available for this scheme may be re-allocated to other qualifying measures under the Rural Development Programme. Adjustments will accordingly be made to the Programme Financial Plan in order to achieve the fullest possible draw down of EU funds having regard to the availability of matching national funding.

Departmental Expenditure

241. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23306/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): It is not possible to provide this information in the required time. I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Fodder Crisis

242. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will consider the issues raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23368/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I announced last Friday the extension of the imported fodder transport scheme for a further 2 weeks and the doubling of the fund to €2m.

Following consultation with Met Eireann, Co Ops, the farming organisations, Teagasc and the advice of officials working on the ground, the decision was taken to allow a further two weeks for fodder to be imported into the country with a doubling of the transport subsidy fund. Fodder, eligible under the scheme and delivered into the country in the next two weeks will be covered up to May 24th. My Department will continue to monitor the situation on a day by day

basis. This remains a very challenging situation for farmers and this extension will allow both farmers and Co Ops to have some certainty around supply of fodder over the coming weeks.

The Animal Welfare Hotline remains open for those with emergency situations or who need information about where to source fodder: 1850 21 19 90 (Low-call).

Further information on the scheme is available from the Department website. <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/fodderassistanceapril2013/>

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Applications

243. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 179 of 7 November 2012, if he will process a 2011 REP scheme 4 application and issue payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23369/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in June 2009 and received payments for the first two years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the Rural Development Programme 2007-13 and is subject to EU regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before payments can issue. Following an inspection in 2011 an anomaly was discovered in relation to both Natura and Habitats on lands owned by the person named. Consequently, a letter issued to the person named from my Department dated 13th November 2011 requesting clarification of specific matters. Following the receipt of a response to this letter the 2011 and 2012 applications have been processed for payment.

75% of the 2011 payment amounting to €3,648.29 has issued for payment on 13th May 2013 and the 25% balancing payment for 2011 amounting to €1,266.76 will issue shortly.

In addition, 75% of the 2012 payment amounting to €3,464.53 issued for payment on 13th May 2013. This payment includes a 3% penalty for non compliance with Measure 4 – Biodiversity. The remaining 25% balancing payment for 2012 will issue shortly.

Inter-Country Adoptions

244. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will confirm for each of 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 the total number of adoption registrations here. [23165/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Adoption Authority (AAI) informs me that the following number of intercountry adoptions have been recognised under Section 5, Adoption Act 1991 and Section 57 (2)(b)(ii) of the Adoption Act, 2010 as appropriate: 307 in 2009, 200 in 2010, 188 in 2011, 117 in 2012 and 7 to date in 2013.

Figures received from the AAI in relation to domestic adoption registrations are as follows: in 2009, 189 in 2010, 39 in 2011, 46 in 2012 and 29 to date in 2013.

Early Childhood Education

245. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will

confirm the availability of a second year of free preschool education in respect of a child (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23272/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme was introduced in January 2010 and provides for one free pre-school year for all eligible children before commencing primary school.

The programme includes a number of additional provisions to take account of children with special needs. These include an exemption from the upper age limit for qualification under the programme where a child is developmentally delayed and would benefit from starting primary school at a later age. In addition, children with special needs can apply to have the pre-school year split over two years on a *pro rata* basis, for example availing of the programme for 2 days a week in the first year and for 3 days a week in the second year. Application for these exemptions must be made prior to the child commencing the programme. However, there is no provision under the programme for a second pre-school year for any child. As the child in question is availing of the full free pre-school complement in the in the current academic year, there is no further entitlement under the ECCE programme.

Foster Care Provision

246. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 500 of 26 March 2013, there were 368 Health Information and Quality Authority audits of the Dublin north west foster care service, there was 34 cases of serious concern, if birth parents who have reported concern of their children in foster care to social services and have not been contacted by social services following the HIQA report, the way these birth parents proceed to clarify their reported concerns; Dublin North West Social Services was closed after the report and social workers have been dispersed, if she will support that the reports of the 368 audits be sent to all the birth parents; and if further action is being taken in any of the 32 cases. [23275/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Foster care services in HSE Dublin North West Area have been inspected by HIQA on three occasions since September 2009, the most recent of which took place in October 2012. The purpose of foster care inspections is to review compliance with regulations and standards for all children, interview HSE managers and social workers, a sample of children, carers and birth parents and review files, including complaints.

In October 2012 there were 368 children in foster care in this area. As part of the inspection process HIQA reviewed a sample of foster care files. Thirty eight complaints or allegations made about foster carers were reviewed by HIQA. Seventeen of these were confirmed.

Where any allegation or serious concern had been confirmed by the HSE social work department, the majority of the birth parents of these children have been informed of the outcome of these confirmed allegations/concerns. However, there are a number of cases where birth parents are either deceased or not traceable and therefore it has not been possible to do so.

It should be stressed that Dublin North West, Children and Family Services did not close at any stage.

Departmental Expenditure

247. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs her Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the

years 2005 to 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23308/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): No such costs were incurred by my Department since its establishment in June 2011.

Mobility Allowance Decision

248. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the progress being made to formulate a replacement for mobility allowance and motorised transport grant; if he will provide a timeframe for the publication of same; if he will provide a guarantee that a replacement scheme will be in place prior to the cessation of payments under the current scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23110/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): A Project Group, which is independently chaired by a former Civil Servant, has been established to seek an alternative method to provide for the priority transport needs of people in a manner that does not run counter to the Equal Status Acts. The work of the Project Group is being supported by the National Disability Authority and includes representatives from key disability sector organisations such as the Irish Wheelchair Association, the Disability Federation of Ireland, the Centre for Independent Living, along with an independent service user and advocate for people with disabilities and a former County Council Manager with relevant experience.

Both Minister Reilly and myself have instructed the Project Group to seek solutions across the whole of Government, so that alongside representatives from the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE), membership also includes representatives from Pobal and from the Departments of Transport, Tourism & Sport, Environment, Community and Local Government, Social Protection and Finance and the Revenue Commissioners. The Group, who will report to Government by the end of this month, has met six times, with the next meeting scheduled for 22nd May. The results of the review will be presented to the Government before any final decisions are made on future arrangements. At this stage, I am not in a position to pre-empt the outcome of the review or the decision of Government.

HSE Expenditure

249. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide details of the volume and cost of transport fuel petrol and diesel purchased by the Health Service Executive for use in HSE vehicles in the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, broken down by each HSE region; HSE Dublin Mid Leinster, HSE Dublin North East, HSE South and HSE West [23070/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Card Eligibility

250. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health when the updated medical card national assessment guidelines will be available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23071/13]

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

National Lottery Funding Disbursement

251. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline the way the cystic fibrosis unit at Cork University Hospital is funded; the role played by Build4Life; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23074/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I can confirm that my Department, through the National Lottery Discretionary Fund awarded Build4Life €150,000 in 2011 and €150,000 in 2012. The funding of the cystic fibrosis unit is an operational matter for the HSE and I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the deputy on this matter.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

252. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Kildare, will be fitted with hearing aids; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23089/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive Community Audiology service administers and monitors hearing tests for adults who are at risk for hearing loss and prescribes hearing aids as required. Appointments for the audiology service are sent in a strict chronology according to clinical priorities and date of receipt of referral. The HSE has been asked to examine the specific query raised by the Deputy and to reply to him as soon as possible.

Medicinal Products Availability

253. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the analysis used by the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics in their decision not to make Pirfenidone available for patients with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis on economic grounds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23124/13]

258. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the availability of a medical drug in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23174/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 253 and 258 together.

The HSE has received an application for the inclusion of pirfenidone in the GMS and community drugs schemes. The application is being considered in line with the procedures and timescales agreed last year by the Department of Health and the HSE with the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA) for the assessment of new medicines. In accordance with these procedures, the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE) conducted a pharmacoeconomic evaluation of pirfenidone and concluded that, at the submitted price, pirfenidone is not cost-effective for the treatment of patients with mild to moderate idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. The report is available on the NCPE's website (www.ncpe.ie).

The NCPE report is an important input to assist decision making and informs further discussions between the HSE and the manufacturer of the drug. The HSE is currently in negotiations with the manufacturers of pirfenidone and therefore it would not be appropriate to comment further while these negotiations are ongoing. The HSE assessment process is intended to arrive

at a decision on the funding of pirfenidone that is clinically appropriate, fair, consistent and sustainable. The HSE understands that patients and clinicians are very anxious that a decision be made as soon as possible.

Services for People with Disabilities

254. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline his policy in relation to personal assistant services; the guidelines currently in place for personal assistant service providers in relation to hours and levels of service on a county basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23143/13]

255. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the reasons personal assistant service guidelines are not standardised across the country instead varying from county to county; if he will consider establishing a standardised set of guidelines nationwide to ensure clarity and equal treatment within the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23144/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 254 and 255 together.

The role of a personal assistant is to provide personal assistance to an individual with a disability to enable her or him to live independently. The Health Service Executive provides a range of assisted living services including personal assistant services to support individuals to maximise their capacity to live full and independent lives. In 2013, the Health Service Executive is seeking to maximise the provision of services within available resources and to maintaining a consistent level to that provided in 2012, by continuing to provide 1.68 million hours of Personal Assistant / Home Support Hours. The administration and operation of personal assistant services to people with a disability is a matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly the Department has asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Thalidomide Victims Compensation

256. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health with regard to the Heidelberg study into survivors of thalidomide, if he has proposals to bring in a scheme similar to that operated by the German Government, where thalidomide survivors can draw down or borrow money to purchase items like car adaptations, kitchens, housing and so on at a rate of 1.6% [23170/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): There are no proposals to introduce a loan scheme for Irish survivors of thalidomide as outlined by the Deputy.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

257. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health in relation to Wexford General Hospital, when it is envisaged that the new accident and emergency will open; if funding is in place to equip same; if it will require extra staff over and above staffing level in current accident and emergency; if existing staff are required, where they will be recruited or will they be appointed from existing staffing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23173/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Question No. 258 answered with Question No. 253.

Hospital Services

259. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health if he will list the nineteen public obstetric units here [23240/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Detailed in a table is the list of public obstetric units requested by the Deputy.

Obstetric Units
Dublin /Mid Leinster Region
1. Coombe Women's and Infants University Hospital
2. Midlands Regional Hospital Mullingar
3. Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise
4. National Maternity Hospital Holles Street
Dublin North East / Region
5. Cavan General Hospital
6. Our of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda
7. Rotunda Hospital
Mid West Hospitals Group
8. Mid Western Regional Maternity Hospital
South Region
9. South Tipperary General Hospital
10. St. Lukes Hospital Kilkenny
11. Waterford Regional Hospital
12. Wexford General Hospital
13. Cork University Maternity Hospital
14. Kerry General Hospital
West Region
15. Letterkenny General Hospital
16. Mayo General Hospital
17. Sligo General Hospital
18. Galway University Hospitals
19. Portiuncula Hospital General and Maternity Ballinasloe

Mental Health Services Provision

260. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the centres which are registered by the Mental Health Commission under the Mental Health Act 2001 [23241/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Under the Mental Health Act 2001, a 'centre' is defined as a hospital or other in-patient facility for the care and treatment of persons suffering from mental illness or mental disorder. All facilities that operate as a 'centre' as defined in the Act, must be registered by the Mental Health Commission. Section 63 of the Mental Health Act 2001 states that 'a person shall not carry on a centre unless

15 May 2013

the centre is registered and the person is the registered proprietor thereof and a centre which so registered shall be known and is referred to in this Act as an approved centre'. Once a centre is registered by the Commission, it is entered in the register of approved centres and each centre's registration lasts for three years from the date of registration.

Full details on the list of registered of approved centres, including access to reports carried out by the Inspector of Mental Health Services are available on the website of the Mental Health Commission, www.mhcirl.ie.

Abortion Legislation

261. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 240 of 8 May 2013, if there were draft terms of reference for the expert group; if so, what there were; the brief he gave the chairman of the external group; the nominations received from the Irish College of General Practitioners, the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland, an Bord Altranais, and the Medical Council; who, if any, of these were selected; the personnel other than those nominated above that were on the group; and the persons who nominated them; and if the meetings held in his Department may be accessed to view or copy [23242/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy will be aware from his previous question on this area, the terms of reference for the Expert Group were initially drawn up by the relevant officials in my Department, after which they were submitted for discussion by Government, and approved on the 29th November 2011. As the question relates to confidential matters for Cabinet, I will not be commenting any further.

Again, the Deputy will be aware from my previous reply that the membership of the Expert Group was chosen and appointed by the Minister and approved by Government. The Group consisted of members selected on the basis of their medical, legal, and policy expertise, and no further personnel were members of the Group.

The nominations from the Irish College of General Practitioners, the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland, an Bord Altranais, and the Medical Council were each provided to me in confidence, and those appointed are on the public record.

Under the terms of the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003, all records held by the Department of Health are accessible to the public. Finally, I have set out the letter of appointment of the Chair of the Expert Group with relevant briefing as requested.

13th January 2012

Hon. Justice Mr. Sean Ryan

High Court

Four Courts

Inns Quay

Dublin 7

Re: Expert Group on the A, B, and C-v-Ireland judgment of the

European Court of Human Rights

Dear Hon. Justice Mr. Sean Ryan,

I would like to thank you most sincerely for agreeing to chair the Expert Group on the *A, B, and C-v-Ireland* judgment of the European Court of Human Rights.

The terms of reference for the Group which have been approved by Government are:

- To examine the *A, B and C v Ireland* judgment of the European Court of Human Rights;
- To elucidate its implications for the provision of health care services to pregnant women in Ireland;
- To recommend a series of options on how to implement the judgment taking into account the constitutional, legal, medical, and ethical considerations involved in the formulation of public policy in this area and the over-riding need for speedy action.

You will find enclosed a document outlining the membership of the Group and a brief summary of the judgment.

I appreciate that the task at hand is a difficult and complex one, and that the timeframe of six months for finalising your work is challenging. However, the Government is committed to ensuring that the judgment is implemented expeditiously and the Expert Group will play a vital role in formulating recommendations on how to progress in this matter. In order to meet this deadline, the Expert Group will meet on a periodic basis (at least monthly) and may consult with interested parties and additional relevant experts and professionals.

The Expert Group will be provided with a secretariat and meetings will be held in the Department. My officials will be in touch with you with further details in due course. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact the senior official responsible for this Group, Ms. Geraldine Luddy, Principal Officer, at 01 635 4063 or geraldine_luddy@health.gov.ie should you have any queries.

Finally I would like to repeat my appreciation for your willingness to participate in the Group and I wish you well in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. James Reilly, T.D.

Minister for Health

Membership of the Expert Group on the *A, B and C-v Ireland* judgment of 16th of December 2010 of the European Court of Human Rights

No	Expertise	Organisation
1	Chair	Hon. Justice Mr. Sean Ryan
2		

No	Expertise	Organisation
3	Obstetrics	Dr Peter Boylan , Consultant Obstetrician/Gynaecologist Dr Mary Holohan, Consultant Obstetrician/Gynaecologist
4	Psychiatry	Dr Imelda Ryan Psychiatrist
5		
6	General Practice	Dr Ailis Ni Riain Dr Mark Walsh
7		Ms Christine O'Rourke, Office of the Attorney General
8		Ms Mary O Toole, Senior Counsel
9		Ms Joanelle O' Cleirigh, Solicitor
10	Law	Ms Denise Kirwin, Solicitor
11		Mr. Bernard Carey, Assistant Secretary, Department of Health
12	Policy	Dr Tony Holohan, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health
13	Professional Standards – Doctors	Dr. Deirdre Madden nominated by Medical Council
14	Professional Standards – Midwives	Dr Maura Pidgeon nominated by An Bord Altranais (Nursing Board)

Background on A, B, and C -v- Ireland Case

A, B, and C- v- Ireland judgment

The European Court of Human Rights heard in December 2009 an application by three women that it is a breach of their rights under the Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights for the Irish State not to provide abortion in circumstances where a woman wishes to undergo an abortion (the *A, B and C* case).

The judgement of the Court confirms that Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution is in conformity with the European convention on Human Rights. The Court accepted that Article 40.3.3 of the Irish Constitution, as interpreted by the Supreme Court in the *X* case, provides **that it is lawful to terminate a pregnancy in Ireland if it is established as a matter of probability that there is a real and substantial risk to the life, as distinct from the health, of the mother**, which can only be avoided by a termination of the pregnancy. This has not been altered by this judgment.

The Court held:

- In the case of the first and second applicants, Ms A and Ms B, the Court dismissed their applications, finding that there had been no violation of their rights under the Convention;

- In the case of the third applicant, Ms C, the Court found that Ireland had failed to respect the applicant's private life contrary to Article 8 of the Convention, as **there was no accessible and effective procedure to enable her to establish whether she qualified for a lawful termination of pregnancy in accordance with Irish law.**

The Court ruled that “no criteria or procedures have been... laid down in Irish law... by which that risk is to be measured or determined, leading to uncertainty...” and held that further **legal clarity** was required.

Execution of the Judgment

Steps need to be taken to ensure no future similar violations of Article 8 occur. **While the State is free, within certain limits, to choose the means of execution it is legally bound to attain the execution result required.** This means that while the State can choose the means of implementation, it needs to **achieve legal clarity** as to when a woman may qualify for a lawful termination of pregnancy.

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme

262. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health if there are any supports available to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 12 to adapt a car. [23245/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers Scheme provides a range of tax reliefs linked to the purchase and use of vehicles by disabled drivers and disabled passengers in Ireland. The rules of the scheme are set out in the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994. The scheme is administered by the Revenue Commissioners and information is available on www.citizensinformation.ie and www.revenue.ie.

A Project Group has been established to seek an alternative method to provide for the priority transport needs of people with a disability in a manner that does not run counter to the Equal Status Acts. The Group is reviewing the mobility allowance and the motorised transport grant. It will report to Government by the end of this month. The results of the review will be presented to the Government before any final decisions are made on future arrangements for mobility supports for people with a disability. I am not in a position to pre-empt the outcome of the review or the decision of Government.

Medicinal Products Prices

263. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health when approval for funding will be given for the drug Eculizumab; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23248/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The drug mentioned by the Deputy is extremely expensive, costing over €350,000 per patient per year. Treatment is lifelong. In 2010, in the absence of sufficient information to make a decision regarding long term funding, the HSE entered into an agreement with the manufacturer and St James' Hospital, Dublin, whereby it provided a fund of almost €10m (inclusive of VAT) for the years 2010 to 2012. This level of funding was seen as sufficient to treat 10 patients, the expected number of patients to be identified for treatment over that time period. The agreement provided that continued funding of Eculizumab would be contingent on the results of a HSE commissioned evaluation of the clinical and economic information associated with the use of this drug.

In this context, it was understood that the manufacturer was working with clinical experts internationally to develop the evidence to support continued funding of this very expensive drug.

The HSE has honoured the terms of the 2010 agreement. The agreement has now lapsed and a formal re-assessment process has been triggered as was agreed in 2010. Pending consideration of the outcome of the assessment, the HSE is continuing to fund the treatment of the original 10 patients identified by St James's Hospital. The HSE has released funding of €848,000 (plus 23% VAT) to fund treatment for these patients in the first four months of 2013.

The HSE is progressing with the formal re-assessment agreed in 2010 so as to ensure that funding decisions are made in the full knowledge of all the benefits and costs of this drug. The HSE understands that the manufacturer is working on a dossier setting out additional evidence in support of this drug and the HSE awaits its submission. The National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics has been requested to examine that dossier on behalf of the HSE once it is submitted. Future funding decisions will be made when the assessment report is available.

Medicinal Products Availability

264. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the plans that are in place to deal with the shortage of Augmentin which is currently being experienced by hospitals throughout the country; in view of this, and other medicine shortages in recent months, the actions that have been taken to ensure early notification of emerging medicine shortages to hospitals and patients to deal with such shortages and to ensure that there are alternative suppliers available to supply Irish patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23249/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Over the last number of months hospitals have been experiencing a shortage of Augmentin intravenous products (Augmentin IV). This shortage is due to manufacturing capacity issues which the manufacturer, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) is experiencing at its manufacturing site in the United Kingdom.

A number of measures are in place to deal with this shortage and minimise its impact on the delivery of essential health services. GSK, is closely monitoring supply and ensuring that product stocks are available for those considered most vulnerable and consequently the supply of Augmentin IV to hospitals has been and will continue to be rationed, with paediatric hospitals being prioritised.

For other hospitals there are two generic IV amoxicillin / clavulanic acid products currently authorised in Ireland. The Irish Medicines Board (IMB) has put in place measures to facilitate the continued supply of these alternative products until such time as normal supplies of Augmentin IV are resumed.

Clinical leadership within the HSE made clinical microbiologists, infectious diseases physicians and antimicrobial pharmacists aware of the potential issues in March 2013 and requested that individual hospitals consider preparation of contingency plans to guide clinicians on potential alternatives to Augmentin IV in the event that alternatives were required.

My Department works closely with the IMB and the HSE to identify and address medicines shortages so as to minimise their impact on patients. Shortages are a global issue and can arise for a variety of reasons, including, as in the case in Augmentin IV, production issues at a manufacturing facility. In the event of a particular shortage, priority is given to restoring supply as quickly as possible and to identifying and securing continued supply of alternative products. Manufacturers, wholesalers and pharmacies all have responsibility to work together to identify shortages and implement alternative arrangements to meet the needs of patients.

Hospital Waiting Lists

265. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has been waiting for more than three years for a hospital appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23250/13]

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.

Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and hospital involved.

In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Services

266. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of services at St Vincent's Hospital, Athlone, County Westmeath; if current services will be maintained; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23265/13]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

267. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a hip operation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23274/13]

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

Hospital Waiting Lists

268. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath will receive a hospital appointment for a hip replacement operation at Tullamore General Hospital [23277/13]

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

Alcohol Pricing

269. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the target month he is working to for the completion of the health impact assessment in relation to the minimum pricing of alcohol [23280/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I anticipate that the assessment in question will be available in the first quarter of next year.

Departmental Expenditure

270. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23315/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The information requested by the Deputy is being collated and will be forwarded to him as soon as it is available.

Water Fluoridation

271. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the range of capital costs for installing a fluoridation system for a large, medium and small scale water treatment plant; if he will provide a breakdown of the costs for installation including all necessary equipment, monitoring systems, contractor expenses, design and installation; if the figure quoted in a previous Parliamentary Question includes costs for auditing water treatment fluoridation plans; and when these were independently audited last since 2006 [23321/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Capital costs for fluoridation plants and equipment depend on a range of factors, including the size, volume and population served by the plant and whether the claimed capital costs relate to a new build, upgrade or retrofit. Consequently, there is no standard cost of installing fluoridation systems in water treatment plants. The most recent capital reimbursements made by the HSE to local au-

thorities were €4,426, €14,450 and €25,286 in respect of 3 medium sized plants and €621,192 for a larger plant serving a population of over 170,000. The main types of equipment purchased include bulk tank, bulk tank bund, day tank, day tank bund, weighing scales, dosing pump, dead man's handle and shower unit but this list is not exhaustive. Local authorities have been requested to ensure, as far as practicable, that provision for fluoridation equipment is included in the tendering process for the procurement of new water treatment infrastructure or the upgrading of existing facilities. Procurement in this manner should ensure a more cost effective outcome compared to tendering separately for such equipment.

The most recent independent national audit of the fluoridation process at water treatment plants was commissioned by the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health and conducted in 2008-2009. The cost of the project was €232,000. Figures given in a previous Parliamentary Question for operational costs, capital costs and the supply of hydrofluorosilicic acid do not include the cost of the audit.

Universal GP Care

272. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health if he will publish a detailed timetable for the introduction of free general practitioner care for all as contained within the Programme for Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23330/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Government is committed to introducing, on a phased basis, a universal GP service without fees within its first term of office, as set out in the Programme for Government and the Future Health strategy framework. This policy constitutes a fundamental element in the Government's health reform programme. There has been no change to the Government's over-arching commitment to this goal. This Government is the first in the history of this State to have committed itself to implementing a universal GP service for the entire population.

Having examined the progress made in the universal GP care plan, it became clear to me that the legal and administrative framework required to provide a robust basis for eligibility for a GP service based on having a particular medical condition is likely to be overly complex and bureaucratic for a short-term arrangement. Relatively complex primary legislation would be required in order to provide a GP service to a person on the basis of their having a particular illness. The assessment system for such an approach would have to be robust, objective and auditable in order to have the confidence of this House as well as the general public. This legislation would have to address how a person could be certified as having such an illness, and who could do this, and how to select the diagnostic basis for medical conditions. As well as primary legislation, there would be a need for secondary legislation to give full effect to this approach for each condition. While it would not be impossible to achieve this, it would take several months more to finalise the primary legislation, followed then by the preparation of statutory instruments. In my view, this would entail putting in place a cumbersome legal and administrative infrastructure to deal with what is only a temporary first phase on the way to universal GP service to the entire population.

The Cabinet Committee on Health has discussed the issues relating to the delay in the initial step of the roll-out of the universal GP service. In doing so, it has considered the importance of weighing the balance between, on the one hand, resolving the legal issues but with a further delay and, on the other hand, the need to bring forward an important Programme for Government commitment with the minimum of further delay. No decision has been taken by the Cabinet Committee or by Government on changing the first step of the plan to extend GP care without fees to persons with chronic illnesses. Instead, it has been agreed that we should prepare and

set out a number of alternative options with regard to the phased implementation of a universal GP service without fees. Minister Reilly and I expect to report back to the Cabinet Committee in the near future. As part of this work, consideration will be given to the approaches, timing and financial implications of the phased implementation this universal health service.

The Government has already made clear its commitment to delivering on the implementation of a GP service for the entire population by providing additional financial resources in the two most recent Budgets. The HSE Vote now contains funding of €30 million for this year for an initial phase of the provision of GP services as part of this Programme for Government commitment.

Medical Card Application Numbers

273. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health if he will publish in tabular form for the years 2008 to 2012 inclusive the number of new applications for medical cards that were received; the number of these applications that were refused and of these refusals the number granted on appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23331/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The information sought by the Deputy is not readily available. However, I have asked the Health Service Executive to supply this information to me and I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health Services Issues

274. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure the medical needs are addressed in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7. [23338/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Nursing Home Services

275. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the rationale behind the decision to close ten beds at Dungle Community Hospital; if he will immediately reverse this decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23350/13]

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.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

276. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will detail the pre-emergency medical response in the case of the death of a young boy in Midleton on 6 May 2013; the details of the investigation into this incident; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23362/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Firstly, I would like to extend my sympathies to the family on the tragic death of their child. The incident has been referred to the HSE's Serious Incident Management Team. In line with HSE incident review methodology, an incident

review has been commissioned into the manner in which an emergency 999/112 call received at 14.00 hours on 6 May 2013 was managed. A preliminary report has been requested as a matter of urgency and this will be followed by a full report. The NAS has appointed a Liaison Officer to the family to keep them informed of progress and the outcome of the review.

Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors Working Conditions

277. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health the measures he will take to tackle the issue of non consultant hospital doctors working excessive hours of between 60 to 65 hours and continuous shifts of 36 to 80 hours per week without adequate breaks or rest which can impair their health and their ability to work professionally and is causing many such doctors to leave the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23366/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government is committed to achieving compliance with the European Working Time Directive in respect of non-consultant hospital doctors (NCHDs) by 2014. I have emphasised to the HSE the high priority the Government and I attach to this issue, and also the need to address NCHDs working conditions more generally.

The Health Service Executive's Service Plan for 2013 specifically recognises the need to address EWTD compliance as a priority, stating that there will be a particular focus in the acute hospital service on the achievement of compliance with the European Working Time Directive amongst the non-consultant hospital doctor workforce, in line with the Implementation Plan submitted to the Commission in 2012.

Key priorities for the HSE in 2013 are a reduction of average weekly hours worked and also a reduction in the duration of shifts undertaken. The Executive is bringing a strong and particular focus to the achievement of compliance with the Directive. New and demanding targets and timescales have been issued to hospital managers and clinical directors and progress on a site-by-site basis will be assessed against these. Measures the HSE has identified that will support NCHD retention include the protection of training time, the implementation of formal bleep policies and the transfer of tasks often inappropriately undertaken by NCHDs to more appropriate staff.

I am satisfied that the HSE is making every effort to improve the working hours of NCHDs and to implement other measures to improve their working conditions which will in turn facilitate the provision of improved and safer delivery of services to patients.

Sports Capital Programme Expenditure

278. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 234 of 13 March 2013, when the sports capital fund stream of funding will be open for applicants in 2013; and whether a club (details supplied) will be entitled to apply [23128/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): No decision has been taken on the timing of the next round of the Sports Capital Programme. Any such decision will of course have to be taken in the context of the likely capital provision for the subhead in future years. It is open to any club to apply under any future round of the Sports Capital Programme, subject to the terms and conditions that will apply at that time.

Air Services Provision

279. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide the name and contact details of the Irish representative on the Joint Committee of the EU-US Open Skies Air Transport Agreement. [23148/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Aviation Services Division of my Department has line responsibility in my Department for the EU US Open Skies Air Transport Agreement. The Committee meets twice a year but not all Member States attend and Ireland has not attended as part of the EU delegation in recent years. However, Ireland is represented at meetings of the Transport Council's Aviation Working Group where the EU's position for the Joint Committee meetings is prepared. The Division can be contacted by e-mail at aviationservices@dtas.ie.

Road Openings

280. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding a road (details supplied) in County Kerry; when this road will be opened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23244/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Bus Éireann Staff

281. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of employees including management in Bus Éireann that earn over €100,000; the level these employees are at; and if any employee including management received a bonus over the past five years. [23298/13]

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

Bus Éireann Staff

282. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide the annual wages and any pension agreements in respect of a person (details supplied). [23300/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Chairman of Bus Éireann, Mr Paul Mallee receives a fee of €21,600 per annum. This is the gross amount and is subject to tax and other statutory deductions. The fee payable is in accordance with Government guidelines. The fee payable to Mr Mallee is in respect of his combined role as Chairperson

of Bus Éireann and member of the Board of CIÉ. There are no pension arrangements in place in respect of his role at Bus Éireann or CIÉ.

Departmental Expenditure

283. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown on a yearly basis of the legal and travel costs his Department has incurred as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the General Court in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg from the years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23320/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The material in relation to the legal costs is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy within 10 working days. The breakdown of travel costs requested by the Deputy is not available within my Department.

Details of external expenditure by my Department, including on legal matters, are available from the Department's website. The 2012 figures are due to be updated shortly.

Tourism Promotion

284. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he and his Department has regular interaction with stakeholders in the tourism sector with a view to identification of issues of concern; the extent to which he expects to be in a position to respond to any such issues such as credit availability or transport costs throughout the sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23351/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department and I are in regular contact with the stakeholders in the tourism sector and are kept advised of issues of concern to the industry. Indeed, in recent weeks I have attended the annual conferences of a number of key representative bodies in the sector.

The Government's plans to improve overall competitiveness are set out in the Programme for Government. I have also outlined my priorities to 2016 for the transport, tourism and sports sectors on my Department's website.

With specific regard to the tourism sector, the Government has already delivered on several measures under the Jobs Initiative to reduce costs and enhance competitiveness, such as reducing VAT to 9% on a range of tourism services and halving employers' PRSI for those on modest wages. The Finance Act which was enacted recently contains further measures to assist the industry including:

- The diesel fuel rebate for hauliers, bus and coach operators;
- Extending the Employment and Investment Incentive Scheme to encourage investment in tourism accommodation;
- Confirmation of the eligibility of tourism accommodation to participate in Real Estate Investment Trusts;
- Smaller tourism businesses will benefit from the higher VAT threshold of €1.25 million.

In line with the Programme for Government and the Action Plan for Jobs, the Government will continue to play its part in reducing business costs, increasing credit availability and enhancing overall competitiveness.

Job Initiatives

285. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he continues to engage with stakeholders in the industries under his aegis with a view to maximisation of job creation opportunities of consequent reduction in unemployment levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23352/13]

289. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he expects to be in a position to maximise job creation prospects through the medium of road, rail and air transport with particular reference to the need for competitiveness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23357/13]

290. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he continues to have discussions with the hotel, restaurant and transport sectors in the context of retaining existing jobs and maximising employment in the industry in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23358/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 285, 289 and 290 together.

I refer the Deputy to Dáil Question Nos: 58,331,324 and 332 of 27 March 2013 and Priority Question No 4. 23305/13 for answer today which set out the actions which the Government and myself as Minister are taking in relation to the issues raised by the Deputy. Both I and my Department meet regularly with stakeholders in this context.

Sporting Events

286. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which efforts can be made and or increased to attract major sporting events to this country over the next five years keeping in mind the economic benefits accruing therefrom; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23354/13]

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 response is not received within ten working days.

Road Safety Issues

287. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he and or his Department and the National Roads Authority to continue to examine the locations at which numerous accidents have taken place on minor or major roads including motorways throughout the country with particular reference to the frequency of such accidents with a view to identifying the cause or causes and addressing the issues by way of remedial action as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23355/13]

291. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent if any to which he continues to have discussions with the various local authorities with a view to identifying the priorities in respect of funding for local or minor roads other than those for which the National Roads Authority has responsibilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23359/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 287 and 291 together.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is a statutory function of each road authority in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. The carrying out of works on these roads is a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants. Local authorities were allocated over €6million this year for works under the Low Cost Safety Improvement Scheme.

Under the Low Cost Safety Improvement Works scheme the criterion for approval and grant allocation is based on accident data, discussions between the local authority and the National Roads Authority, together with inspection of sites. Works include a variety of safety work measures including road signage, road marking improvements, surface works including higher friction surfaces and works to improve sight lines at junctions and other locations. However, it must be emphasised that the initial selection and prioritisation of such works is a matter for the local authority in the first instance. With regard to national roads, as Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

State Airports

288. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the various State supports for each of the airports throughout the country can be reviewed collectively with a view to an endeavour to retain a reasonable quality of service throughout; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23356/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department's Statement of Strategy clearly sets out the overall policy in relation to aviation, including our airports, in terms of facilitating the optimum structure to ensure a strong network of airports to support Ireland's economic and social goals in a safe, competitive, cost effective and sustainable manner with maximum connectivity for Ireland with the rest of the world. Dublin, Cork and Shannon Airports are managed by the Dublin Airport Authority and the Shannon Airport Authority which operate under clear commercial mandates, are entirely funded from their own internal resources and receive no Government funding supports. In line with the recommendations of the Value for Money Review on the Regional Airports Programme published in 2011, funding under the Regional Airports Programme 2011- 2014 is being consolidated on the four regional airports of Donegal, Knock, Kerry and Waterford since the start of 2012. I believe that this policy ensures the provision of the necessary transport access, with the appropriate level of quality of service, to underpin Ireland's economic recovery.

A consultation paper on the development of a new civil aviation policy was published on my

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Department's website on 1 March this year inviting submissions from stakeholders and interested parties by 30 June 2013. Following receipt of submissions, a draft National Aviation Policy Statement will be issued in the second half of this year, with a view to a final policy document being published in 2014. I would encourage all stakeholders, including the airports, to take this opportunity to give their views so that they can form an important input into this process.

Questions Nos. 289 and 290 answered with Question No. 285.

Question No. 291 answered with Question No. 287.

Job Creation Issues

292. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the likelihood of increased employment arising from expansion of business in the catering sector in the course of the current year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23360/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Fáilte Ireland estimate that approximately 185,000 people now work in the tourism and hospitality sector which is 5,000 higher than their previous estimate. I am hopeful that the increased activity this year as a result of The Gathering combined with the initiatives taken by the Government to reduce costs in the tourism and hospitality sector such as the reduced VAT rate, the higher VAT cash threshold and the reduced PRSI rate will spur further job creation this year. In this regard the growth in numbers of overseas visitors of 7.4% in the first three months compared to the equivalent period last year is a positive indicator.