

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 11, inclusive, answered orally.

National Gallery

12. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the expected completion date of the renovation of the National Gallery of Ireland and the Irish Museum of Modern Art; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26119/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): A comprehensive refurbishment project is currently underway in the National Gallery of Ireland. The project is focusing on a complete refurbishment of the historic core of the National Gallery – the Dargan and Milltown Wings. The finished project will ensure that the Gallery space will have upgraded climate, heating, fire suppression, electrical, lighting and security systems. This should ensure that the Gallery will be able to operate and meet international standards for the exhibition of its own collection and visiting artworks from other important collections. It is envisaged that the Gallery will reopen in its entirety to the public in 2016.

The major programme of works relating to the upgrade of the Fire and Security Systems at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham is expected to be concluded within the coming weeks. Meantime, the Irish Museum of Modern Art is continuing to mount exhibitions at its new galleries at the Royal Hospital and at the National Concert Hall in Earlsfort Terrace.

Comhairle Aireachta Thuaidh Theas

13. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta céard iad na himpleachtaí a mheasann sé a bheidh ann mar thoradh ar an múnla nua maoinithe atá curtha os comhair na Comhairle Aireachta Thuaidh/Theas do líon agus do chaighdeán na seirbhísí do phobal na Gaeilge agus do chúrsaí fostaíochta d'fhostaithe sna heagrais bhunmaoinithe reatha; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [26253/13]

40. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil aon dul chun cinn déanta ó thaobh teacht ar shocrú maidir le maoiniú na mbunegras Gaeilge. [26250/13]

42. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Michael Colreavy** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas faoi thodhchaí Fhorbairt Naíonraí Teo; cén maoiniú a bheidh ar fáil dóibh sa tréimhse atá le teacht; agus cad é todhchaí na scéime maidir le deontais atá á gcur ar

fáil dóibh faoi láthair. [26247/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Molaim ceisteanna Uimh. 13, 40 agus 42 a fhreagairt le chéile.

Mar is eol do na Teachtaí, cuireann Foras na Gaeilge bunmhaoiniú ar fáil i gcás 19 n-eagraíocht Ghaeilge, lena n-áirítear 12 eagraíocht atá ag feidhmiú go príomha sa dlínse seo agus 7 n-eagraíocht atá ag feidhmiú go príomha ó thuaidh. Le linn 2008, chuir Foras na Gaeilge tús le hathbhreithniú seachtrach ar na heagraíochtaí bunmhaoinithe sa chomhthéacs go raibh 40%, nó €8m, de bhuiséad Fhoras na Gaeilge á chaitheamh ar na heagraíochtaí seo agus go raibh 50% den allúntas sin á chaitheamh ag na heagraíochtaí bunmhaoinithe ar thuarastail amháin. Léirigh an t-athbhreithniú seachtrach neamhéifeachtúlachtaí leis an chóras a bhí i bhfeidhm.

Dá bhrí sin, shocraigh an Chomhairle Aireachta Thuaidh Theas in 2009 gur chóir an t-athbhreithniú a chur i gcrích chun tairbhí suntasacha a bhaint amach maidir le luach ar airgead agus maidir le seachadadh éifeachtach dhualgais reachtúla Fhoras na Gaeilge. Ó shin i leith, tá múnlaí éagsúla maoinithe á mbreithniú ag Foras na Gaeilge i gcomhar leis na heagraíochtaí bunmhaoinithe, le páirtithe leasmhara eile agus leis an phobal i gcoitinne trí na próisis chomhairliúcháin phoiblí a réachtáladh sa dá dhlínse.

Ní miste a nótáil gur aontaigh an Chomhairle Aireachta síneadh a chur leis na socrúithe reatha bunmhaoinithe i rith an ama seo. San am i láthair, tá cinneadh tógtha ag an Chomhairle Aireachta go leanfaidh na socrúithe reatha bunmhaoinithe go dtí an 31 Nollaig 2013.

Ag cruinniú den Chomhairle Aireachta ar an 6 Márta 2013, aontaíodh go gcuirfí pleananna chun cinn chun múnla nua maoinithe a thabhairt isteach, ag féachaint do chinneadh críochnaitheach a dhéanamh faoi mhí an Mheithimh 2013 ar a dhéanaí.

Dá réir sin, tá mo Roinn féin agus an Roinn Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta ó thuaidh ag obair go dlúth le Foras na Gaeilge ar mhaithe le moltaí críochnúla a chur faoi bhráid chruinniú den Chomhairle Aireachta atá socraithe don mhí seo chugainn.

Tuigfidh na Teachtaí nach mbeadh sé cuí dom labhairt faoi na himpleachtaí a d'fhéadfadh a bheith ag aon mhúnla nua maoinithe d'eagraíochtaí ar leith, nó do chúrsaí fostaíochta sna heagraíochtaí bunmhaoinithe, go dtí go mbeidh an cheist uile cíortha ag an Chomhairle Aireachta an mhí seo chugainn.

Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla

14. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Michael Colreavy** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cathain atá sé ar intinn ag an Aire cinn Bhille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla a fhoilsiú; agus cad iad na haighneachtaí a fuair a Roinn i dtaobh an Bhille seo. [26248/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Mar atá ráite i gClár Reachtaíochta an Rialtais, táthar ag súil Bille a fhoilsiú i mbliana ina ndéanfar foráil do na leasuithe ar Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003. Tá na céimeanna cuí idir lámha ag mo Roinn faoi láthair chun Cinn an Bhille seo a dhréachtadh agus táthar ag súil na dréacht-Chinn a chur faoi bhráid an Rialtais a luaithe agus is féidir.

Déanfaidh an Bille foráil do na leasuithe ar an Acht Teanga ag eascairt as an athbhreithniú ar an Acht a bhí sonraithe i gClár an Rialtais. Ina theannta sin, déanfaidh an Bille foráil do na leasuithe ar an Acht Teanga ag eascairt as an gcinneadh Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga a chomhcheangal le hOifig an Ombudsman, mar a bhí sonraithe i bPlean an Rialtais um Athchóiriú na

Seirbhíse Poiblí.

Mar atá curtha in iúl agam cheana sa Teach seo, fuarthas 1,400 freagra ar an suirbhé agus 262 aighneacht le linn an phróisis chomhairliúcháin phoiblí a reáchtáladh mar chuid den athbheithniú ar an Acht. Tá anailís déanta ar na moltaí a fuarthas faoin bpróiseas sin agus déanfar iad a fhoilsiú ar shuíomh gréasáin mo Roinne in am trátha i dteannta le Cinn an Bhille.

Departmental Bodies Expenditure

15. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide a detailed account of the amount of money spent by Culture Ireland in 2012 and in the year to date in 2013; if he will provide specific details of the way the money was spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26095/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The Culture Ireland Division of my Department promotes Irish arts and artists worldwide through regular grant rounds and through special promotional initiatives. The total programme allocation in 2012 was €3.56m for projects worldwide and a further €780k was spent on projects which formed part of the *Culture Connects* Culture Programme to mark Ireland's Presidency of the Council of European Union. I have allocated €3.166m to Culture Ireland as its annual allocation for 2013 and have given supplementary funding of a further €800k for delivery of the *Culture Connects* programme. The total spend to date in 2013 is €1.386m.

During 2012 the Culture Ireland Division operated three grant rounds under which applications for events were considered from Irish artists and international hosts. In all over 550 Irish cultural projects and events were supported in over 50 countries, ranging across music, theatre, dance, literature, film, visual art and architecture. This included significant projects such as a major international tour of DruidMurphy in the USA and England which culminated in the Director winning Best Director at the UK Theatre Awards

As Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht I led two of our largest and most important trade missions in 2012 -

- the Association of Performing Arts Presenters Conference [APAP], in New York, in January, a key target market for Irish artists which is of strategic importance in the development of US Irish cultural relations, and

- the performing arts showcase at the Edinburgh Festivals in August, an annual showcase which has proved a key platform for Irish performing artists and writers to present their work to international audiences as well as festival and venue promoters and programmers.

Furthermore, the Division, in partnership with the Arts Council, supported Ireland's participation in the Venice Architecture Biennale, the foremost platform for international showcasing of architecture. In January of this year, the Division supported a delegation of key theatre, dance and music practitioners to attend APAP 2013 in New York, as part of an Irish Government trade and promotional mission for the performing arts. The Irish artists who presented work in New York have reported strong future tour bookings for 2013/2014 as a result.

The International element of *Culture Connects*, the Culture Programme to mark Ireland's Presidency of the Council of European Union during the first 6 months of 2013, funded by the Culture Ireland Division of my Department has focused on Member States and priority countries, including Russia, Australia and China. The programme covers all art forms and provides a key platform to highlight the strength of Ireland's creative and artistic sector. Highlights of

the Culture Programme include the opening concert in Brussels by The Gloaming, the Irish Chamber Orchestra in Berlin, the Eileen Gray exhibition in Centre Pompidou, Paris and the *Changing States* exhibition of Frances Bacon and contemporary artists in the Bozar Art Gallery in Brussels. Audience attendance has been strong and feedback and media coverage on Ireland's Culture Programme has been very positive. In Berlin, for example, there were more than 1,200 attendees at the opening concert, visitor numbers to the *Changing States* art exhibition in Brussels have exceeded 8,000 and Centre Pompidou will attract approx 500,000 visitors during the period of the Eileen Gray exhibition.

My Department continues to support Irish artists in presenting work at strategic international festivals, venues and showcases, building touring networks and contacts. Just last week I announced the results of the most recent grant round, allocating funding of over €470,000 to Irish artists and organisations to present Irish arts abroad during the remainder of 2013 and early 2014. The Culture Ireland Division also continues to work on a cross-agency basis on key initiatives of joint interest. Over the 2013 St Patrick's Day period, for example, it supported more than 60 events across Europe, the US, China, Russia and Australia.

I am satisfied that my Department's international promotion of Irish arts has created significant goodwill and influence for Ireland and has helped to contribute to the strength of Ireland's reputation for creative excellence. Full details of each individual project funded by the Culture Ireland Division of my Department can be found on www.cultureireland.ie.

The Gathering Events

16. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which he and his Department have identified the widest possible range of cultural events in the context of The Gathering with a view to maximising the projection of a positive image of the country internationally; the extent if any to which his Department or its subsidiary bodies have been in a position to offer grant assistance for such promotional events including festivals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26243/13]

163. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the degree to which he and his Department have liaised with the various bodies involved with The Gathering with a view to maximisation of opportunities to promote Irish arts and cultural events; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26503/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 16 and 163 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, The Gathering initiative undertaken by my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, has the strong support of my Department and the agencies under my Department's remit. A range of the actions being taken to support The Gathering were outlined in my replies to Questions No. 16 of 28 November 2012, No. 13 of 30 January 2013 and No. 120 of 13 March 2013. The national cultural institutions are involved and have identified specific exhibitions and initiatives to focus on maximising a positive impression of the country internationally.

Culture Ireland is the Division of my Department responsible for the promotion of Irish arts worldwide. Through regular grant rounds, showcases and special initiatives it creates and supports opportunities for Irish artists and companies to present and promote their work at strategic international festivals and venues. Culture Ireland has included as a grant condition for 2013 events that grantees when presenting their work should promote The Gathering and encourage

their audiences to embrace the initiative.

In addition, the thousands of arts events at festivals and elsewhere funded by the Arts Council are at the heart of The Gathering. While the primary purpose of Arts Council grants is to promote the arts, the Arts Council has long recognised the immense value of the events its funds to our tourism 'offer'. The weather in Ireland can be unreliable, so it is vital that visitors have the option of experiencing the best of Irish contemporary culture – indeed, that is frequently why they come to our shores. Each event in The Gathering centres on a different and unique community in Ireland, and the arts are often what creates that distinctive sense of place. Senior officials at the Arts Council met with The Gathering last year to discuss how Arts Council events could best compliment the initiative.

The Deputy will be aware that Arts Council funding decisions are made independently of my influence, but I understand that a great number of arts organisations funded by the Arts Council are participating in The Gathering. This is particularly the case with festivals. In addition to major arts festivals such as the Galway Arts Festival, Kilkenny Arts Festival or Cork Midsummer Festival, and the many important festivals relating to a single art form, such as Listowel Writers' Week or Wexford Festival Opera, the Arts Council will this year invest some €8811,00 in 160 smaller festivals right around the country.

Údarás na Gaeltachta developed a dedicated scheme to support events & festivals in the Gaeltacht as part of the 2013 Gathering initiative. The scheme placed particular emphasis on activities aimed at attracting visitors to Ireland as part of the Gathering. As previously outlined, various initiatives are also underway in the heritage area.

I consider that my Department and its agencies are making a substantive contribution to The Gathering Initiative which will promote a positive image of the country internationally.

Proposed Legislation

17. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his plans to amend the Official Languages Act 2003; if he will outline these plans to Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26127/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): The Deputy will be aware from the Government's Legislation Programme that it is intended to publish the Official Languages Act (Amendment) Bill 2013 this year. Preparatory work in this regard is currently underway in my Department with a view to bringing the relevant draft Heads of Bill to Government as soon as possible. The Bill will provide for amendments to the Official Languages Act 2003 arising from the review of that Act, as set out in the *Programme for Government*, and from the decision to amalgamate the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga with the Office of the Ombudsman, as set out in the Government's *Public Service Reform Plan*.

Commemorative Events

18. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the specific preparations that have been made to commemorate the centenary anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26147/13]

33. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the

amount of money his Department has allocated for the commemoration programme in 2013; if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the projects and events the money will be spent on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26099/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 18 and 33 together.

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge the commitment and interest of the many bodies and individuals that have brought forward the diverse initiatives that comprise a great part of the Centenary commemorative programme. I place great importance on public engagement and participation at community level. There is a strengthening interest in this important period of our history which I believe will continue to grow in the coming years. I have made a priority commitment to facilitating exploration and discussion of the revolutionary period through the preparation of archives for public release and the production of a new online newspaper of contemporary reporting - *Century Ireland* – to build affinity with the issues and people of a hundred years ago.

The costs arising from official elements of the commemoration programme are largely being met from the existing resources allocated to the national cultural institutions and other bodies, complemented by the work of other Departments. Commemorative arrangements are also being developed through co-operation between the National Cultural Institutions, the Trade Unions, academic bodies, community and voluntary partners, most especially this year in relation to the 1913 Lockout.

The comprehensive programme for the Lockout has been primarily brought forward by a 1913 Commemoration Committee under the auspices of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. It includes a collaborative commemorative tapestry project, an oral history project, exhibitions, conferences, seminars, memorial church services, re-enactments and a schools programme developed in association with the National Cultural Institutions, academic bodies, community and voluntary partners. Recognising the centenary of the Lockout, the ‘One City, One Book’ programme of Dublin City Council has selected ‘*Strumpet City*’ for 1913. Special commemorative stamps will be issued by An Post this year for The Lockout.

Without a substantial and dedicated fund to support commemorations, my Department seeks to provide assistance through accommodation, use of services and other supports. The National Museum will soon host an exhibition of the banners of the labour movement. The National Library will host a major exhibition in August entitled “Lockout!”, which will provide access to historical documents of the time. My Department has provided support for the 1913 tapestry project, which is being developed by a large group of volunteers under the supervision of the National College of Art and Design and artists Robert Ballagh and Cathy Henderson.

Special arrangements are also being made this year for the Centenary of the Irish Volunteers. Plans for events to take place in November are being prepared in partnership with the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces and will be announced shortly.

Insofar as funding can be provided this year by the Government to support commemorations, I believe priority should attach to a small number of capital projects that are under consideration in order that they might be completed in advance of the centenary of the Easter Rising. Project approval and the allocation of funding for these projects will be announced on an individual basis. I have approved financial support of approximately €150,00 Centenary commemorative projects in 2013. These allocations relate in the main to the recently launched *Century Ireland* and the 1916 Oral History projects. Subject to availability of resources within the approved Estimate for my Department, I hope to make some further allocations later this year.

Although the commemorative programme embraces the totality of our history in the years from the 3rd Home Rule Bill to the emergence of the Irish State, I am conscious of the particular interest in the Easter Rising and the Proclamation of the Republic and how these events might be commemorated. I had a welcome opportunity to discuss these issues with Senators last week. I indicated that I was interested to look beyond the ceremonial arrangements that will mark the anniversaries and that we should direct attention now towards initiatives that would enhance our understanding of the background, the principles and the vision of the revolutionary movement. In particular, I invited Senators to consider how we might explore the revolutionary age through its artistic legacy and how the arts might today give expression to our perspective on the Rising after the passing of a hundred years.

The Advisory Group on Commemorations has recently commenced a national consultation process with regard to expectations and arrangements. Following an initial meeting in Carlow, meetings are now being arranged to take place in Cork and Kerry. These meetings are arranged in partnership with the local authority and promoted through local media and the network of local history societies.

I am aware of the limited time remaining to 2016 and the desirability that all arrangements would soon be in place for the special initiatives relating to the Centenary of the Rising. The commemorative framework will be underpinned by official ceremonies and the continuing and special exhibitions by the national cultural institutions – particularly the digitisation and release of archival material, most especially the records of the Military Service Pensions Archive. With the official contribution substantially defined, I am keen next to engage with local authorities, universities and community groups in Ireland and abroad on their contributions and participation.

Departmental Staff Training

19. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will give a detailed account of the amount of money spent by his Department in 2012 and in the year to date in 2013 on training and development in arts and heritage; if he will provide specific details of the way the money was spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26096/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): My Department does not directly provide training or development for people working in the arts or heritage sectors. In common with all other Departments, it supports the training and development of the Department's staff through formal training and development courses, in-house training, attendance at relevant conferences and seminars, refund of academic fees, and the reimbursement of professional membership fees.

Some €223,286 was spent on training and development in 2012, and a further €71,586 has been spent in 2013 to date. The formal training and development courses attended by officers in 2012 include: Job-Specific Training e.g. Abseil Access, ArcGIS Geographic Information Mapping Software, Biodiversity Identification, Quad, Raptor Poisoning, Rope Rescue Technician; Business Process Improvement; Health and Safety Training e.g. Fire Safety, Firearm Safety, Manual Handling, Occupational First Aid, Safe Pass, Signing, Lighting and Guarding at Roadworks, Crisis Prevention; Child Protection; Irish Language Skills; Courtroom Skills; ICT Training e.g. Microsoft Office Applications, Microsoft Sharepoint, Website Content Management; and Corporate, HR and Financial Training e.g. Financial Management, Interview Board, Management Development, Mediation, Procurement, Professional Services Withholding Tax, Public Speaking, Report Writing, Workplace Investigation.

Further training in these areas is being carried out during 2013. A number of these training and development courses are delivered in-house or by other public bodies which accrues no direct cost to my Department. Where such options are not available, my Department ensures that correct procedures in relation to procurement are followed.

Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

20. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cathain a bhí an cruinniú deireanach ag an gCoiste Feidhmiúcháin atá freagrach as an Straitéis Fiche Bliain don Ghaeilge, cé chomh minic a tháinig siad le chéile le bliain anuas, cén dul chun cinn atá déanta ag an gcoiste sin; cén teanga oibre a úsáidtear sna cruinnithe [26256/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Mar is eol don Teachta, is sa Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030 a leagtar amach polasaí an Rialtais maidir le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge. Sa chomhthéacs seo, tá sé ráite i gClár an Rialtais 2011-2016 go dtabharfaidh an Rialtas tacaíocht don Straitéis agus go ndéanfaidh sé na spriocanna indéanta atá luaite inti a sheachadadh.

Glacaim leis go bhfuil an Teachta ag déanamh tagairt don Choiste Rialtais ar an Ghaeilge agus ar an Ghaeltacht a bhfuil an Taoiseach ina chathaoirleach air. Tionóladh an cruinniú is déanaí den Choiste Rialtais seo ar an 15 Aibreán 2013 agus táthar ag súil an chéad chruinniú eile a réachtáil go luath. Bhí 3 chruinniú ag an Choiste Rialtais seo le linn na bliana 2012. Déanann an Coiste Rialtais ar an Ghaeilge agus ar an Ghaeltacht maoirseacht ar bhonn leanúnach ar an dul chun cinn maidir le forfheidhmiú na *Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge*. Is ar bhonn dátheangach a thionóltar na cruinnithe.

Job Creation Issues

21. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which he and his Department can fully exploit the potential for job creation throughout the arts sector; if he anticipates any increase in such employment in the current year over previous years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26244/13]

165. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which the maximisation of job creation opportunities remain an objective of the promotion of arts and heritage events and or locations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26505/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 21 and 165 together.

Government policy on the arts is set out in the Programme for Government. The Government appreciates the importance of the arts, culture and the creative industries to both our society and to our economy. The arts sector continue to offer vital opportunities for the provision of important cultural, social and employment benefits to communities throughout the country. The nature of employment within the arts sector encompasses a very wide range of activities. It can include those engaged in the arts practice within specific artistic genres and can also encompass areas which flow from such artistic pursuits. It may also embody the whole industrial creative sectors, including the audiovisual production sector.

The Government appreciates and values the contribution the arts sector makes to the in-

ternationally renowned artistic reputation of this country. Within the current economic constraints, investment in the arts, culture and creative sectors is more important than ever, having regard to the employment intensity of the sector. In October 2012, the Arts Council published its latest update of the Assessment of the Economic Impact of the Arts in Ireland and it is available at http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/publications/research_publications.aspx. As the Deputy will be aware, in the Government's Action Plan for Jobs, there are 11 specific actions in the areas of arts, culture and creative enterprise which are to be undertaken by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the agencies under its remit. The relevant actions are set out in section 7 of the Plan and I look forward to continuing progress in relation to these actions in the period ahead.

Arts Promotion

22. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount of money his Department has allocated for 2013 for the arts in education programme; if he will provide specific details of the way the money will be spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26100/13]

24. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his plans to require artists to donate their labour for free in order to receive State funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26125/13]

28. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he has received any report from the high level implementation group set up to oversee the implementation of the arts in education charter; if he will publish the reports of the implementation group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26242/13]

30. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress that has been made to date on the implementation of the arts in education charter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26241/13]

171. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which he directly or bodies under his aegis have been successful in the promotion of the arts directly or through interaction with schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26511/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 22, 24, 28, 30 and 171 together.

In January last the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn, TD, and I jointly launched the Arts in Education Charter. This Charter places new responsibilities on Government Departments, agencies, cultural institutions and arts organisations in terms of providing and promoting arts education to children and young people. This Charter has been agreed by both Ministers. Minister Quinn and I believe passionately in arts education and want to see a joined-up Government approach across Departments, education agencies and arts organisations. The charter will see organisations like the Arts Council, the National Cultural Institutions, the Colleges of Education and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment working with both Departments in order to bring the arts into the classroom and learners into the institutes for the arts.

A High Level Implementation Group was established to oversee the implementation of the Art in Education Charter earlier in the year and it will report twice a year. The Implementation Group is chaired by Professor John Coolahan, Professor Emeritus, NUI Maynooth. It membership includes Orlaith McBride, Director of the Arts Council, Mary Nunan, Irish World

Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick, Alan Wall Director, Department of Education and Skills and Niall O Donnchú, Assistant Secretary, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The Group has met on a number of occasions and has been proactive in meeting organisations from both the arts and education sectors. Progress is being made on a number of initiatives including developing a website / portal as a key communications and information channel for both the education and arts sectors. Suitable models for Art Rich Schools and for artists become involved in the programme are also being examined by the Arts Council and this Group.

There is no specific funding provision in my Department's Vote for arts in education this year. However, the Deputies may be aware that in May 2012 I announced the introduction of a new philanthropic initiative on a pilot basis for arts and culture organisations. The initiative - the Philanthropic Leverage Initiative - was designed to encourage philanthropic sponsorship and endowment of the arts from private sources. The initiative, established in 2012 provides an incentive to arts organisations to proactively seek new funding relationships with sponsors which deliver private sector financial support, thereby increasing overall funding available to the arts. The initiative proved very successful with a multiplier of 4.26 in philanthropic donations being leveraged for the arts. The arts got a boost of over €1 million last year, of which less than one-fifth came from the public purse.

This year, €210,000 will be available to arts organisations under the scheme and the majority of the Philanthropy Initiative funding will be directed towards arts and culture organisations seeking support for projects that include an education component. The application form includes a provision that in the event of multiple applications competing for limited grant allocation, priority will be given to Arts in Education projects aimed at disadvantaged (DEIS) schools. In 2013, it is hoped that the Philanthropy Initiative, while continuing to provide an incentive to arts organisations to engage in fund-raising, will also encourage arts and culture organisations to engage creatively with children and young people and add to their education.

Stádas na Gaeilge san Eoraip

23. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an leagfaidh sé amach plan, ina mbeidh spriocanna bliantúla, maidir le líon na n-aistriitheoirí agus na n-ateangairí atá ag teastáil do na poist ar ardchaighdeán atá ar fáil ag Éirinn san Aontas Eorpach faoi 2016; má dhéanann sé sin, an bhfoilseoidh sé an plan seo chun go mbeidh na heagraíochtaí Gaeilge in ann cabhrú leis na spriocanna a bhaint amach agus chun go mbeidh an pobal ar an eolas faoi na deiseanna fostaíochta atá ar fáil san Aontas Eorpach [26246/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): I mí an Mheithimh 2005, chinn Comhairle na nAíre san Aontas Eorpach go mbeadh stádas mar theanga oifigiúil agus mar theanga oibre de chuid an Aontais ag an nGaeilge. Tháinig an cinneadh seo i bhfeidhm ar an 1 Eanáir 2007. Cuireadh maolú i bhfeidhm ón 1 Eanáir 2007 go dtí an 31 Nollaig 2011 maidir le húsáid na Gaeilge sna hinstiúidí Eorpacha agus cuireadh síneadh 5 bliana leis an mhaolú seo go dtí an 31 Nollaig 2016 mar gheall ar na deacrachtaí dóthain foirne cáilithe a earcú sna hinstiúidí Eorpacha.

Faoin mhaolú, níl dualgas ann gach téacs dlíthiúil de chuid an Aontais Eorpaigh a aistriú go Gaeilge. Ciallaíonn sé seo gur gá na dlíthe Eorpacha amháin a dhéantar faoin nós imeachta comhchinnidh a aistriú go Gaeilge. Ní miste a nótáil go bhfuil méadú suntasach tagtha ar líon na ndlíthe Eorpacha atá le haistriú go Gaeilge mar thoradh ar theacht i bhfeidhm Chonradh Liospóin ar an 1 Nollaig 2009, a chiallaíonn gurb é an nós imeachta comhchinnidh an gnás anois

seachas an eisceacht i bpróiseas reachtaíochta na hEorpa.

Beidh cinneadh le tógáil faoi dheireadh na bliana 2015 maidir le todhchaí an mhaolaithe agus beidh an cheist seo le breithniú ag an Rialtas in am trátha. Sa chomhthéacs seo, ní miste a nótáil go bhfuil sé ráite sa Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030 go n-oibreoidh an Rialtas chun na himthosca a chruthú ina mbeidh go leor céimithe cáilithe ar fáil le freastal ar riachtanais earcaíochta an Aontais Eorpaigh le go bhféadfar deireadh a chur leis an mhaolú sin le linn ré na Straitéise, is é sin faoin mbliain 2030.

Táthar ag obair leis na hinstitiúidí Eorpacha ar bhonn leanúnach chun a chinntiú go mbeidh dóthain foirne cáilithe fostaithe sna hinstitiúidí chun freastal ar na riachtanais a bhaineann le stádas na Gaeilge san Eoraip. Mar shampla, tá ciste ar leith ag mo Roinnse chun maoiniú a chur ar fáil do shainchúrsaí tríú leibhéal i nGaeilge chun aistritheoirí, ateangairí agus dlítheangeolaithe a oiliúint. Ina theannta sin, tá mo Roinn ag cur maoiniú ar fáil do Fiontar in Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath chun téarmaíocht Ghaeilge a sholáthar do bhunachar sonraí téarmaíochta an Aontais Eorpaigh.

De réir mar a thuigtear ón bplé atá ar siúl leis na hinstitiúidí Eorpacha, theastódh méadú suntasach ar an líon foirne le Gaeilge chun deireadh a chur leis an mhaolú. Ní miste a nótáil go gcaithfidh cumas i dtrí theanga oifigiúla de chuid an Aontais Eorpaigh a bheith ag iarratasóirí ar phoist den chineál seo sna hinstitiúidí Eorpacha, is iad sin an Ghaeilge, an Béarla agus teanga oifigiúil eile. Scaiptear eolas go forleathan in Éirinn maidir leis na comórtais earcaíochta ábhartha a réachtáiltear sna hinstitiúidí Eorpacha, lena n-áirítear eolas a chur ar fáil ar www.publicjobs.ie.

Cé go bhfuil go leor dúshlán le sárú chun dóthain daoine leis na cáilíochtaí cuí a oiliúint chun freastal ar riachtanais na Gaeilge san Aontas Eorpach, is féidir liom a rá go leanfar ag obair go dlúth leis na hinstitiúidí Eorpacha ar mhaithe le stádas na Gaeilge san Eoraip.

Question No. 24 answered with Question No. 22.

Irish Language Issues

25. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his views on the latest annual report of the Coimisinéir Teanga his assertion that there is no secure stable basis to the system for confirming language schemes, on the widespread failure of public bodies who fall under the Official Languages Act to bring in and implement new language schemes; and his plans to ensure that more language schemes are agreed and implemented. [26245/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Under the Official Languages Act 2003, the purpose of the language schemes is to increase over a period of time the quality and quantity of services available in Irish from public bodies. As Minister of State, my role is to agree language schemes with public bodies and the role of An Coimisinéir Teanga is to monitor the implementation of those schemes by the public bodies concerned. Language schemes remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new scheme has been agreed. A total of 108 schemes have been agreed and are being implemented by public bodies. Those schemes cover a total of 194 public bodies. In addition, there are 122 draft schemes being prepared by public bodies that are currently the subject of active discussion with my Department. I am hopeful of a positive outcome with regard to those discussions and that, as a result, further schemes will be agreed during 2013.

Although there are approximately 600 public bodies covered under the First Schedule of the Official Languages Act, I am satisfied that the 108 schemes being implemented cover the

majority of public bodies who have regular contact with the general public. I recognise that the preparation and implementation of schemes can be a challenging and complex process for public bodies, particularly in the current economic climate with the pressure on resources. The system of language schemes is being examined as part of the review of the Official Languages Act being undertaken by my Department.

Regarding the 2012 annual report of An Coimisinéir Teanga, I should point out that An Coimisinéir Teanga is independent in the fulfilment of his statutory functions. The Deputy will understand, therefore, that it would not be appropriate for me to express any view in relation to the work of An Coimisinéir Teanga. Further information on agreed schemes and draft schemes is available at www.coimisineir.ie.

Departmental Expenditure

26. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide a detailed account of the amount of money spent by his Department on consultancy services and policy reviews in arts and heritage in 2012 and to date in 2013; if he will provide specific details on the way the money was spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26092/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): A total of €138,000 was allocated for Consultancy Services and Value for Money and Policy Reviews within my Department's Administrative Budget in 2012. That subhead provides for fees and expenses in respect of business consultancy assignments and other surveys and studies commissioned by my Department.

In line with Government policy, my Department endeavoured to reduce the use of business consultants as far as possible and succeeded in reducing the level of expenditure in 2012 to some €47,000. One consultancy relating to arts and heritage was funded from this provision during 2012: 1) Review of Dublin Contemporary (€10,961) - Dublin Contemporary (DC2011) was the largest contemporary visual art event of its kind and scale ever held in Ireland and attracted almost 180,000 visitors (179,331). My Department commissioned a full appraisal of all aspects of DC2011, from operational right through to artistic merit, in order to ensure that the experience and significant lessons derived from DC2011 will be taken on board for any future similar events that may transpire.

The 2013 allocation of €124,000 for consultancy services, value for money and policy reviews represents a decrease of 10% when compared against the 2012 allocation. In order to allow my Department to be in a position to respond to issues as they arise during the course of the year, the €124,000 is not yet fully committed and no expenditure has occurred to date. My Department will continue to minimise expenditure under this heading as far as possible and, as with 2013, I expect that savings will again be achieved against this allocation.

For completeness, I wish to bring to the Deputy's attention that from time to time my Department also commissions engineering or environmental experts to provide technical reports on specific issues as required. While the providers of these services are consultant engineers, environmental consultants or may describe themselves in other such terms, their work is not classified as "consultancy services and policy reviews" and is not funded from the Department's Administrative Budget.

Lough Leane Loop Trail

27. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he

will provide an update on the round Lough Lein trail, County Kerry; the anticipated timeline for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26012/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): In July 2012 I convened a Steering Group involving representatives of the key stakeholders in the Lough Leane trail project and charged the Group with the planning and development of the trail. To date, the Group has met on six occasions, and a further meeting is scheduled next month.

Most of this trail will be inside the boundary of Killarney National Park and because of the associated ecological issues the task of delivering this project will require careful consideration and planning. To ensure that the project is delivered as efficiently and quickly as possible, it has been broken down into various modules which will allow the advancement of some sections of the trail while the necessary consultations, assessments and planning and any land acquisitions as may be required for the more complicated aspects of the plan are moved along in parallel.

Final completion of the trail will depend on the progress made on advancing all these issues and a final deadline has not been set at this stage. I am satisfied that significant progress is being made and, insofar as possible within the constraints of the public finances, I will seek to ensure that there are no avoidable delays in bringing the project to completion.

Question No. 28 answered with Question No. 22.

Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

29. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé sásta, i gcomhthéacs na Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge, 2010-2030, struchtúr ardleibhéil a chur ar bun idir na húdaráis agus eagraíochtaí pobail na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta, trína bhféadfar moltaí a dhéanamh sula gcuirfear ar aghaidh chuig na hAíreí cuí iad. [26258/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Sa chaoi is gur féidir linn an *Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge* a chur i bhfeidhm go héifeachtach, níl amhras dá laghad orm ach go bhfuil sé riachtanach go mbeidh ról lárnach ag pobal na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta sa phróiseas sin. Ar ndóigh, tá an ról sin aitheanta go sonrach in Acht na Gaeltachta 2012 a leagann bunús reachtúil faoi fheidhmiú na Straitéise agus faoin phróiseas pleanála teanga ach go háirithe. Mar thoradh ar Acht na Gaeltachta, tá ról níos lárnaí ná riamh ag pobal na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta, agus ag na heagraíochtaí pobail a fheidhmíonn thar a gceann, i gcur i bhfeidhm na Straitéise tríd an phróiseas pleanála teanga ar an talamh.

Chomh fada is a bhaineann sé leis an Ghaeltacht, tá aitheantas ar leith tugtha sa Straitéis don ról faoi leith atá á imirt le fada an lá ag pobal na Gaeltachta agus ag na heagraíochtaí pobail sa Ghaeltacht i gcur chun cinn na Gaeilge mar theanga pobail agus teaghlaigh sa Ghaeltacht. Le cur i bhfeidhm an phróisis phleanála teanga faoi Acht na Gaeltachta, déanfar ról an phobail sa Ghaeltacht a threisiú tuilleadh, chomh maith le ról na n-eagraíochtaí pobail a fheidhmíonn thar a gceann, le tacaíocht phraiticiúil ó mo Roinnse, ó Údarás na Gaeltachta agus ó fhoinsí Stáit eile. Sa chomhthéacs sin, tá obair ullmhúcháin ar bun ag Údarás na Gaeltachta i gcomhar leis na heagraíochtaí pobail chun cabhrú leo pleananna teanga a ullmhú sna limistéir pleanála teanga Ghaeltachta.

Chomh fada is a bhaineann sé leis an chuid eile den tír, níl aon amhras ann ach go bhfuil raon d'eagraíochtaí thar a bheith gníomhach i gcur chun cinn na Gaeilge i measc an phobail i gcoitinne, le tacaíocht phraiticiúil ó mo Roinnse, ó Fhoras na Gaeilge agus ó fhoinsí Stáit eile. Tá a gcuid oibre siúd thar a bheith tábhachtach agus muid ag iarraidh cuspóirí na Straitéise a

bhaint amach ar bhonn náisiúnta. Tá obair ullmhúcháin ar bun ag Foras na Gaeilge, i gcomhar le heagraíochtaí pobail áirithe taobh amuigh den Ghaeiltacht, chun cabhrú leo pleananna teanga a ullmhú i gceantair ar leith.

Ós rud é go gcreidim go láidir gur chóir go mbeadh ionchur ag na heagraíochtaí pobail i gcur i bhfeidhm na Straitéise, tá sé beartaithe ag mo Roinnse, i gcomhar le hÚdarás na Gaeltachta agus le Foras na Gaeilge, seimineár a reáchtáil don chuspóir seo go luath. Tá súil agam go gcuideoidh sé seo le malartú eolais faoin Straitéis a éascú idir mo Roinn, an tÚdarás agus an Foras, agus na heagraíochtaí Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta. Tabharfaidh an seimineár deis an próiseas pleanála teanga a phlé leis na heagraíochtaí seo fosta. Beidh mé ag tnúth leis na tuairimí uile a thiocthaidh ón seimineár a mheas i dtráth cuí.

Question No. 30 answered with Question No. 22.

Oileáin Eischósta

31. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil na hAerstráicí in Inis Bó Finne agus sa Chloigeann á n-úsáid faoi láthair agus an bhfuil aon pleananna ag an Roinn tuilleadh forbartha a dhéanamh orthu. [26251/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Ós rud é nach bhfuil ceadúnais ag na haerstráicí ar Inis Bó Finne agus sa Chloigeann, níl siad ar oscailt. Dá bhrí sin, táim cinnte go dtuigfidh an Teachta go bhfuil sé mídhleathach iad a úsáid. Chomh fada is a bhaineann sé le todhchaí na n-aerstráicí seo, táim ag súil go mbeidh mé in ann cinneadh a thógáil maidir leis seo go luath.

Coillte Teoranta Harvesting Rights Sale

32. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he has had any input into the proposed sale of Coillte harvesting rights in view of the importance of forests to our national heritage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26282/13]

37. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he and the National Parks and Wildlife Service have concerns regarding the impact on biodiversity in our forests should the proposed sale of Coillte harvesting rights go ahead; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26283/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 32 and 37 together.

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

Question No. 33 answered with Question No. 18.

Inland Waterways Development

34. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will engage with local stakeholders to develop a waterways strategy that facilitates those who want

to live on houseboats. [26014/13]

36. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will outline the contact he has had with Waterways Ireland to promote and facilitate houseboats as an alternative lifestyle choice, potential amenity and tourism asset. [26013/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 34 and 36 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, I directly engage with Waterways Ireland through the Inland Waterways meetings of the North South Ministerial Council. I should say that officials in my Department also have ongoing engagement with Waterways Ireland and meet directly with the organisation on a regular basis. The issues referred to by the Deputy are operational matters for Waterways Ireland. However, I have been informed by Waterways Ireland that they have installed facilities for houseboats at Shannon Harbour and are in the process of developing facilities at Lowtown and Sallins.

I am also informed that Waterways Ireland is currently in negotiations in relation to the change of use of berths in Grand Canal Dock from short term mooring to long term mooring to facilitate houseboats. These developments are part of Waterways Ireland's recognition of the potential amenity, tourism and lifestyle benefits that well managed houseboat locations with suitable houseboats can bring to the navigation network within its remit.

As regards engagement with local stakeholders in the development of a water strategy that facilitates houseboat dwellers, again this is an operational matter for Waterways Ireland. I encourage and support such engagement with local stakeholders. Waterways Ireland has informed me that they will continue to take into account the views of all its stakeholders when formulating policy in relation to the use of the waterways.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Issues

35. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** den Aire Éalaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta a shoiléiriú cad iad na spriocanna fostaíochta atá ag Údarás na Gaeltachta don bhliain seo, 2013, cén dul chun cinn atá déanta acu agus an bhfuil na spriocanna tréimhsiúla a bhí acu á mbaint amach, cé méid post nua atá cruthaithe i mbliana sa Ghaeltacht le tacaíocht ón Údarás, cé méid post atá cailte, agus ráiteas a dhéanamh ar an staid fostaíochta sa Ghaeltacht go ginearálta. [26254/13]

39. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén beartas agus cé na pleananna atá ann chun níos mó post a chur ar fáil sa Ghaeltacht; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [26107/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Molaim ceisteanna Uimh. 35 agus 39 a fhreagairt le chéile.

Tuigim ó Údarás na Gaeltachta gurb é an sprioc fostaíochta atá ag an eagraíocht do 2013 ná 400 post nua a chruthú agus go bhfuil an tÚdarás sásta ag an bpointe seo go mbainfear an sprioc sin amach. Cruthaíodh 700 post nua in 2012 agus ag deireadh na bliana sin, bhí 7,533 post i gcliantchuideachtaí de chuid an Údaráis, lena n-áirítear 6,933 post lánaimseartha agus 620 post páirtaimseartha. Is ar bhonn suirbhé bliantúil a dhéanann Údarás na Gaeltachta tuairisciú ar phoist a cruthaíodh agus a cailleadh. Foilseofar na figiúirí don bhliain 2013 ag tús 2014 nuair atá an suirbhé bliantúil curtha i gcrích.

Le linn na bliana 2013, beidh straitéis fiontraíochta Údarás na Gaeltachta ag díriú ar chomhlachtaí seirbhíse intrádála idirnáisiúnta eolasbhunaithe a mhealladh chun na Gaeltachta agus a fhorbairt sa Ghaeltacht agus ar theacht i dtír ar an gcumas fiontraíochta in earnálacha fáis. Cuirtear béim i straitéis fiontraíochta an Údaráis do 2013 ar leibhéal níos airde fiontraíochta a spreagadh sa Ghaeltacht agus ar chomhlachtaí dúchasacha nuálaíoch ardchumais a bhunú agus a fhás. Tá an tÚdarás ag díriú go háirithe ar chuidiú le comhlachtaí nua a bhfuil féidearthachtaí fáis iontu bogadh ón ngorlann go dtí an margadh.

Question No. 36 answered with Question No. 34.

Question No. 37 answered with Question No. 32.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Issues

38. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ar an bhforbairt atá beartaithe ag an gcomhlacht Bioniche/Mylan in Indreabhán, Contae na Gaillimhe, i bhfianaise an mhéadaithe ar an líon post a d'fhógair an Taoiseach anuraidh, cé méid post atá cruthaithe go dtí seo; cé méid post a bhfuil súil ag an Aire go gcruthófar iad; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [26255/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Mar is eol don Teachta, d'fhógair an Taoiseach i mí Aibreáin 2012 go mbeadh 220 post breise á chruthú thar thréimhse trí bliana ag an gcomhlacht Mylan / Bioniche in Indreabhán i gCo. na Gaillimhe. Tuigim ó Údarás na Gaeltachta go bhfuil 55 post breise cruthaithe ó shin i leith, rud a fhágann go bhfuil 205 duine fostaithe ag an gcomhlacht in Indreabhán faoi láthair.

Question No. 39 answered with Question No. 35.

Question No. 40 answered with Question No. 13.

Arramara Teo

41. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an ndéanfaidh sé soiléiriú ar thodhchaí Arramara Teo; agus cad atá á dhéanamh aige chun slí bheatha na mbainteoírí feamainne a chaomhnú. [26249/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Dirím aird an Teachta ar an bhfreagra a thug mé ar Cheist Dála 13092/13 ar 13 Márta 2013 inar thug mé le fios go raibh próiseas ar bun ag Údarás na Gaeltachta le tamall anuas chun féachaint ar na roghanna inmharthana agus forbartha is fearr chun todhchaí an chomhlachta Arramara Teo. a dhaingniú. Chuige sin, cuireadh próiseas ar bun le páirtneir a aimsiú a bheadh in ann an comhlacht a fhorbairt agus tugadh deis don chomhlacht féin cás gnó a dhéanamh chomh maith.

Ag cruinniú de bhord Údarás na Gaeltachta ar 1 Márta 2013, tógadh cinneadh scaireanna an Údaráis sa chomhlacht a dhíol leis an gcomhlacht Acadian Seaplants Ltd., faoi réir mo chead agus cead an Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe a bheith faighte agus coinníollacha dlí ina leith a bheith socruithe. Is é an staid reatha ná go bhfuil an cás a mheas ag oifigigh mo Roinne faoi láthair agus táim dóchasach go mbeidh cinneadh déanta sa chás réasúnta luath. Tuigtear dom ó Údarás na Gaeltachta go raibh todhchaí agus leas na mbainteoírí feamainne lár-

nach i bpróiseas cinnteoireachta an Údaráis maidir le todhchaí an chomhlachta Arramara Teo.

Question No. 42 answered with Question No. 13.

Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge

43. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an dtabharfaidh sé soiléiriú i dtaobh an bhfuil i gceist aige scéim deontais a chur ar fáil do mhná tí sna Coláistí Samhraidh a bhfuil gá acu le breis spáis lóistín chun tacú leo a dtithe a thabhairt suas chuig na caighdeáin chuí ó thaobh sábháilteachta agus sláinte de. [26252/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Ar an gcéad dul síos, tá áthas orm a rá go leanfar ag íoc deontas ó mo Roinnse le teaghlaigh a choinníonn foghlaimoirí Gaeilge ar iostas faoi Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge agus iad ag freastal ar choláistí Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht. Mar is eol don Teachta, cuireadh an scéim tithíochta faoi Achtanna na dTithe (Gaeltachta) 1929 – 2001 ar fionraí ar an 7 Aibreán 2009. Is faoin scéim seo a tugadh cabhair deontais d'úinéirí tithe sa Ghaeltacht chun feabhas a chur ar a dtithe, lena n-áirítear iad siúd a chur iostas ar fáil d'fhoghlaimoirí Gaeilge. Níl i gceist an scéim tithíochta a athoscailt san am i láthair. Bheadh aon chinneadh i leith na scéime le tógáil i gcomhthéacs na *Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030*.

Overseas Development Issues

44. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline Ireland's contribution to the recent international conference on education and development in Brussels on post-2015 millennium development goals; his interaction with European Commissioners, Andris Piebalgs and Kristalina Georgieva; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26317/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): Access to quality education is a fundamental right which enables communities around the world overcome inequality and tackle the causes of poverty and hunger. While there have been very significant advances in terms of access to education in developing countries over the last decade, progress has been uneven. Today, 61 million children of primary school age remain out of school and almost half of these are living in countries and regions affected by conflict.

Ireland has a strong and internationally recognised commitment to education, as an important priority of our development cooperation programme. The focus of our programme is on improving access to education for children in some of the poorest countries and communities in the world, and on improving learning outcomes, by supporting activities such as teacher training and curriculum reform.

During our EU Presidency, as we review progress under the Millennium Development Goals and prepare for the negotiation of the post-2015 framework for global development, Ireland has played a leading role in ensuring the EU has a coherent approach to the challenge of ending poverty and achieving sustainable development. Last week, I attended the International Conference on Education and Development convened by the EU Development Commissioner in Brussels, with the objective of ensuring that a commitment to education remains central to global efforts to reduce poverty.

During the Conference, I had discussions with Commissioner Piebalgs, who emphasised the

need for a continued focus on education, particularly for children from the poorest families, and with Humanitarian Commissioner Georgieva, who highlighted the important role education can play in preventing conflict and improving the resilience of communities affected by conflict or natural disaster. In speaking at the Conference and in my discussion with the other participants, I affirmed the Government's continued commitment to working for improved access to quality education in developing countries, and ensuring that education remains an international priority in the fight to end poverty, and especially in a new framework for global development beyond 2015.

Foreign Conflicts

45. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if any consideration has been given by the United Nations or European Union to imposing a no-fly zone over Syria to prevent the bombing of civilians by the Syrian regime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26356/13]

52. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his position regarding the EU arms embargo against Syria; if he supports arming rebels in Syria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26459/13]

57. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the outcome of discussions at the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 27 May 2013 in relation to the ongoing conflict in Syria and the humanitarian crisis in that region; if any new initiatives were approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26560/13]

58. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the request of the Irish-Syrian Solidarity Campaign in relation to the call by the local co-ordinating committees of the opposition in Syria for a no-fly zone; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26561/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 45, 52, 57 and 58 together.

Syria dominated the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council which I attended in Brussels last Monday. What was most clearly evident during the long and sometimes difficult discussions was the very strong and unanimous support among member States for efforts to reach a political solution to this appalling conflict. The EU is extending its full support to the initiative of the US and Russia to bring all sides in Syria to the negotiating table on the basis of the Geneva Communique of June 2012. In its Conclusions, the Council reaffirmed that the EU will spare no effort in helping to create the appropriate conditions for a successful convening of the conference which is envisaged.

The EU also remains deeply engaged in efforts to address the horrendous humanitarian consequences of the conflict. The Union is the largest contributor to the UN-led humanitarian efforts, with some €700 million pledged in support of the relief operations in Syria and in neighbouring countries. The Council renewed its commitment to respond to humanitarian needs in Syria and in neighbouring countries and it urged all donors to fulfil pledges made at the Kuwait humanitarian conference on 30 January.

Renewal of the EU's sanctions against Syria, including the arms embargo, gave rise to long and intense discussion within the Council. I reiterated on behalf of the Government our firm view that lifting the arms embargo would be unlikely to assist efforts to achieve a political resolution. On the contrary, the provision of arms to the Syrian moderate opposition, no matter

how well-intentioned, is only likely to contribute to further militarisation of the conflict and to greater levels of violence in Syria and in the wider region. I further stated my belief that lifting the arms embargo ran the clear risk of endangering the US-Russia led “Geneva II” initiative.

It is obviously a matter of regret that the Foreign Affairs Council was unable to agree to renew the EU arms embargo against Syria. As a result, this will now expire on 31 May. However, I welcome the fact that the Council did agree to renew the remainder of the existing sanctions directed against the Assad regime. These will continue in force for a further year, following adoption of a Council Decision later this week.

It is important to emphasise that all 27 member States of the EU remain fully united in their desire to promote the earliest possible end to violence and a political resolution leading to transition and the establishment of a functioning democracy in Syria. In the Council Declaration that accompanied the Council Decision on renewal of the sanctions package, it was noted that no member State intending to do so will proceed at this stage with the delivery of arms to Syria. The Council also agreed to review its position before 1 August on the basis of a report from the High Representative on the developments related to the US-Russia initiative and on the engagement of the Syrian parties.

In relation to calls which have been made for the establishment of a no-fly zone over Syria, this would obviously necessitate broad international agreement and could only be authorized through a UN Security Council Resolution specifically mandating such a step. Regrettably, the Security Council has not been able to agree any Resolution on Syria since the conflict erupted in March 2011 and it appears most unlikely that the political will exists within the Council at present to reach agreement on such a proposal.

Overseas Development Aid Provision

46. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the expected level of funding that will be provided in his Department’s budget for overseas aid in budget 2014; if he will confirm that Ireland will be in a position to fulfil a commitment to keep its provision of overseas aid at 70 cent in every €100 by the year 2015; if he will indicate the current level of invigilation of that funding in programme countries; and the way his Department measures the impact and success of Irish Aid in each country concerned. [26367/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): The Government is strongly committed to Ireland’s overseas aid programme. Last month we launched Ireland’s new Policy on International Development, “One World, One Future”. The policy clearly sets out our vision for a sustainable and just world, and our goals and areas of focus for the coming years. It reaffirms the Government’s commitment to international development and its centrality to our foreign policy.

The new policy restates the Programme for Government commitment to achieving the UN target of providing 0.7% of GNP for Official Development Assistance (ODA). Over the past two years, the Government has broadly stabilised the budget for development assistance. This is an important achievement. We will endeavour to maintain aid expenditure broadly at current levels until economic circumstances permit us to make further progress towards achieving the 0.7% target.

Preparations for Budget 2014 are currently under way. Budget 2014 will be framed in the context of the Government’s overall fiscal consolidation strategy of reducing the deficit to be-

low 3% of GDP by the end of 2015. Departmental budget allocations for 2014 must be set in this context, and all Departments will be required to provide further savings. While I am firmly committed to working to maintain aid allocations at their current level, the final allocation will be a matter for Government decision and will be announced in the Budget Statement.

Under the Government's aid programme, Ireland has long term, strategic development partnership programmes with a small number of developing countries. Working with our partner countries, we are helping to build government and institutional capacities to deliver the essential services their populations need, mainly in the areas of health, education and food security. There is an approved strategy for each partner country, which includes a detailed results framework. Rigorous systems are in place for planning, monitoring, evaluating and auditing the aid programme and in particular our assistance to Partner Countries. Programmes are continually monitored and assessed at mission level and by headquarters staff to ensure they deliver the intended results. Crucially, this enables us to measure the impact and effectiveness of our programmes.

In addition a comprehensive system of internal audit is in place in the Department and audits are carried out on an annual basis, as appropriate by auditors based in our Embassies, the Department's evaluation and audit team, international accountancy firms whom we commission and the national audit offices of our partner Governments. Oversight of the internal audit function is by the Department's independent Audit Committee which provides an independent appraisal of the Department's audit and evaluation function, meets with the Comptroller and Auditor General, and publishes an annual report on its work. The Committee reports directly to the Secretary General of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Passport Applications

47. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the upcoming changes to passport application procedures that are currently pending; if these new changes will make the process of acquiring a passport for Irish citizens cheaper, faster and more efficient; if an effective communication plan is in place to deal with this new process and effectively relay this message to the general public; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26405/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Over the coming weeks the Passport Service are introducing a number of changes to passport application procedures. These include the move from the very successful pilot to full implementation of the appointments service in the Molesworth Street office; and the withdrawal of the ordinary post service over time.

In November 2012, the Passport Office in Molesworth Street launched a pilot programme to allow customers to book, via a simple web based system, guaranteed time slots before travelling into the office. The pilot has proved very successful. The public have responded very well to this pilot programme and in particular are very welcoming of the fact that the many hours previously spent queuing in the office has been eliminated. Customers are now in and out having lodged their application in approximately 10 minutes. Additionally the pilot has extended the public opening hours of the office from 09.30-16.30 to 09.00 -17.00.

Priority in the system is given to those with urgent travel needs (travelling in 3-10 days) with the majority of appointments available to those who fit into this category. Additionally, the Passport Service continue to provide the service of turning around applications on the same day in cases where a passport is required for travel necessitated by an emergency such as the death

or illness of a family member. All others are encouraged to use the passport express service.

There has been a 33% decrease in counter applications year to date with a corresponding increase in passport express applications. The appointments system critically allows the Passport Service to identify and prioritise those applications with greatest need for short turnaround. Additionally, from the customer perspective, the change has removed the necessity for the public to queue for many hours, of unknown duration, and early in the morning outside in inclement weather.

For citizens resident on the island of Ireland, the cheapest and most efficient means of processing their passport application continues to be through the passport express services operated on behalf of the Passport Service by An Post and by the Post Office in Northern Ireland. This service, which involves a pre-checking facility, has a maximum ten working day turnaround.

This compares favourably to postal applications not transmitted through the passport express system, of which over 90% are either inaccurate or incomplete on arrival, with 35% lacking the correct documentation and the vast majority lacking the correct fee. As a consequence, these applications take more than twice as many man hours to process as passport express applications, thereby draining resources from the processing of valid applications submitted through the passport express system or through the appointment system.

With a view to further improving the quality of service to the public, therefore, applications from addresses on the island of Ireland received by regular and registered post after 30 June 2013 will be returned to the applicant who will be advised to resubmit their application through the passport express service. Information on the changes to application procedures will be advertised in the national press, on the Passport Service website and through social media channels.

Ministerial Meetings

48. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the recent discussions he had, in addition to discussions the Minister of State with responsibility for trade and development had, with the former British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Right Honourable David Miliband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26408/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I met with David Miliband on Wednesday, 22 May, in his capacity as former Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in the British government. In the course of a wide-ranging and useful conversation, we discussed issues related to British-Irish relations, the European Union and wider foreign policy issues.

Emigrant Support Services

49. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the funding that the Irish International Immigrant Centre in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, has received from his Department per year from 2007 to 2012; if the centre is legally obliged to report Irish citizens to immigration authorities for taking extra work; if the centre could instead offer supports to Irish citizens and help Irish immigrants in view of the fact that it receives Irish taxpayer funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26414/13]

56. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the recent actions of the Irish International Immigrant Centre in Boston in relation to a young J1 Irish visa holder; his views on the adequacy and suitability of advice provided by such centres; if he has received a comprehensive report on this particular incident; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26556/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 49 and 56 together.

The Irish International Immigration Centre in Boston (IIIC) has provided assistance to Irish emigrants in Massachusetts for almost 25 years. The Government has provided funding to the organisation through the Emigrant Support Programme primarily for services aimed at assisting vulnerable Irish citizens, including the undocumented, the elderly, prisoners and those suffering from substance abuse. Details of grants provided since 2007 are outlined in the following table.

Since 2009, the IIIC has also been accredited by the US State Department as a visa sponsor for the J1 Irish work and Travel 12 month programme. The terms and conditions under which the IIIC participates in this programme are determined by its contractual relationship with the State Department. Following the incident referred to by the Deputy, our Consul General in Boston met with the Executive Director of the IIIC and requested a full report. He also emphasised that Emigrant Support Programme funding would be provided to organisations who continued to prioritise the interests of Irish citizens and Irish communities. I note that the IIIC has since issued a public apology for the manner in which the incident was handled.

While my Department has expressed its concern to the organisation, it is important to recognise that thousands of Irish citizens have received considerable direct assistance over the past two and a half decades from the IIIC. Through our Consulate in Boston we will continue to work with the IIIC and the Irish Pastoral Centre in Boston to ensure that the needs of Irish citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, continue to be met.

Amount of funding awarded to the Irish International Immigration Centre* 2006 -2012

Year	Amount of funding awarded in Euro
2006	€127,281
2007	€141,026
2008	€127,000
2009	€148,536
2010	€209,603
2011	€145,682
2012	€206,169

*The Centre was known as the Irish Immigration Centre until 2010, since then it has been known as the Irish International Immigration Centre.

European Council Meetings

50. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the developments and discussions that took place at the 27 May 2013 meeting of the European Union Foreign Affairs Council held in Brussels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26416/13]

51. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

the discussions he held with ministerial colleagues at the 27-28 May 2013 meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council held in Brussels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26458/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 50 and 51 together.

I attended the most recent meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 27 May. As you will be aware, the deteriorating situation in Syria and specifically discussions around the renewal of the sanctions package - including the arms embargo – dominated the meeting. I will return to this point.

In her opening remarks, High Representative Cathy Ashton mentioned the successful outcome of the High-level Donors Conference on Mali which had taken place in Brussels on 15 May. Pledges at the Conference exceeded the target of €2bn, with Ireland pledging new funding of €2.5m for Mali. The Council adopted Conclusions which underscored the EU's support for the implementation of the transition road map. HR Ashton gave a short update to Ministers on the latest round of EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. It is hoped that the implementation plan for the agreement reached between the two sides in April will be fulfilled by the end of this year.

HR Ashton and the UK Foreign Secretary noted the successful outcome of the London conference on Somalia on 7 May, which raised \$350m for justice, security sector and governance development programmes.

Ministers had an exchange of views on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in preparation for the discussion on defence issues scheduled to take place at the European Council meeting in December. In my intervention I noted the importance of civilian CSDP missions as instruments for advancing the EU's foreign and security policy objectives, and the importance of the December European Council also addressing these missions. I agreed with other colleagues on the need to improve the management of civilian CSDP missions to ensure that they respond effectively to developing needs.

While it was hoped to have a detailed discussion at the Council about the Middle East Peace Process, due to time constraints it was agreed that this item would be postponed until next month's meeting, when it is also intended that Conclusions will be adopted.

As mentioned, discussions at the Council were dominated by consideration of the ongoing crisis in Syria in advance of the deadline for renewal of the EU sanctions package on 31 May. There was strong and unanimous support among member States for efforts to reach a political solution in Syria. The EU is extending its full support to the initiative of the US and Russia to bring the parties to the negotiating table on the basis of the Geneva Communiqué of June 2012. As emphasised in the Council Conclusions, the EU will continue to work with all stakeholders to try and find a peaceful solution to bring the conflict to an end.

The Council renewed its commitment to respond to humanitarian needs in Syria and in neighbouring countries, notably Lebanon and Jordan, and urged all donors to fulfil pledges made at the Kuwait humanitarian conference on 31 January. Renewal of the EU sanctions package, and in particular the arms embargo, was the subject of long and intensive discussion among member States. In my intervention, I set out the Irish position, in particular our view that lifting the arms embargo is unlikely to assist efforts to achieve a political resolution. On the contrary, the provision of arms to the Syrian moderate opposition, no matter how well-intentioned, is only likely to contribute to further militarisation of the conflict and to greater levels of violence in Syria and in the wider region. I further stated the Government's belief that lifting the arms embargo runs the clear risk of endangering the US-Russia led "Geneva II" initiative.

The Council agreed to extend, for a twelve-month period, all of the existing restrictive measures in place against Syria and its current rulers, with the exception of the arms embargo. It is obviously a matter of regret that we were unable to agree to renew the arms embargo. As a result, this will now expire on 31 May. It is important to emphasise that all 27 member States of the EU remain fully united in their desire to promote the earliest possible end to violence and a political resolution leading to transition and the establishment of a functioning democracy in Syria. In the Council Declaration that accompanied the Council Decision on renewal of the sanctions package, it was noted that no member State intending to do so will proceed at this stage with the delivery of arms to Syria. The Council agreed to review its position before 1 August on the basis of a report by the High Representative on the developments related to the US-Russia initiative and on the engagement of the Syrian parties.

Despite these difficult discussions, it is worth repeating that the EU remains fully supportive of, and engaged in, the efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution to this appalling conflict and to address its horrendous humanitarian consequences. This position has been clearly affirmed in the Conclusions adopted by the Council on 27 May which can be accessed on the official EU website (links below).

- Council conclusions on Syria:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137316.pdf
(original version - EN)

- Council declaration on Syria:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137315.pdf
(original version - EN)

Question No. 52 answered with Question No. 45.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

53. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the date on which the current panel for the recruitment of third secretaries in his Department was formed; when the panel will expire; the number of persons listed on the current panel and the number appointed from the panel; when a new panel will be formed to generate a new list of persons to be called to become third secretary; if applications for inclusion on the panel will be publicly advertised through the Public Appointments Service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26473/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The recruitment of Third Secretaries is conducted on behalf of my Department by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). The approval of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is required before a competition can be held. Competitions are advertised through the PAS website www.publicjobs.ie which includes an automatic e-mail alert service for potential candidates. The most recent competition was held in the second half of 2008 when a panel of 30 qualified candidates was put in place. Since then, a total of 14 appointments have been made, the last of which occurred in December 2010 and involved the person who secured 16th place in the 2008 competition. The Deputy will be aware that the moratorium on recruitment to the civil service introduced in 2009 remains in force, and of the reasons for it. Nevertheless, my Department is in consultation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform about

the urgent need to hold a Third Secretary competition later this year in order to fill a number of existing and emerging vacancies in the grade at home and abroad.

J1 Summer Work and Travel Programme

54. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the measures his Department is taking with regard to potential changes to the J1 visa system in legislation currently being considered in the United States Congress. [26482/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The welfare of the Irish abroad in general, and especially the position of undocumented Irish immigrants in the United States, remains an important priority for the Government. The Government have also attached great importance to providing for future flows of migration between Ireland and the United States through the extension of the so called E3 visa scheme to include Irish citizens. The Government is continuing to follow closely the progress of the Senate bill on comprehensive immigration reform that is currently under consideration and which would address these issues.

The Senate Immigration Reform Bill (S.744) is a very extensive piece of draft US legislation that contains a comprehensive and complex set of reforms across the US immigration system. The Government has already welcomed the inclusion of provisions which would provide a solution for the undocumented Irish and opportunities for future flows of migration between our two countries. However, all of its provisions, including those in relation to the J1 programme, are at the early stage of the legislative process and it is too early to indicate the timing and final shape of any legislation.

The Government greatly values the current provision of the J1 programme and believes it is important that the programme be as accessible as possible and that efforts be made to ensure high levels of uptake. Our Embassy in Washington remains in very close contact with the US Congress and the Administration to ensure that the interests of all Irish citizens are advanced in any immigration legislation that is passed.

Departmental Budgets

55. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of that adjustment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26549/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): In the context of the forthcoming Budget, the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform has asked my Department to identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The identification of savings options should ensure that a sufficient range of proposals are made by all Departments to help the Government make well-informed choices about spending priorities and allocations. The scale of the adjustments for 2014 was set out in part 1 of the *Expenditure Report 2013*, which was published in December 2012. The Government will be making decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations.

Question No. 56 answered with Question No. 49.

Questions Nos. 57 and 58 answered with Question No. 45.

Middle East Peace Process

59. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if any new initiatives were discussed at the recent EU Foreign Affairs Council in relation to the urgent need to renew the Middle East peace process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26562/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Due to pressure of other business, the discussion of the Middle East Peace Process which had been planned for the Foreign Affairs Council on 27 May was postponed to the Council's meeting in June. It had been intended that Ministers would discuss the initiative of US Secretary of State Kerry to restart the peace process, and in particular what the EU could do in support of, and in parallel to, his efforts. It is likely, depending on the timing of any US moves, that there will be a major discussion of the Middle East Peace Process at the Foreign Affairs Council on 24 June, which will include a review of developments in relation to the issues raised in the May 2012 Council Conclusions on the MEPP.

Overseas Development Issues

60. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade following his Department's acknowledgement of the contradiction between policies to promote biofuels, on one hand, and hunger alleviation goals, on the other, if he will raise this issue forcefully at the upcoming Hunger Summit in London on 8 June as EU policies on biofuels are currently under review during the Irish EU Presidency; if he will demonstrate Irish Aid's commitment to a whole-of-Government approach to development in its new policy document, One World, One Future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26573/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): As the Deputy is aware from replies to previous Questions on this matter, I share concerns that biofuel production, unless properly regulated, can have a negative impact on food production, and on food prices. My colleague, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, takes the lead on Government policy in relation to biofuels and EU policy on biofuels, including the European Commission's proposal to limit the use of foodcrop-based biofuels in transport to 5% by 2020.

The EU Renewable Energy Directive of 2009 requires that, by 2020, 10% of transport fuels should come from renewable sources. The Directive also provided that the ongoing effects of its implementation be monitored by the European Commission. Following a number of studies on the Directive's effects, in October 2012 the Commission published a proposal to amend the Renewable Energy Directive and the Fuel Quality Directive. The Commission included a proposal that foodcrop-based biofuels should at most comprise half of the 10% quota required to come from renewable energy sources. This proposal, in conjunction with the incentives for advanced (next-generation) biofuels, signals the desire of the Commission to move towards the use of advanced biofuels made from feedstocks which do not compete with the production of food. While Member States agree that the issue must be addressed, it remains an extremely complex matter, and agreement has not yet been reached on the 5% cap. Negotiations are continuing, and it is expected that a progress report will be submitted for the meetings of the Energy and Environment Councils in June 2013.

The fight to end extreme hunger is, and will remain, a key priority for Ireland's international development programme, which takes a comprehensive approach to the challenge. This

includes a focus on good governance in respect of land use. The scale of the challenge of fighting global poverty and providing nutritious food for a growing population, in the context of a changing climate, was highlighted at the international Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Climate Justice which the Government organised in Dublin last month.

In the context of its G8 Presidency, the British Government is hosting an important international meeting on hunger and under-nutrition in London on 8 June, on the theme 'Nutrition for Growth: Beating Hunger through Business and Science'. Ireland is a core partner in this initiative and the Taoiseach will participate, at the invitation of the British Prime Minister. The event will build on the Olympic Hunger Summit held at Downing Street in August 2012, which the Taoiseach also attended.

The London meeting will focus specifically on under-nutrition, an often silent element of hunger which has devastating consequences. Over 40% of children under the age of five in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are undernourished, putting them at greater risk of infection and death, and seriously limiting their ability to reach their full potential. I am determined that Ireland will continue our strong international advocacy and action to address hunger and under-nutrition. In London, we will focus particularly on supporting efforts to harness public and private investment which will assist low-income countries to fight under-nutrition.

Ireland's new policy on international development, One World, One Future which was launched in early May, sets out in clear terms the goals and focus of our development efforts. It aims to enhance coherence of Government policies for development results. It will result in a more focussed approach across all Government Departments, harnessing the particular contributions, expertise and knowledge that each can offer. The Interdepartmental Committee on Development, which I chair, will have a strengthened role, and will be responsible for producing a biennial report on Ireland's progress on policy coherence for development. This report will be submitted to the Government and the Oireachtas.

Undocumented Irish in the USA

61. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the up to date position in relation to the new E3 visa initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26593/13]

62. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the up to date position in relation to the Immigration Reform Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26594/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 61 and 62 together.

A resolution of the situation facing the undocumented Irish in the United States has been and remains a priority for the Government in ongoing contacts with the US Administration and Congress. The Government have also attached great importance to providing for future flows of migration between Ireland and the United States through the extension of the so called E3 visa scheme to include Irish citizens. In this context, we very much welcome the recent publication of the US Senate's Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Bill which provides for reform of the US immigration system. The bill is progressing through the Senate system and on May 21, the Senate Judiciary Committee completed its detailed examination of proposals for comprehensive reform of the US immigration system as set out in Bill. It is expected that the Bill will now go forward for further debate by the full Senate

over the coming weeks.

The comprehensive draft legislation, which was drafted over several months by a bi-partisan group of eight US Senators, includes provisions that would legalise the status of thousands of undocumented Irish people and provide a path to permanent residency. It also provides for future flows of legal migration between Ireland and the US via the proposed E-3 visa. The Bill is a very positive development. Its provisions, if adopted, would help to end the great hardship and uncertainty faced by undocumented Irish in the US and their families here in Ireland. The inclusion of a new provision to allow several thousand Irish citizens to legally avail of employment opportunities in the US every year is also particularly welcome.

It is important to recall that the overall issues involved are complex and sensitive ones within the US political system. Our Embassy in Washington continues to closely follow developments and lobby as necessary, in keeping with the approach we have adopted over many years in our pursuit of a resolution of the situation facing the undocumented in the United States. I would like to reiterate my appreciation for the active support we continue to receive from a number of Irish community organisations, including the Irish Lobby for Immigration Reform, the Chicago Celts and the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

Property Tax Assessments

63. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance the criteria that should be used by a person registering for the local property tax who is in the process of signing over the property to a family member; if the property in such a situation should be registered by one or both parties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26332/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Based on the information provided by the Deputy it is not possible to give a definitive reply. However, by way of general information the following may be of relevance in this case. A liability for Local Property Tax (LPT) arises where a person is a liable person in relation to a residential property on the liability date, which is 1 May 2013 for the year 2013. The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act, as amended, defines a liable person as “a person who holds any estate, interest or right in a relevant residential property entitling the person to either immediate possession of such property for a period that may equal or exceed 20 years; or the receipt of rents or profits of such property for a period that may equal or exceed 20 years”.

I have been informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the owner of a residential property is generally the liable person for the purposes of the charge to LPT. The Deputy indicates that the owner is currently in the process of signing over the property to a family member and it is therefore assumed that this transfer was not completed on 1 May 2013. In that case, the property should only be registered in the name of the current liable person.

The Commissioners advise that when the transfer is complete, details of the new liable person in respect of the property in question should be notified to Revenue so that the LPT Register can be updated accordingly. Furthermore, as the meaning of sale includes a transfer of property, the person who is the liable person as at 1 May 2013 is required to pay any 2013 LPT due before they complete the transfer, notwithstanding that the LPT is not payable until 1 July 2013.

Corporation Tax

64. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide figures on

the amount of tax paid by foreign multinational companies here, corporate tax in particular. [26312/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that as multinational companies are not specifically distinguished from other companies on tax records, there is no precise basis on which the taxes paid by multinational companies can be separately ascertained. Where necessary, it is possible for Revenue's Large Cases Division (which manages the tax affairs of most multinational companies) to manually identify the top payers among these companies on a case by case basis and extract the necessary tax details to provide indicative figures. The amount of corporation tax paid in 2012 by the top 10 companies, managed in Revenue's Large Cases Division was €1.42 billion.

Property Taxation Collection

65. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Finance if he will clarify the length of time persons, particularly pensioners, qualifying for a deferral of the local property tax on income grounds will continue to avail of the deferral, assuming their income remains constant. [26357/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): For individuals on low incomes the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, as amended, provides for a system of deferral arrangements for owner-occupiers where there is an inability to pay the tax and certain specified conditions are met. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that an owner-occupier, such as a pensioner, who meets the qualifying conditions for deferral of their 2013 Local Property Tax (LPT) charge based on their income thresholds, may continue to defer the LPT for so long as they meet the qualifying conditions. It is a condition of any deferral that, if a claimant's circumstances change, Revenue must be notified. A change of circumstances may result in the deferral being terminated in respect of future LPT. Where a liable person ceases to meet the qualifying conditions, any LPT deferred before that person ceased to meet the conditions may continue. Interest of c. 4% per annum will apply to any amounts deferred.

Certain events such as the receipt of money by way of winnings, gifts, inheritances or capital sums of any kind will cause the tax deferred up to that point, including interest, to become immediately payable. Deferred LPT and interest will have to be discharged on the sale/transfer of the property. However, a deferral may be allowed to continue where the property passes to another person by way of a gift or inheritance and the new liable person is also eligible for a deferral. I previously provided details on the option of deferring payment of LPT based on income thresholds in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 69 of 25 April 2013 (19691). I am advised by the Commissioners that full details of all deferral options are outlined in the Guidelines on Deferral or Part Deferral of Local Property Tax, which are available on Revenue's website www.revenue.ie.

Tax Code

66. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Finance if he intends introducing a provision, whereby all invoices issued for farm contracting services, must carry a VAT number in order to discourage evasion of taxation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26368/13]

67. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether it is reasonable that self-employed persons who are not VAT registered can write cheques of up to

€5,000 without having to provide back up invoices; the reason for this provision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26369/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 66 and 67 together.

I understand that these questions arise from an article in the *Irish Independent* on 28 May 2013 quoting Mr. Peter Farrelly of the Association of Farm Contractors of Ireland (FCI), stating, “Farmers have a special exemption with Revenue at the moment where they don’t have to get a receipt from a contractor for any work done up to €5,000.” The article goes on to say that the FCI have proposed a system whereby farmers must be able to show a receipt for any work done by a contractor in order for it to qualify as a tax deductible expense.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that there is no such “special exemption” in existence. Farmers, similar to all self-employed individuals, registered for VAT or not, must be in a position to document all business expenses incurred prior to making any claim to a deduction for that expense against income in order to compute their chargeable income for tax purposes. I am further informed that the Revenue Commissioners met with Mr. Peter Farrelly and Mr. Timothy O’Brien of the FCI on 14 June 2012, and it was made clear at that time that no concession of this nature was in place.

Tax Reliefs Application

68. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Finance the reason farmers were granted a carbon tax relief on diesel, but that this rebate is not available to agricultural contractors, thus putting them at a financial disadvantage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26370/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I assume that the Deputy’s question relates to the double deduction for carbon tax on farm diesel which I provided for in Finance Act 2012. Under this provision, farmers are allowed a deduction in computing their farming profits or losses for the amount of additional carbon tax they incur on purchases of marked gas oil following the €5 per tonne increase in the rate of carbon tax on certain fuels from 1 May 2012. This was provided in the context of a commitment in the Programme for Government.

Non-Resident Companies

69. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the process by which the Revenue check that the companies claiming to be an Irish registered non-resident company have identified a country of residence and pay or are liable for tax in that country of residence. [26374/13]

70. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the number of inspections carried out for tax purposes on companies claiming to be an Irish registered non-resident company. [26375/13]

71. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the process of verification of companies claiming the status of Irish registered non-resident companies are exempt from tax. [26376/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 69 to 71, inclusive, together.

As a general rule, based on long-standing case law, companies are resident in Ireland for tax purposes if they are managed and controlled in Ireland. Section 23A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 supplements this general rule and provides that certain companies incorporated in the State are to be regarded as being resident in the State for tax purposes.

A company incorporated in the State is not regarded as tax-resident here where - either the company or a related company is carrying on a trade in the State and either — the company is ultimately controlled in a tax treaty country or in an EU Member State or the company or a related company is quoted on a recognised stock exchange in the EU or in a tax treaty country, or - the company is treated under a tax treaty as not resident in the State.

Companies that are tax resident in Ireland are liable to tax on their worldwide income with credit given for foreign taxes paid on income earned abroad. Companies that are not tax resident in Ireland and which do not carry on a trade in Ireland have no liability to Irish corporation tax and have no obligation to file an Irish corporation tax return or to identify the country in which they are resident for tax purposes.

Non-resident companies that carry out business activities in Ireland through an Irish branch are not exempt from or outside the scope of corporation tax. Such companies are liable to corporation tax on such proportion of their profits as are attributable to business activities carried on through the Irish branch. These companies are obliged to file a corporation tax return but only in respect of their Irish branch operations. The corporation tax return requires the non-resident company to tick a box on the return where the company in question is non-resident but has an Irish branch. There is no requirement for such a company to identify its country of residence for tax purposes on its corporation tax return. There is also no requirement for such non-resident companies that have an Irish branch to report their non-Irish branch profits to Irish Revenue as such profits are not, as a matter of law, subject to Irish corporation tax.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that there is no requirement in Irish tax law for a company to claim the status of Irish registered non-resident company. While there is no requirement for a company to claim Irish registered non-resident status, the Revenue Commissioners as part of their normal compliance activity in the area of corporation tax, would seek confirmation from a company as to how it is structured and would verify that all relevant corporation tax rules have been correctly applied.

Tax Compliance

72. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the number of tax inspections conducted on companies with a turnover in excess of €500 million and in excess of €1 billion each year since 2000. [26377/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that data are not maintained in a manner which would enable this question to be readily replied to. However I can provide statistics for Revenue's Large Cases Division which manages the tax affairs of the largest companies and high wealth individuals within the state including those with turnover in excess of €500M.

Since 2005 Large Cases Division has completed 3,447 audits on cases for whom it is responsible. In addition, since July 2011, this Division has also completed 7,397 other risk interventions (such as querying refunds, relief claims) on cases for which it is responsible.

VAT Rates Application

73. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he will ensure that the VAT rate is maintained at 9% with regard to restaurants and other key areas of the tourism industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26409/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Any proposals to maintain the 9% rate into 2014 will be considered in the context of Budget 2014.

Property Taxation Collection

74. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline in tabular form, the total number of local property taxes that have been paid at the stated deadline set by the Revenue Commissioners on Tuesday 28 May 2013; if he will provide a break down of the figures into each rate band; the total amount of money they have received for the number of properties in each rate band; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26457/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that Local Property Tax (LPT) Returns, personalised letters and an LPT Guide issued earlier this year to owners of 1.69 million residential properties either by post or by way of their ROS (Revenue Online Service) inbox. The Commissioners have confirmed that at close of business on Tuesday 28 May 2013 1,517,902 LPT Returns have been filed. However, as the Deputy will be aware, in light of the unprecedented demand on the LPT Helpline, the Revenue Commissioners extended the deadline to 8pm on Wednesday 29 May. At the end of the extended deadline 1,539,822 LPT Returns have been filed.

According to Budget estimates prepared by my Department, Local Property Tax is expected to generate an overall yield of €250 million in 2013 and €500 million in 2014. I am also advised that by the end of May 2013, approximately €100m will have been transferred by Revenue to the Exchequer. This is a very significant sum of money given that payment of the tax is not due until 1 July 2013. Further payments will be collected between July and December 2013 as the various phased, and other, payment options available to property owners are met.

As the Deputy will appreciate, with returns still being filed yesterday evening, the Commissioners' focus is on processing the Returns, dealing with correspondence, telephone calls and payment processing. It is therefore not possible at this time to provide the details requested by the Deputy until the Revenue Commissioners have had time to carry out the necessary analysis of the Returns filed and payments.

For completeness sake, the Deputy should note that in light of the arrangements provided for local authorities and social housing associations in the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Act 2013, discussions are taking place on the most practical approach to securing LPT returns from those bodies. Where local authorities and social housing associations are liable for LPT, payment is not due until on or before 1 January 2014.

Tax Code

75. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Finance if he is aware of the total amount of corporate tax avoided by companies registered in Ireland as a result of the double Irish tax scheme in 2010, 2011 and 2012, respectively; if he will outline that amount; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26474/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The so-called ‘Double Irish’ two-tier structure is a tax-planning arrangement which has been designed and developed by tax and legal advisers. It relies on arbitrage between the different tax rules used in different countries and is categorically not part of the Irish tax offering. Differences arise in the legal and tax systems between countries. International tax planning takes account of these differences in national systems and rules. What companies do outside of Ireland is beyond the scope of the Irish tax system. We cannot conclusively determine the effective rate of tax paid under international tax structures by reference to taxation in Ireland alone.

The profits charged in Ireland fully reflect the functions, assets and risks located here by a multinational group. The payments to the non-resident company represent the required remuneration of intellectual property assets funded and owned outside the State and its tax payments are properly reduced in these circumstances by reference to expenditure incurred for the purpose of its trade. Ireland cannot expect to receive or retain the remuneration of these assets.

The only way to effectively deal with such arrangements is for countries to work together to examine these structures and to consider how international rules can be amended to ensure fair levels of taxation. Ireland remains fully committed to this approach to ensure fair play in international taxation. In this regard, Ireland is participating in projects at EU and OECD level which aim to address international tax issues.

My Department has been actively engaged in the OECD “Base Erosion and Profit Shifting” project, which aims to address these issues, and an action plan is expected later this year. The Irish Presidency of the EU Council is making significant progress on a number of key files in the area of tax evasion and tax fraud and we hope to bring them to a conclusion in the coming months. As President of the EU Council, I and EU Tax Commissioner Algirdas Semeta sent a joint-letter to the Finance Ministers of the other 26 EU Member States outlining seven key areas where concrete action can be delivered in the short term. Significant progress on the seven priorities set out in the joint-letter was made at the May Ecofin and further progress is hoped for at the June Ecofin.

Tax Code

76. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Finance if he is aware of the total amount of corporate tax avoided by companies registered in Ireland as a result of our laws on transfer pricing in 2010, 2011 and 2012, respectively; if he will outline that amount; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26475/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Ireland’s transfer pricing legislation is based on the OECD arm’s length standard which requires associated companies to price transactions on the same basis as independent parties would. Ireland’s legislation takes account of the OECD’s Transfer Pricing Guidelines. It is not correct to suggest that this legislation could be a basis for tax avoidance. The operation of the arm’s length standard and the OECD Guidelines as they apply in relation to intangible assets, including IP, are currently being considered by the OECD. Ireland is participating in this on-going OECD review of specific aspects of the international Guidelines and whether they may require adjustment in the context of the current organisation of global business.

Credit Availability

77. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the level of lending to small and

medium enterprises by State controlled banks over the past three years. [26496/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware, the Government has imposed SME lending targets on the two domestic pillar banks for the three calendar years, 2011 to 2013. Each bank was required to sanction lending of at least €3 billion in 2011, €3.5 billion in 2012 and €4 billion in 2013 for new or increased credit facilities to SMEs. Both banks have reported that they achieved their 2011 and 2012 targets.

The pillar banks are required to submit their lending plans to the Department and the Credit Review Office (CRO) at the beginning of each year, outlining how they intend to achieve their lending targets. The banks have submitted their lending plans for 2013 to my Department. My Department, in conjunction with the CRO, has analysed the plans and has met with the banks to discuss them. At the end of the first quarter 2013, both banks are on schedule to meet their targets. The Credit Reviewer has stated in his last report that over €8bn was sanctioned by the banks in 2012, of which approximately €2.5bn (27%) is new lending drawn down.

Separately, the Central Bank of Ireland publishes data on lending to Small and Medium Enterprises by all credit institutions resident in the Republic of Ireland, and commenced compiling these data in March 2010. These figures show that total gross new lending drawdowns by non-financial SMEs between March 2010 and December 2012 amounted to €8.7 billion. (Gross new lending drawdowns refer to funds accessed by SME customers during the period which were not included in the previous period's stock of credit advanced. This excludes the value of renegotiations/restructures that takes place during the period. It is also not equivalent to sanctioning activity, nor does it cover contingent liabilities, such as letters of credit or similar guarantees. Non-financial SME credit excludes lending to certain financial vehicle corporations in the financial intermediation sector, as their balance sheet size brings them into the SME category.) This is available at http://www.centralbank.ie/polstats/stats/cmab/Documents/ie_table_a.14.1_credit_advanced_to_irish_resident_small_and_medium_sized_enterprises.xls

The Central Bank of Ireland does not publish these data separately for state controlled banks. Data for March 2013 are due to be published before the end of June.

Household Savings Rate

78. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance Ireland's gross domestic saving rate as a percentage of GDP. [26497/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am assuming the Deputy is referring to the household savings rate. The latest preliminary estimates from the Central Statistics Office indicate that gross household savings amounted to €11,084 million in 2012. This equates to 6.8 per cent of GDP in 2012. I would point out that the gross household savings rate is typically expressed as a percentage of gross household disposable income. Expressed in this way, the savings rate was 12.5 per cent last year.

Tax Code

79. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he has requested that Revenue write to the US authorities to correct any inaccuracies in the portrayal of Ireland's corporation tax regime during recent Senate hearings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26537/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As I have said in the Dáil previously and also earlier this week in answer to other Parliamentary Questions on this subject, we are in regular contact with our friends in the United States and we will communicate the issues referred to by the Deputy in the appropriate way at the appropriate time. In relation to the company specifically referred to in the question, I understand that their CEO has now publicly confirmed that they “have no special deal with the Irish Government that gives us a 2% flat tax rate “.

NAMA Debtors

80. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the action that the National Asset Management Agency will undertake if it believes it was furnished with a deliberately misleading statement of affairs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26538/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The provision of false or inaccurate information to NAMA as part of a sworn statement of affairs by debtors is a criminal offence, under Section 7 of the NAMA Act. NAMA has no hesitation in fulfilling its statutory obligations. I am advised by NAMA that it has, to date, referred two formal complaints to the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation arising from the possible failure by debtors to fully disclose their assets and liabilities in their statements of affairs to the Agency.

NAMA Portfolio Value

81. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the value of National Asset Management Agency’s property portfolio would be enhanced by alterations to the planning regulations for the Dublin docklands. [26539/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): NAMA has publicly indicated that it has a significant exposure to the Dublin Docklands through its debtors and Receivers and has indicated that it is willing to support investment if it is commercially viable. I am advised that the formal consultation period for the Draft Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) Scheme relating to the North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock areas of Dublin closed on 10th May. I am advised that NAMA, along with a large number of other organisations and individuals, made a formal submission on the Draft SDZ Scheme and that the Agency is otherwise in dialogue with the planning authority and with other State agencies as to how to meet accommodation requirements in the area.

I understand that the Dublin City Manager will shortly issue his report on the submissions received. The elected members of Dublin City Council will then consider and make a decision on the draft scheme. I am confident that NAMA will continue to work towards maximising the value of its assets under prevailing market parameters, including the planning regulations in force.

Departmental Budgets

82. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of that adjustment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26548/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In the context of the forthcoming Bud-

get, the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform has asked my Department to identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The scale of the adjustments for 2014 were set out in part 1 of the Expenditure Report 2013, which was published in December 2012. 2014 Summary Estimates will be published in October and my Department will consider resource requirements for 2014 over the coming months.

Tax Code

83. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of all special tax arrangements available to executives and special assignees under section 12 of the Finance Act 2012; the number of persons claiming in each case and the value of tax foregone; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26566/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Section 12 of Finance Act 2012 provides a deduction from income for income tax purposes for employees who travel abroad to certain countries as part of the duties of their employment. A deduction from salary of up to a maximum of €35,000 will be granted for employees travelling to the so-called BRICS countries, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa as part of the duties of their employment. The provision applies as respects the years 2012, 2013 and 2014. The individual claiming the deduction must be absent from the State for a minimum of 60 days in a period of 12 months beginning or ending in a relevant tax year. These days can be accumulated from a number of trips. However, in order to qualify each trip must have a minimum duration of four days.

The numbers of employees who availed of the scheme in 2012 was 12 and the amount of tax forgone was €61,000 (amount rounded to nearest €10). However, it is possible that not all potential claimants have submitted their claims yet. Also, the figures provided do not include the details for claims that may yet be made in the Form 11 tax returns for 2012 to be filed under the self-assessment system in October/November of 2013. The deduction was extended to include related travel to Egypt, Algeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the 2013 & 2014 tax years.

Tax Reliefs Application

84. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the action he has taken to date to give effect to his budget speech commitment that tax relief on pension contributions will only serve to subsidise pension schemes that deliver income of up to €60,000 per annum; and the target date for publication of the legislation to give effect to this by 1 January 2014. [26567/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In my 2013 Budget speech, I indicated that the necessary arrangements to give effect to the Programme for Government commitment to effectively cap taxpayers' subsidies for pension schemes that deliver income of more than €60,000 would be put in place next year. A cross-Departmental Working Group of officials has been established to examine, among other things, the changes required to the existing arrangements governing the maximum allowable pension fund at retirement (the Standard Fund Threshold) and other potential alternative approaches for achieving the commitment. The Working Group has also sought views from various interested parties as part of the examination of options for delivering on the Budget commitment.

A Steering Group of senior officials has also been established to provide direction and guidance to the activities of the Working Group. Both Groups have held regular meetings over

recent months and their work is continuing. I expect to receive a report on the results of this work during the Summer on which I will base decisions on changes to give effect to the Budget commitment. Budget 2014 will be delivered in October this year and I would expect that any legislative changes in this area will be included in the Finance Bill giving effect to that Budget.

Corporation Tax

85. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an update on claims in the United States Senate hearings that Ireland made a special deal with Apple and the other claims that Ireland was a tax haven; the steps being taken to rebut these claims; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26595/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I would remind the Deputy that owing to taxpayer confidentiality I am only able to speak in general terms about this issue and matters that are already in the public domain. As the Taoiseach, the Tánaiste, numerous other Ministers, and I have explained already, there is no special tax rate deal done with any company in Ireland. All companies in Ireland pay the standard 12.5% rate on their trading profits arising in Ireland. All companies here pay a corporation tax rate of 25% on their non-trading income, and chargeable capital gains are taxable at the capital gains tax rate of 33%. These rates are set down in statute law and are not open to negotiation with taxpayers.

In relation to the company specifically referred to in the question, I understand that their CEO has now publicly confirmed that they “*have no special deal with the Irish Government that gives us a 2% flat tax rate*”. I would also restate that Ireland is not a tax haven. The OECD identifies four key indicators of a tax haven and none of these apply to Ireland: the first is having no taxes or only nominal taxes; the second is a lack of transparency; the third indicator is an unwillingness to exchange information with tax administrations of OECD member countries; and the fourth indicator is absence of a substantial activity requirement. None of these criteria apply to Ireland. We are in regular contact with our friends in the United States and we will communicate these issues via the appropriate channels at the appropriate time.

School Transport Eligibility

86. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a school transport issue (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26394/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): One of the main objectives of my Department’s School Transport Scheme is to provide a basic level of service for children who live long distances from school, and who might otherwise experience difficulty in attending regularly. Children are eligible for Post Primary School Transport where they reside not less than 4.8 kms from, and are attending, their nearest education centre as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Bus Éireann which operates the School Transport Scheme on behalf of my Department is responsible for the planning and timetabling of school transport routes. Bus Éireann endeavours, within available resources, to ensure that each eligible child has a reasonable level of school transport service in the context of the Scheme nationally. In general, transport services are not established in areas where public scheduled bus services already exist. Eligible pupils in such cases are facilitated with travel permits for public scheduled services. Bus Éireann has advised that the families in question, who have been availing of school transport, have a service within

guidelines and it not proposed to alter the current arrangement. New families who have applied for school transport will be assessed by Bus Éireann for eligibility in line with the terms of the Post Primary School Transport Scheme.

FÁS Training Programmes

87. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if and when payment will be effected in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26512/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Persons who are unemployed but, not in receipt of a social protection payment are generally eligible to take part in FÁS training courses. However, only those who were receiving a social protection payment prior to commencing training may be eligible to receive a FÁS training allowance while undertaking a course. I am informed by FÁS that the individual in question commenced a FÁS Career Planning and Employability Skills course in Swords on 13th May, 2013. The F103 form completed by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) indicates that he is not currently in receipt of a DSP payment and in those circumstances he has no entitlement to a FÁS training allowance.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

88. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when resource hours will be allocated to a child (details supplied) in County Cavan by SENO in view of the report of their school and the educational psychologist into their behaviour at school. [26344/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including the allocation of resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants to schools. The NCSE operates within my Department's established criteria for the allocation of Special Education supports and the staffing resources available to my Department.

All schools were advised to apply to the NCSE for resource teaching and SNA support for the 2013/14 school year by 15th March 2013. The NCSE are currently processing these applications and schools will be notified by SENOs of their resource teaching and SNA allocation for 2013/14 in advance of the coming school year, based on the number of valid applications received. All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

89. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are any grants for a person (details supplied) in Dublin 8 doing a PhD in London; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26387/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The student grant scheme does not extend to postgraduate courses pursued outside of Ireland. Tax relief at the standard rate of tax may be claimed in respect of tuition fees paid for approved courses at approved col-

leges of higher education including approved undergraduate and postgraduate courses in EU Member States and in non-EU countries. Further information on this tax relief is available from the Revenue Commissioners on www.revenue.ie.

Departmental Reports

90. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his response to the findings in the report, *School Completers - What Next?*, that two thirds of students who attend fee-paying secondary schools go on to higher education in comparison to 40% of students from other school types and only one quarter of students from DEIS schools went on to higher education in 2010; the way he intends to address the inequalities of the education system here to ensure more equal levels of progression to third level education across the education spectrum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26398/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): A new National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2014-2019) is currently being prepared by the National Access Office for my Department. The findings of the *School Completers - Whats Next* report will be considered in the context of this new Access Plan.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

91. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a student grant application (details supplied); his plans to review the requirement that an applicant must be in receipt of a jobseeker’s payment for 390 consecutive days; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26402/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will appreciate that in the absence of all of the relevant details that would be contained in an individual’s application form and supporting documentation, it would not be possible for me to say whether or not a student should qualify for the special rate of maintenance grant. However, the qualifying criteria for the special rate of maintenance grant in the 2012/13 academic year as specified under the 2012 student grant scheme is as follows:

1. Student must qualify for the standard rate of grant.
2. Total reckonable income net of income disregards and Child Dependant Increase must not exceed €22,703
3. As at 31st December, 2011, the reckonable income must include one of the eligible long-term social welfare payments prescribed in the Student Grant Scheme. Jobseekers Allowance is considered to be a short-term payment unless it is held for 390 consecutive days at the 31st December 2011. A student may however apply for the special rate in subsequent years of their study. It is not proposed to depart from the existing arrangements for the determination of the eligibility for the special rate of maintenance grant.

Schools Building Projects Administration

92. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he intends to publish a revised school building list; and if a school (details supplied) in County Westmeath will be included on this list. [26406/13]

93. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he intends to publish a revised school building list; and if a school (details supplied) in County Westmeath will be included on this list. [26407/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 92 and 93 together. My Department's over-riding objective is to ensure that every child has access to a physical school place and that our school system is in a position to cope with increasing pupil numbers. To ensure that this is achieved, the delivery of major school projects to meet significant demographic demands nationally will be the main focus for capital investment in schools in the coming years. The Five Year Construction Plan that I announced in March 2012 is focused on meeting those demographic needs.

In addition to the Five Year Plan, my Department is committed to publishing a detailed annual programme in relation to planned expenditure on individual major school projects commencing construction. The first of these, which related to 2012 expenditure, was published in December 2011 and the 2013 construction programme, representing the second phase of the five-year plan, was published in December 2012. Details are available on my Department's website at www.education.ie.

However, there are a number of proposed school building projects, including the schools referred to by the Deputy, which simply could not be included in the five year plan. The Deputy will be aware that my Department has continued to progress projects outside the five year plan to the final planning stages in anticipation of further funding becoming available to my Department in future years. A building project for the first named school requires a site to be identified and secured. A building project for the second named school is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning and a stage 2(b) submission is currently with my Department for review.

Information in respect of the current status of all assessed applications for major capital works is available on my Department's website which is updated regularly throughout the year.

Pension Provisions

94. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a request for a pension to be electronically transferred to an An Post account will be facilitated in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26412/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the Public Service Transformation Plan, which was published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in November 2011, Payable Orders will be abolished as a method of payment from August 2013. This decision is being implemented by all Government Departments. Hereafter pensions will be paid by Electronic Funds Transfer only. In order to ensure continued payment of pension when Payable Orders cease the Department is seeking account details from the remaining small number of pensioners who continue to get paid by Payable Order. An Post has confirmed to officials from my Department that they are unable to accept payments by way of Electronic Funds Transfer into their accounts. The person referred to by the Deputy should seek to make arrangements to provide account details which will accept payment of pension by Electronic Funds Transfer. All banks accept EFT payments and a number of Credit Unions now also accept EFT payments.

Bullying in Schools

95. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department will be engaging with the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals in their attempt to request a meeting with Facebook to discuss the risks of cyberbullying; his position on this request; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26440/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As I said at the NAPD conference last year, at national level the NAPD has shown great leadership in helping to formulate education policy. At local level NAPD members show great leadership in the running of our schools, day in, day out. I am therefore very disappointed that Facebook has indicated that they will not engage directly with the NAPD and facilitate a meeting with them. Officials in my Department have already communicated with both the NAPD and Facebook about this issue. Officials in my Department are meeting with Facebook representatives next week and this matter will be raised with them again.

School Textbooks

96. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the cost of school books; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26462/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I am very conscious that the cost of textbooks is a considerable burden on families. Since becoming Minister for Education and Skills, I have attempted to take steps to reduce the burden on families. Shortly after coming into office I met with members of the Irish Educational Publishers' Association and impressed on them the need to limit the cost of textbooks. I have also stressed to them the real need to avoid placing schools and families in a position where textbooks are altered unnecessarily.

The Association has responded positively to my approaches and have agreed a voluntary Code of Practice among their members. The Code commits the publishers to limit the publication of new editions and to maintaining editions of books in print unchanged for at least six years. The publishers have also given assurances to me that they will sell textbooks to schools at discounts so that schools can purchase textbooks in bulk to stock textbook rental schemes. The Deputy should note that educational book publishers are independent private companies and are not under the direct control of my Department. Accordingly, I have no role or powers to intervene in the production decisions of these companies, such as those you have highlighted.

As the Deputy is aware I met with the Irish Educational Publishers' Association shortly after my appointment as Minister and agreed with them a voluntary Code of Practice among their members. If there is any evidence that this Code is being breached, I would like to be provided with same so that I can take it up with the Association.

Teachers' Remuneration

97. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 347 of 21 May 2013, if he will address the question (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26472/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): All arrears due to the teacher will issue on 13th June 2013. A letter has been sent directly to the person in question setting out her service history, registration details and appointment status.

Departmental Budgets

98. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the percentage of overall Government spend attributable to his Department; and the percentage for each of the past ten years. [26483/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the attached table which has been extracted from the Databank maintained by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The Databank can be accessed at <http://databank.per.gov.ie/>. The figures reflected in the databank detail all current and capital spending by Government Departments and agencies, along with expenditure from the Social Insurance Fund and the National Training Fund.

It should be noted that comparison of education expenditures for the years in question should take account of changes in the make-up of the Education and Skills Vote, which include, inter alia:

(a) The transfer into my Vote in 2010 of certain functions in relation to Skills Development (€144 million in 2010 and €164 million in 2011), as well as the transfer in of expenditure under the non-Voted National Training Fund;

(b) The transfer of responsibility for Nursing Education into my Vote (€56 million in 2010 and 2011);

(c) The transfer of responsibility for the School Completion Programme and the National Education Welfare Board out of my Vote in 2011.

Vote Group Gross Expenditure

Vote	€'000s	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Education and Skills Vote											Prov	Estimate
Education Group	Pay Bill	4,170,000	4,626,776	5,008,206	5,502,787	5,981,963	6,481,489	6,731,232	6,458,507	5,399,088	5,289,594	5,275,159
	Pension									1,100,252	1,188,042	1,128,082
	Non Pay	1,279,926	1,518,094	1,608,348	1,776,249	1,908,548	1,983,928	1,857,310	2,100,608	1,810,353	1,714,861	1,690,342
	Capital	414,857	452,426	601,243	617,861	814,079	829,623	767,194	786,615	556,669	409,972	413,750
		5,864,783	6,597,296	7,217,797	7,896,897	8,704,590	9,295,040	9,355,736	9,345,730	8,866,362	8,602,469	8,507,333
National Training Fund*	Pay Bill								10,912	10,992	12,213	11,660
	Non Pay								384,310	315,277	328,683	350,340
									395,222	326,269	340,896	362,000
		5,864,783	6,597,296	7,217,797	7,896,897	8,704,590	9,295,040	9,355,736	9,740,952	9,192,631	8,943,365	8,869,333

Vote	€'000s	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total Government		38,364,390	40,750,645	45,095,031	50,016,306	56,426,010	62,395,042	63,051,261	60,563,570	57,361,945	55,838,479	54,576,918
	Total Education Group as % Total Government	15.30%	16.20%	16.00%	15.80%	15.40%	14.90%	14.80%	16.10%	16.00%	16.00%	16.30%

* Note - Expenditure under the non-Voted National Training Fund came under the remit of the Department of Education and Skills in 2010, as a result of a transfer of Departmental functions in that year.

Schools Building Projects Status

99. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he expects his Department's Carrickphierish campus joint venture with Waterford City Council to finally start construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26501/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that following the recent completion of the pre-qualification of contractors, the project has been authorised to proceed to tender. It is anticipated, once the tender period is complete, that a contractor will be appointed and construction will commence in the final quarter of this year.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

100. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which resource or other teaching supports can be made available in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26518/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including the allocation of resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants to schools. The NCSE operates within my Department's established criteria for the allocation of Special Education supports and the staffing resources available to my Department.

All schools were advised to apply to the NCSE for resource teaching and SNA support for the 2013/14 school year by 15th March 2013. The NCSE are currently processing these applications and schools will be notified by SENOs of their resource teaching and SNA allocation for 2013/14 in advance of the coming school year, based on the number of valid applications received. All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

Departmental Budgets

101. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of that adjustment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26546/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In the context of the forthcoming Budget, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has asked my Department to identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The identification of savings options should ensure that a sufficient range of proposals is made by all Departments to help the Government make well-informed choices about spending priorities and allocations. The scale of the adjustments for 2014 was set out in part 1 of the Expenditure Report 2013, which was published in December 2012. Government will be making decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

102. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) in County Meath may expect a decision on its July provision application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26585/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The July Provision Scheme is an option for all special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism or severe to profound general learning disability that choose to extend their education services through the month of July. Children with autism in mainstream classes are eligible to apply for home based tuition, but can, in limited circumstances participate in their school's JEP if they can be accommodated within the school's existing autistic or severe to profound unit(s) and without incurring the need for additional resources, as defined by my Department.

Under the terms of the Programme, exemptions to the general restriction on children from mainstream classes participating in the school based programme can, in limited circumstances be sought, where it is determined that the best interests of the children would be more appropriately addressed by their inclusion in a dedicated autism or severe to profound class for the period of July, having regard to the additional cost arising. A proposal from St Michael's Primary School seeking an exemption has recently been received and approved by my Department. The school have been advised of the decision and the appropriate additional resources in this regard.

School Accommodation

103. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an update on the need for additional accommodation for a school (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26598/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware, there are two schools on this site, a Junior School and a Senior School. Both schools have temporary accommodation, in the ownership of the schools, in addition to their permanent structures and have applied to my Department for replacement permanent buildings. The next step to progressing a building project for the schools involves the appointment of a design team and the commencement of the architectural planning process. School building projects such as this one, that are not included in the 5 year construction programme, will continue to be progressed

to final planning stages in anticipation of further funds being available to my Department in future years.

Information in respect of the current status of all assessed applications for major capital works is available on my Department's website which is updated regularly throughout the year. Funding under my Department's Prefab Replacement Initiative announced in March 2012 was not offered to the schools in question as the initiative was available to schools to replace rented prefabs only. The schools were not considered for devolved grants as the proposed building project is expected to address the various deficiencies within the school buildings. The schools received a total of €34,900 under my Department's Minor Works Scheme in November 2011. It is open to the schools concerned to prioritise the use of these funds to address works of a capital nature requiring attention.

School Accommodation

104. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an update in the way the decision to provide a school (details supplied) in County Dublin was arrived at; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26599/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department uses a Geographical Information System to analyse demographic data to determine the areas where additional school accommodation may be required. A variety of sources are used in this analysis, including census data, school enrolment data and child benefit data obtained from the Department of Social Protection. Using this system, up to 2018 a need for some 1,540 additional primary school places has been identified in the area to which the Deputy refers. This equates to an additional 55 classrooms at a pupil teacher ratio of 28:1. The new school referred to by the Deputy is being established to assist in addressing this emerging shortfall and to add to the choice of school type available to parents in the area.

Pension Provisions

105. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding Garda pensioners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26461/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I do not accept that a two-tier approach is being adopted in respect of the planned reduction in public service pensions over €32,500. The approach set out in the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Bill 2013 on this matter is in fact designed to ensure that the same broad level of pension reduction is applied in the case of each of the two groups of pensioners referenced by the Deputy's question. I would note that the reductions planned for public service pensions above €32,500 apply to retirees from all sectors of the public service; and that Garda pensioners and other public service pensioners are treated alike.

The fundamental change provided for in the Bill is that a public service pension that is currently valued in excess of €32,500 will be reduced with effect from 1 July 2013. The reduction in such pensions will range from 2% at around the threshold level of €32,500 (subject to no pension being reduced below €32,500) to 5% for the highest value public service pensions. Pensioners who retired up to end-February 2012, (i.e. during the 'original' grace period) are already subject to the Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR). The planned further pension reduction of 2 to 5% will therefore be secured by increasing, with effect from 1 July 2013, the

PSPR rates to which these pensioners are currently subject. The new higher rates to apply to this cohort are set out in the first Table in section 5 of the Bill.

For pensioners who retired after end-February 2012 and for public servants who will retire on pension up to end-August 2014 (i.e. during the 'new' grace period), their pensions will not have been subject to PSPR to date; instead those pensions reflect the downward impact of the 2010 public service pay cuts. The planned pension reduction for this group of 2 to 5% will therefore be secured by introducing PSPR at the rates set out in the second table in section 5 of the Bill. On this basis I consider that there is broad parity of treatment as between the two categories of pensioner referred to.

Office of Public Works Properties

106. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of gift/books shops in Office of Public Works sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26589/13]

107. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the cost of running the gift and book shops in Office of Public works sites for 2010, 2011 and 2012 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26590/13]

108. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the revenue made in the gift and book shops in the Office of Public Works sites for 2010, 2011 and 2012 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26591/13]

109. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans for the gift and book shops at Office of Public Works sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26592/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 to 109, inclusive, together.

The Office of Public Works has 70 visitor sites across the country. The majority of these sites do not operate a separate retail outlet but sell limited visitor memorabilia on an across the counter basis. As such facilities are contained within an overall site structure, and administered by general guide staff as part of their normal range of duties, information relating to the cost of administering such activity is not available.

Two visitor sites, namely Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre in Co. Meath and Dublin Castle have a designated retail outlet which operate on a franchise basis. In the case of Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre, the franchise operation was introduced in June 2012 with a fee of €20,000 per annum payable. The fees for 2010, 2011 and 2012 in respect of Dublin Castle Gift Shop amounted to €19,046.16. A tabular breakdown by site, of the sales income generated by visitor memorabilia in respect of the Office of Public Works sites for the years 2011 and 2012 is as follows. The figures in respect of 2010 are currently being compiled and will be furnished to Deputy O'Mahony in due course. As the majority of Office of Public Works visitor sites have limited space and facilities to operate a retail outlet, and our prime focus is on the preservation and presentation of the sites in question, there are no immediate plans for the development/expansion of this area.

Publications sales (only) by site

Site Name	2011	2012
Ardfert Cathedral	€180.09	€186.70
Athenry Castle	€356.26	€330.03
Aughnanure Castle	€1,900.87	€2,128.38
Ballyhack Castle	€276.00	€294.50
Barryscourt Castle	€275.50	€241.00
Blasket Centre	€1,862.86	€2,778.50
Boyle Abbey	€310.05	€384.70
Cahir Castle	€13,350.18	€12,672.63
Carrowmore	€3,939.00	€3,816.50
Casino Marino	€2,486.00	€1,811.00
Castletown House	€6,305.60	€11,485.50
Céide Fields	€3,460.21	€4,108.46
Charles Fort	€3,797.93	€4,407.97
Clonmacnoise	€17,095.60	€16,008.01
Corlea Trackway Visitor Centre	€409.49	€475.55
Derrynane House	€3,552.20	€3,456.50
Desmond Castle	€952.50	€863.50
Desmond Hall	€123.20	€142.40
Donegal Castle	€1,283.52	€1,423.06
Dublin Castle - books only	€1,110.00	€1,070.00
Dún Aonghasa	€6,497.50	€6,056.50
Dungarvan Castle	€406.94	€384.50
Dunmore Cave	€2,149.51	€2,876.50
Emo Court	€391.49	€1,262.26
Ferns Castle	€490.10	€381.10
Garinish Island	€9,857.40	€8,948.40
Glebe House and Gallery	€3,107.30	€2,038.88
Glendalough Visitor Centre	€27,286.12	€27,087.38
Hill of Tara	€2,119.50	€2,050.50
J F Kennedy Arboretum	€95.20	€39.70
Jerpoint Abbey	€2,486.80	€2,694.99
Kilkenny Castle	€23,863.20	€20,919.00
Kilmainham Gaol	€37,674.03	€36,234.94
Main Guard	€47.30	€165.90
Maynooth Castle	€115.40	€343.50
Mellifont Abbey	€1346.28	€1,295.75
National Botanic Gardens	€3,309.60	€2,859.30
Newgrange	€6,635.95	€9,807.50
Newmills Corn and Flax Mills	€216.41	€190.40
Ormond Castle	€1,845.80	€1,676.80
Parke's Castle	€386.70	€454.96
Pearse Museum	€461.37	€1,434.05

Site Name	2011	2012
Pearse's Cottage	€1,096.81	€692.83
Phoenix Park Visitor Centre	€2,471.21	€2,651.08
Portumna Castle	€1,453.38	€1,905.73
Rathfarnham Castle	€125.00	€311.50
Reginald's Tower	€1,089.20	€1,308.91
Rock of Cashel	€20,612.46	€12,211.34
Roscrea Heritage	€187.60	€196.91
Ross Castle	€3,452.29	€3,230.45
Scattery Island	€538.60	€411.50
Sligo Abbey	€325.30	€432.00
St. Audoen's Church	€394.90	€340.90
St. Mary's Church, Gowran	€44.00	€35.50
Swiss Cottage	€2,815.80	€2,539.91
Tintern Abbey	€1,584.80	€487.60
Trim Castle (and Keep)	€5,198.35	€5,796.85
-	€235,206.67	€229,840.71

Garda Stations Refurbishment

110. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans, if any to upgrade a Garda station (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26390/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): Having been prioritised for attention by the Garda authorities, the existing layout of Donegal town Garda Station is being reviewed to assess whether or not identified deficiencies can be addressed in the present Station building.

Garda Stations Closures

111. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans for the use of the former Garda station building (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26393/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The OPW is currently assessing the property options arising in respect of all closed Garda Stations including the former Garda Station in Malin, County Donegal. The stated policy is to identify if other State Bodies, including government departments and the wider public sector has a use for the property. If there is no other State use for a property the OPW will then consider disposing of the property on the open market, if and when conditions prevail, in order to generate much needed revenue for the Exchequer. If no State requirement is identified or if a decision is taken not to dispose of a particular property the OPW would consider, community involvement subject to the receipt of an appropriate business case which would indicate that the community/voluntary group has the means to insure, maintain and manage the property. The OPW are presently reviewing all expressions of interest for the future use of the former Garda Station in Malin, County Donegal.

Public Sector Staff Remuneration

112. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the pay cuts for public sector employees over €65,000 will also apply to providers of professional services to the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26535/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Bill 2013 does not provide for reduction of fees in respect of the providers of professional services. Provision to adjust the fees of the providers of professional services to the State is made in the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act, 2009. That Act also provides for an annual review of fees and the relevant Ministers can conduct a review of fees in accordance with the provisions of legislation.

Expenditure Reviews

113. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to publish a new comprehensive review of expenditure before budget 2014; the expected date for its completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26536/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Stability Programme Update, published in April 2013, sets out medium term aggregate parameters for 2013-2016, which gives the fiscal framework for Budget 2014.

With regard to savings to be made next year, my Department has requested that all Departments identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The identification of savings options should ensure that a sufficient range of proposals are made by all Departments to help the Government make well-informed choices about spending priorities and allocations. The scale of the adjustments for 2014 were set out in part 1 of the *Expenditure Report 2013*, which was published in December 2012. Government will be making decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations.

In addition to this, all spending lines are being reviewed in advance of the Budget and my Department continues to conduct in-depth Focused Policy Assessments This is supplemented by ongoing work in relation to Value for Money reports. The results of the FPA's and VFM reports will help inform Government decisions for expenditure which will be published as part of the Budget in October.

Departmental Budgets

114. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of that adjustment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26553/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In the context of the forthcoming Budget, my Department has requested that all Departments identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The identification of savings options should ensure that a sufficient range of proposals are made by all Departments to help the Government make well-informed choices about spending priorities and allocations. The scale of the adjustments for

2014 were set out in part 1 of the Expenditure Report 2013, which was published in December 2012. Government will be making decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations.

Non-Resident Companies

115. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Irish registered non-resident companies; the total value of holding of such companies; and the total number directly employed by Irish registered non-resident companies. [26378/13]

121. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will detail the meeting held with representatives of multinational corporations that have addressed the issue of the operation of Irish registered non-residential companies. [26384/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 115 and 121 together.

I understand from my colleague the Minister for Finance that he has been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the number of companies that are incorporated here but non-resident for tax purposes is not available as they are not separately compiled. I have had no meetings with representatives of multinational corporations on the issue of the operation of Irish registered non-resident companies.

Non-Resident Companies

116. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the expected impact of the Companies Bill 2012 on the operation of Irish registered non-resident companies. [26379/13]

117. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if the Companies Bill 2012 will address the loophole in which an Irish registered non-resident company can claim tax residence in another state yet not declare itself resident for tax purposes in that state. [26380/13]

118. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if the Companies Bill 2012 will make company registration a test of residence without exception and, in view of the reputational damage done to this State by the tax avoidance measures of multinationals, if he will now take steps in the Companies Acts to address the abuse of the concept of Irish registered non-resident companies. [26381/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 116 to 118, inclusive, together.

Policy responsibility for tax issues rests with my colleague the Minister for Finance. I have no direct function for such matters.

With regard to company law, measures were taken in response to concerns in the 1990s regarding Irish Registered Non-resident companies. These measures are contained at sections 42-51 of the Companies (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 1999 as amended.

First, as a precondition of incorporation, every application for registration is required to

demonstrate that the proposed company intends to carry on an activity in the State.

Secondly the 1999 Act required that every company registered in the state was required to maintain an Irish resident director or a bond to the value of €25,394.76. The Irish resident director requirement was subsequently changed under the Companies (Amendment) Act 2009 to a requirement for a director resident in the European Economic Area. The requirement for either a bond or an EEA resident director does not apply if the company obtains from the Registrar of Companies a certificate that the company has a real and continuous link with one or more economic activities in the state. The company concerned must provide proof of such a link.

A statement from the Revenue Commissioners that it has reasonable grounds to believe that the company has such a link is deemed proof of a link under the Act. Additionally the number of directorships which could be held by one person was limited to 25 (subject to certain exemptions). Finally the Act contained enhanced strike-off provisions and enhanced notification to the CRO where directors have resigned. The Companies Bill 2012 contains similar provisions to sections 42-51 of the Companies (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 1999 as amended.

Companies Law Issues

119. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of meetings that he or senior officials have had with the American Chamber of Commerce in relation to the Companies Bill; and if these meetings addressed the issue of Irish registered non-resident companies. [26382/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Neither I nor my officials have had any meetings with the American Chamber of Commerce to discuss the Companies Bill 2012.

Non-Resident Companies

120. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will make public any representations by the Industrial Development Agency in regard to the operation of the Irish registered non-resident companies. [26383/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): IDA Ireland is the agency with statutory responsibility for the attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) to Ireland and its regions. In executing its mandate, IDA Ireland engages with corporate entities, as the primary decision makers around FDI investment. The Agency's key focus is on maximising the level of economic activity and substance in Ireland from these corporations. IDA Ireland is a marketing organisation not a tax advisory body. In the course of its engagement with client companies, IDA Ireland provides general information to companies on the Irish tax regime while companies and their financial advisors engage separately and directly with the Revenue Commissioners, as required. In my regular meetings with the Chairman and Chief Executive of IDA Ireland a broad range of issues are discussed, including matters that are of concern to the Agency's client companies. For reasons of client confidentiality and commercial sensitivity details of these discussions are not divulged to third parties. I can confirm, however, that I have had no meetings with representatives of IDA Ireland on the issue of the operation of Irish registered non-resident companies.

Question No. 121 answered with Question No. 115.

Health and Safety Regulations

122. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the way the safety, health and welfare at work regulations, due to be in force from 1 June, will affect the owners of buy-to-let properties who wish to upgrade; the reason these regulations apply to small domestic projects; if any small buy-to-let or domestic building work is excluded and, if so, the criteria for such exclusion; if he will accept that when a house owner, whether domestic or buy-to-let, engages a builder, the expectation is that the builder alone has the expertise to comply with the regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26424/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): On 23 November 2012, the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (S.I. No. 461 of 2012) were signed, these Regulations had a deferred operational date of 1 June 2013. The main provision of these Regulations was the change in the definition of client by removing the phrase “in the course or furtherance of a trade, business or undertaking, or who undertakes a project directly in the course or furtherance of such trade, business or undertaking;”. This removal means that domestic home owners having construction works carried out on their own domestic dwellings will from 1 June 2013 have certain responsibilities under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2006 to 2012.

Occupational health and safety is as important on a small domestic construction site as it is on a larger commercial site, possibly more so. Evidence has shown that between 2010 and 2012 many serious injuries and 11 deaths have occurred on domestic construction sites. The extension of responsibilities to include domestic home owners as clients will help combat such fatalities and serious injuries on domestic construction sites. Furthermore, in 2009 the European Commission began Infringement proceedings against Ireland regarding, amongst other things, the exclusion of domestic home owners from the definition of client. The introduction of the change in definition is necessary for Ireland to comply with our obligations under European law and avoid substantial fines for the taxpayer.

Arguably, the increased standards will promote the use of experienced competent and reputable contractors thereby reducing undeclared work in the shadow economy. The Deputy refers to the owners of buy to let properties, I would like to point out that there will be no change to the responsibilities for such owners as landlords always had responsibilities to make appointments under the Construction Regulations as their properties would be considered within the criteria for a trade, business or undertaking. I would also point out that in relation to works carried out on domestic dwellings health and safety requirements existed prior to the introduction of this amendment.

The provisions of the Construction Regulations apply to the contractors by way of their responsibilities to their employees in relation to provision of a safe place of work. The provisions of the Construction Regulations will now relate to all works that fall within the definition of construction work. This definition corresponds with that in Directive 92/57/EEC on implementing the minimum health and safety requirements at temporary or mobile construction sites. Exclusions to such provisions apply in situations where there is only one contractor on site and where there is no particular risk involved, and where the work does not exceed 30 days duration. Where individuals require advice on whether the works they are having done will require them to make appointments under the Construction Regulations they can consult the Health and Safety Authority for clarification. There are a number of tasks that are not affected by the change in the definition of client as they do not fall within the definition of construction work, for example routine home DIY, grass cutting, painting your garden fence, cleaning your windows, replacing your locks or getting new blinds fitted.

There is a responsibility on all persons engaging others to carry out construction works to ensure themselves that the person they engage are competent to carry out the tasks they are engaged to do. The Health and Safety Authority have suggested a number of ways to assist domestic homeowners to assess competence, such as looking for certificates of competence in the trades involved or asking about previous works carried out and speaking to previous clients. The Authority is producing a helpful guide aimed directly at home owners having construction work carried out in their own homes, this will be available on the HSA's website (*www.hsa.ie*). A guide to assist contractors carrying out construction work on domestic dwellings will also be available and the Authority's workplace contact unit is available to the public to offer any assistance required (Lo Call 1890 289 389).

Upon the making of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (S.I. No. 461 of 2012), I asked the HSA to carry out a full review of the provisions of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2006 to 2012 and produce a consolidated set of Regulations. As part of this review I asked that the HSA identify revisions that can be effected to reduce the regulatory burden imposed on all clients in construction, while not diminishing workplace health and safety standards. A provision in the Regulations imposes a duty on a contractor to advise a client of his or her responsibilities under the Construction Regulations, where the contractor becomes aware of a situation where the client is not complying with their responsibilities. This consolidated set of Regulations will be in place shortly and will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas as required by the Statutory Instruments Acts 1947 and 1955.

EU Enlargement

123. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he intends to allow citizens of Croatia to have full access to the jobs market here under European Union freedom of movement of workers rules; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26447/13]

124. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation when he expects legislation to amend the Employment Permits Acts of 2003 and 2006 to be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas to allow citizens of Croatia, the newest member of the European Union, full access to the employment sector here from 1 July 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26448/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 123 and 124 together.

On 9 December 2011, Croatia signed the Treaty of Accession to become the EU's 28th Member State. Ireland signed the Instrument of Ratification for the Croatian Accession Treaty on 21 September 2012. The ratification process, by the parliaments of all 27 EU Member States, is expected to be concluded by the end of June 2013. Therefore, entry into force and accession of Croatia to the EU is expected to take place on 1 July 2013. An assessment has been made, in light of analysis and recent data, of the possible impact on the labour market by granting access. The assessment included a review conducted by Forfás which considered the likely impact of opening access to the Irish labour market to Croatian nationals following Croatia's accession to the EU.

A number of factors are noted in respect of this issue. Firstly, it is highly unlikely that significant numbers of Croatians wish to migrate to Ireland. Ireland's current economic status presents a very weak 'pull' factor for Croatians. There are low numbers of job vacancies except

in areas experiencing a shortfall in skills supply e.g. Information Technology – additional migrants to such sectors would be welcome. International studies show that migration is heavily influenced by existing migrant populations and established social networks in the destination country. Eurostat estimates that there are approximately 350,000 Croatian nationals currently resident in the EU. Germany, Austria and Italy account for 91% of Croatian nationals living within the EU. According to the 2011 Census, there are only 846 Croatian nationals resident in Ireland. There is therefore not a sufficient population of Croats in Ireland at present to create an attracting factor.

There is a very low propensity for Croats to emigrate. A Gallup survey undertaken in 2010 suggests that the numbers of Croats with firm intentions of leaving Croatia are relatively low (only 0.1% of the adult population or 4,000 people were considering moving permanently from Croatia in the following 12 months). Ireland did not feature as a target destination. This corresponds with Employment Permits data concerning nationals of Croatia where only 12 employment permits were issued in 2012 in respect of Croatian nationals. Secondly, in quantitative terms the size of Croatia's labour force is relatively small with a total labour force of 1.78 million with only circa 350,000 people in the 25-34 age group (generally the most mobile demographic of a country's population). Ireland's labour market, in line with EU obligations, is already open to an EU workforce of 229 million.

Thirdly, experience suggests that opening access to the Irish labour market may not have a significant impact on the State's services. PPS numbers are a unique reference number issued to persons when transacting with Government Departments and other Public Bodies. The experience in respect of Bulgaria (a country with a labour market twice the size of Croatia and to which Ireland gave full access to its labour market in 2012) suggests that only a modest increase arose in respect of PPS registrations which could not be described as having a distortionary impact on the Irish labour market.

Fourthly, a further factor borne in mind when estimating the impact of access versus restrictions to a labour market, is the issue of undeclared work. The Government decision pertains only to employment - Croats will, in any event, enjoy certain rights afforded to all EU citizens from 1 July and will therefore be able to reside in Ireland subject to restrictions under the Residence Directive. Such nationals will be able to study, work as self-employed, or establish businesses here. Applying restrictions to employment when it is possible work as self-employed can increase the potential for undeclared work. The main problem with undeclared work is that workers fall outside the tax net. They are also more likely to undercut minimum wages in low-skilled jobs and might contribute to the observed unemployment rate if this undeclared work displaces jobs among registered members of the labour force.

Finally, it was noted that Ireland has an excellent relationship with Croatia and it is important that this relationship is developed further for the benefit of both countries. Bearing in mind that Croatia applied for membership of the EU under Ireland's last Presidency of the EU it is timely that Croatia will join the EU just after the conclusion of Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the EU. By providing full access, Ireland is continuing its policy of openness to new Member States and highlights the need for continued EU solidarity. Based on the evidence available, Forfás concludes that it is unlikely that Croatia's entry to the EU will have a significant distortionary impact on the Irish labour market and recommended that transitional arrangements should not be applied in the case of Croatian nationals seeking to work in Ireland following Croatia's accession to the EU. In light of all these issues, Government has decided not to exercise an option under the Treaty to restrict access to Ireland's labour market for nationals of Croatia. As legislation must be enacted in order to give legal effect to the opening of Ireland's labour market to Croatia upon its EU accession, the Bill will be introduced as soon as possible.

Trade Relations

125. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the recommendation that Ireland made to the European Commissioner for Trade, Karel De Gucht, on his proposal that the European Union impose a 47% tariff on imported Chinese solar panels and telecommunications equipment; if he joined other member states in pressing the Commission to drop the proposed import tariffs; his policy in relation to this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26456/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The European Commission initiated anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations on imports from China of crystalline silicon photovoltaic modules (Solar Panels) and key components. The anti-dumping investigation opened on 6 September 2012 and the anti-subsidy investigation commenced on 8 November 2012. These investigations followed a complaint from EU Producers. The Commission proposed the imposition of provisional duties and Member States were required to submit their opinion by 24 May 2013. Ireland voted against these measures as it was judged that they were not in the overall interest of the European Union and in order to facilitate discussions between China and the EU. On 27 May the EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht met China's Vice Minister for Commerce, Mr Zhong Shan, to discuss the solar panel investigations by the EU. The EU is prepared to enter into talks with China to find a negotiated solution to this matter. However any negotiations would only start if and when a decision is taken on the application of provisional tariffs. The legal deadline for this decision is 5 June.

On 15 May 2013, the European Commission announced that it had taken a decision in principle to open an *ex officio* investigation into imports of mobile telecoms networks from China. This decision will not be activated for the time being to allow for negotiations towards an amicable solution with the Chinese authorities. Commissioner De Gucht will revert to the College of Commissioners in due course on this matter. An *ex-officio* case involves an anti-dumping or anti-subsidy investigation initiated and undertaken by the EU Commission where it has not received a formal complaint from producers, for example, of unfair trading practices.

Immigration Status

126. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which regularisation of status will be undertaken in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26522/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The regularisation of status of the person named in terms of prescribed immigration requirements falls within the remit of the Irish National Immigration Service under the auspices of the Department of Justice and Equality. Under the provisions of the Employment Permits Acts 2003 and 2006 the person named is obliged to hold a valid employment permit before taking up employment in this country. There is no record of a work permit application in respect of this person in my Department.

Departmental Budgets

127. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of those adjustments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26551/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): In the context of the forthcoming Budget, scheduled for publication in October, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has asked my Department to identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The identification of savings options should ensure that a sufficient range of proposals are made by all Departments to help the Government make well-informed choices about spending priorities and allocations. The scale of the adjustments for 2014 was set out in part 1 of the Expenditure Report 2013, which was published in December 2012. Government will be making decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations.

National Internship Scheme Numbers

128. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the number of persons who have entered the JobBridge national internship scheme in each of the past three years. [26493/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme, came into operation on 1 July, 2011. The Scheme has made very significant progress in a relatively short period of time. I wish to advise the Deputy that 3,748 internships had commenced as at year end 2011. An additional 9,725 internships commenced in 2012. An additional 4,136 internships have commenced so far in 2013. In total 17,609 internships have commenced to-date.

Youth Unemployment Measures

129. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection her strategy to tackle long-term youth employment. [26495/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The official labour market figures published by the CSO indicated that the number of young unemployed at the end of 2012 was 59,000, of whom 27,300 were long-term (over one year) unemployed. The number of young long term unemployed represented a fall of 8,300 on the figure of 35,600 at the end of 2011.

In the first instance, the Government's primary strategy to tackle all forms of unemployment is to create the environment for a strong economic recovery by promoting competitiveness and productivity. Economic recovery will underpin jobs growth. Past experience suggests that youth unemployment, which tends to rise relatively rapidly in a downturn, can be expected to fall relatively rapidly during the recovery.

The Government is also implementing a number of programmes to assist young unemployed persons and keep young jobseekers close to the labour market. There are five main approaches being taken to tackle youth unemployment: education, training, job search assistance/guidance, work experience, and encouraging job creation. These actions range across a number of Departments and Agencies and includes the Youthreach programme providing 6,000 integrated education, training and work experience for early school leavers without any qualifications or vocational training who are between 15 and 20 years of age. The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme scheme provides a range of courses to meet the education and training needs of unemployed people over 21 years of age, particularly focusing upon early school leavers. The Back to Education Allowance scheme run by the Department of Social Protection provides income maintenance for unemployed people returning to further or higher education. Over 6,500 young people participated on this scheme in the last academic year.

Approximately 12,000 persons aged under 25 completed a training course with FÁS in 2012. This excludes apprenticeships and evening courses. This year MOMENTUM, a scheme for education and training interventions, which is part of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs initiative, is currently being rolled out by the Department of Education. MOMENTUM will support the provision of free education and training projects to allow 6,500 long term jobseekers to gain skills and to access work opportunities in identified growing sectors. Over 1,250 of these places are assigned specifically for under 25s.

The JobBridge National Internship Scheme is focused on providing work experience to young people with the total number of placements of young people on JobBridge during 2012 at 2,700. Long-term unemployed youth will also benefit from the JobsPlus initiative which is designed to encourage employers to recruit long-term unemployed people. Under this scheme, the State will pay circa €1 of every €4 it costs the employer to recruit a person from the Live Register.

In the December Budget, funding was secured for an additional 10,000 places this year across a range of programmes, including JobBridge, TÚS and Community Employment. About a quarter of these places are expected to be taken up by unemployed young people.

With regard to the expected impact of policy, the original Action Plan for Jobs sets out a target for 100,000 net new jobs to be created by 2016, many of which will be filled by young people. In this context, the Department of Finance anticipates that the overall unemployment rate will fall from 14.7% in 2012 to 12.3% in 2016. This could be expected to see youth unemployment fall from over 30% in 2012 to 24% or less in 2016.

In addition, the Action Plan for Jobs 2013 includes the Pathways to Work initiative's targets for increasing the number of people who are long-term unemployed moving into employment and reducing the average length of time spent on the Live Register. Specifically, these targets are that at least 75,000 of long-term unemployed people will move into employment by 2015 (starting 2012); to increase the exit rate of people on the live register for two years or more by 50% (to 40%) by the end of 2015; and to reduce the persistence rate (the rate at which short term unemployed people become long term unemployed) to 25%. As two out of five young unemployed are long-term unemployed, these targets are pertinent to young people.

A new recruitment incentive, JobsPlus, has also been developed by my Department and was approved by the Government as part of the Action Plan for Jobs, and is aimed specifically at the long-term unemployed. This incentive will cover the cost of c. €1 in every €4 of an employer's wage costs and will be launched for availability by July 2013. Young people are likely to be major beneficiaries of this initiative as employers tend to hire young people when there is a recovery in employment.

Following from the formal adoption of the EU Recommendation on Implementing a Youth Guarantee, the Government will review the current range of youth employment and training policies in Ireland to assess what measures will need to be taken to commence the gradual implementation of the guarantee. This will include the identification of what would be the appropriate timescale for implementation in Ireland's current employment and budgetary circumstances.

The scale and nature of the measures required will depend on the trend in youth unemployment, and in particular the number of young people likely to experience periods of unemployment of more than four months under current policies. In this context, it is to be hoped that the favourable developments in the number of young unemployed seen in 2012 is the beginning of a sustained downward movement in youth unemployment as the economy recovers.

Even so, the implementation of a guarantee will almost certainly require an expansion in the range of opportunities currently on offer to young people in the form of further education, training, internships, subsidised private-sector recruitment, and supports for self-employment. It is to be hoped that any measures taken by government in relation to the implementation of the youth guarantee will see youth unemployment fall even further than is already anticipated on the basis of existing policies.

Question No. 130 withdrawn.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

131. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Carlow will receive a decision on a review they sought for an exceptional needs payment; and if she will expedite an answer. [26310/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned will have a decision on the review next week.

Disability Allowance Appeals

132. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a disability allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26316/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the person concerned was assessed by a Medical Assessor of the Department of Social Protection who was of the opinion that she was capable of work. She appealed this decision on 13 May 2013 and the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer who made the decision have been sought. On receipt of the Department's response the appeal of the person concerned will be referred to an Appeals Officer for consideration.

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

National Internship Scheme Issues

133. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide a breakdown on a county basis of the total number of participants who have successfully completed a JobBridge internship; the success rate of JobBridge participants in subsequently finding employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26319/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The JobBridge Scheme has made exceptional progress since it came into operation on 1 July 2011. A recent independent evaluation conducted by Indecon Economic Consultants found that 61% of interns progress to paid employment after completing their internship. The 61% progression rate for JobBridge is among the best in Europe, where progression rates for similar internship schemes average just 34%.

The Indecon evaluation clearly demonstrates that JobBridge is delivering for thousands of jobseekers by providing them with valuable opportunities to gain relevant work experience, knowledge and skills in a workplace environment. JobBridge is a key instrument which is delivering on the Government's Pathways to Work agenda.

A breakdown of internships by county and region as at 16 May 2013 is set out in the following table:

Region	Finishers as at 16/5/13	Current Internships as at 16/5/13	Total Placements as at 16/5/13
Dublin	3986	1945	5931
Dublin Total	3986	1945	5931
Mid Leinster			
CARLOW	142	80	222
KILDARE	396	178	574
WICKLOW	268	117	385
Mid Leinster Total	806	375	1181
Mid West			
CLARE	243	137	380
LIMERICK	556	320	876
Mid West Total	799	457	1256
Midlands North			
WESTMEATH	280	144	424
ROSCOMMON	78	48	126
MEATH	227	149	376
LONGFORD	90	41	131
Midlands North Total	675	382	1057
North East			
MONAGHAN	161	120	281
LOUTH	268	162	430
CAVAN	128	86	214
North East Total	557	368	925
North West			
SLIGO	220	106	326
DONEGAL	355	203	558
LEITRIM	51	23	74
North West Total	626	332	958
West			
GALWAY	722	413	1135
MAYO	229	166	395
West Total	951	579	1530
Midlands South			
KILKENNY	173	94	267
LAOIS	158	84	242
OFFALY	131	72	203
TIPPERARY	352	198	550

Region	Finishers as at 16/5/13	Current Internships as at 16/5/13	Total Placements as at 16/5/13
Midlands South Total	814	448	1262
South East			
WATERFORD	382	212	594
WEXFORD	326	198	524
South East Total	708	410	1118
South West			
KERRY	300	181	481
CORK COUNTY	324	216	540
South West Total	624	397	1021
Cork Central			
CORK CITY	781	383	1164
Cork Central Total	781	383	1164
Grand Total	11,327	6,076	17,403

Rent Supplement Scheme Issues

134. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she has received a submission from the Simon Community regarding the review of rent supplement limits; if so, the action she will take regarding same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26333/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The purpose of the rent supplement scheme is to provide short-term income support to eligible people living in private rented accommodation whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation costs and who do not have accommodation available to them from any other source. There are approximately 86,000 recipients of rent supplement for which the Government has provided over €403 million in 2013. As the Department funds almost 30% of the private rented sector it is essential that State support for rents are continually kept under review and reflect current market conditions.

The recent rent review process involved the Department seeking submissions from a number of organisations, including the Simon Community. A submission has been received from the Simon Community and was considered as part of the review.

I previously committed to a review of maximum rent limits by June with new limits in place from July. However, I plan to advise the results of the review to my Government colleagues within the next week with new rent limits expected to be in place in June.

Back to Work Allowance Eligibility

135. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the back to work allowance and the taxi industry. [26339/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) encourages unemployed people and those receiving other social welfare payments to develop a business while allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their qualifying social welfare payment, and possibly secondary benefits, over two years -100% of

existing social welfare entitlement in the first year and 75% in the second year. In general a person must be 12 months on a qualifying social welfare payment to qualify.

An eligible person wishing to commence a business as a Taxi Driver may apply and will be subject to the eligibility criteria for BTWEA as will any individual who applies for the scheme. A qualifying business must be approved in advance by an Integrated Development Company (IDC) or a Case Officer of the Department. It must be deemed genuine and viable, and not displace an existing business. In assessing viability, cognisance is taken of the demand for, and supply of, the particular product or service at local level.

Detailed breakdown by occupation or the nature of the self-employment of recipients on this scheme is not readily available from records held centrally. While a specific cost benefit analysis has not been completed, the scheme as with all similar activation schemes, are monitored on an on-going basis. A review of employment support schemes including the BTWEA was published by the Department in January 2013. The review process was supplemented and enhanced by a stakeholder forum on all review recommendations which the Department found very useful as it now moves to the implementation phase.

In relation to Action 1 the Department has an extensive legal structure to support the sharing of data for the purpose of controlling the entitlement and payment of benefits. In recent years the National Transport Authority have supplied data to this Department information on active taxi/ hackney licences issued which is used to identify any taxi and hackney licence holders who are in receipt of social welfare payments. Relevant cases are reviewed to determine if they have declared the fact that they are licence holders, and whether they are using the licence or have income from the licence that may impact on their payment. In instances where they are not using the licence efforts are made to determine who is driving the vehicle. The investigations have resulted in a number of social welfare payments being disallowed or suspended. However the vast majority of people were receiving the entitlement due to them.

In addition to enhance information exchange online access has been granted to a number of nominated individuals within DSP which allows data to be viewed via the online National Transport Authority register. The information requested by the Deputy in relation to PRSI class is not currently collated by my Department.

Illness Benefit Appeals

136. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress made in respect of determination of an appeal in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26359/13]

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 8 May 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 put in place.

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.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

137. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a determination will be made in an appeal for a domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26362/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received from the person concerned on the 20 May 2011. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who considered that the child was not medically eligible for DCA. A letter issued on 16 August 2011 outlining the decision to refuse the allowance. An appeal against the disallow decision was registered on 14 November 2012. As part of the appeal process, the case was reviewed by a second Medical Assessor who confirmed the opinion that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. The file was forwarded to the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 28 May 2013 to have the appeal processed.

Carer's Allowance Applications

138. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Offaly may expect a decision on an application for carer's allowance. [26372/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the Department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on 27 February 2013. An information request was made to the person in question on 26 April 2013 requesting statements from financial institutions which had been omitted from the original application. In accordance with normal procedure, the person concerned was told that if the information was not submitted within 21 days that her application would be considered withdrawn. As the information requested was not submitted within the time allowed, a letter was issued on 27 May 2013 notifying the person in question that her claim for carer's allowance had been withdrawn. If the person in question submits the requested information her application may be re-opened and processed or a new application will be opened, as appropriate to the particular circumstances.

School Meals Programme

139. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide the full list of schools that have been granted the school lunch scheme in the past six months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26417/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The school meals programme provides funding towards the provision of food services for disadvantaged children through two schemes. The first is the statutory urban school meals scheme, operated by local authorities and part-financed by the Department. The second is the school meals local projects schemes through which funding is provided directly to participating schools and local and voluntary community groups who run their own school meals projects. The Government has allocated an additional €2 million for the school meals programme in 2013, providing a total allocation of €37 million.

The school meals programme normally operates in line with the academic year, from September to the following June. There are approximately 1,300 schools/groups in the programme

for the current academic year benefitting over 191,000 pupils. Priority for funding is given to schools which are part of the Department of Education & Skills' initiative for disadvantaged schools, 'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools' (DEIS). The Department has written to approximately 170 DEIS schools requesting expressions of interest in participating in the scheme for the coming school year. To date, some 75 schools have expressed an interest in participating in the scheme.

The Department also contacted a further 11 schools/groups who had already made an application to join the scheme. These schools were invited to participate in the scheme for the remainder of the current school year. One organisation, a School Completion Programme in Bray, Co. Wicklow, accepted and is participating in the scheme during May and June 2013. This programme will provide a food club for children attending St. Fergal's Senior National School in Ballywaltram, Bray, Co. Wicklow. It is expected that the remaining 10 schools will join the school meals scheme from September 2013.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Payments

140. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on an application for domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26419/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received from the person concerned on the 10th October 2012. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who found that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. A letter issued on the 15th November 2012 advising of the decision. The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against this decision and supplied additional information on the child's condition. As part of the appeal process, the application along with the additional information provided was reviewed by a second Medical Assessor who found the child to be medically eligible for the allowance. The person concerned was notified of the decision on the 15th May 2013. Payment of the allowance, along with arrears due issued on the 21st May 2013.

Question No. 141 withdrawn.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

142. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the correct level of rent support payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26438/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is in receipt of their full entitlement to rent supplement based on their household circumstances. The rent supplement claim was reassessed on 1 August 2012 in accordance with the new lease.

One-Parent Family Payment Eligibility

143. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the current weekly rate of one parent family allowance payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26439/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is currently in receipt of a one parent family payment of €247.60. This represents the full personal rate payable with an increase in respect of two qualified children.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

144. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an application for domiciliary care allowance will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26441/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received from the person concerned on the 18th February 2013. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who found that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. A letter issued on the 26th April 2013 advising of the decision. The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against this decision. As part of the appeal process, the case will be forwarded to another of the Department's Medical Assessors for further consideration, including a review of any new information supplied. Upon receipt of the Medical Assessor's opinion, the case will be further examined and forwarded for consideration by the Appeals Office, if necessary.

Death Certificates Issues

145. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the rules regarding causes of death being put on death certificates will be changed to ensure that in the future if a person dies through suicide, the cause of death will not have to appear on the report as it does at present; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26465/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Particulars to be entered on the Register of Deaths are listed in Part 5 of the First Schedule of the Civil Registration Act, 2004. My Department is currently examining a range of issues in relation to the Civil Registration Act, 2004, including the provision to issue a short-form death certificate which would omit the cause of death. It is hoped that legislation amending the Civil Registration Act, 2004 will be introduced during 2013.

One-Parent Family Payment Application Numbers

146. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons receiving one parent family payment by county in 2012. [26490/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There were 87,918 persons in receipt of a one-parent family payment at 31 December 2012. I attach a tabular statement detailing the breakdown of this number on a county by county basis.

One-Parent Family Payment recipients at 31 December 2012

County	Recipients at 31 December 2012
Carlow	1,646
Cavan	957
Clare	1,390

County	Recipients at 31 December 2012
Cork	5,712
Donegal	2,881
Dublin	33,871
Galway	3,126
Kerry	2,966
Kildare	4,589
Kilkenny	924
Laois	1,113
Leitrim	520
Limerick	3,542
Longford	952
Louth	3,789
Mayo	1,842
Meath	1,432
Monaghan	822
Offaly	1,056
Roscommon	545
Sligo	1,249
Tipperary	2,737
Waterford	2,441
Westmeath	1,758
Wexford	3,006
Wicklow	3,052
Total	87,918

Farm Assist Scheme Statistics

147. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons by county in receipt of farm assist for each of the past five years. [26492/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information requested by the Deputy is collated by my Department annually for inclusion in the Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services report which is laid before the Dáil when published and copies lodged in the Oireachtas library. Furthermore these reports are available to the public at www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Annual-Statistical-Information-Reports.aspx. I include for the Deputy's convenience a tabular statement detailing the number of persons in receipt of farm assist at 31 December in each of the years 2008 to 2012.

Farm Assist Recipients 2008 to 2012

County	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Carlow	56	70	102	95	84
Cavan	273	343	401	407	404
Clare	417	511	637	643	609
Cork	582	757	917	957	922
Donegal	1,053	1,219	1,389	1,491	1,534

County	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Dublin	9	10	11	35	37
Galway	782	954	1,133	1,137	1,112
Kerry	547	640	742	819	818
Kildare	33	43	56	53	53
Kilkenny	112	135	173	154	146
Laois	75	96	149	177	158
Leitrim	209	260	331	377	394
Limerick	182	231	265	247	250
Longford	91	129	176	258	260
Louth	59	68	81	84	87
Mayo	1,401	1,550	1,684	1,869	1,813
Meath	57	74	90	82	93
Monaghan	386	440	516	545	504
Offaly	70	88	127	133	130
Roscommon	274	320	407	433	424
Sligo	354	409	478	315	310
Tipperary	181	262	350	402	404
Waterford	41	49	84	96	92
Westmeath	72	96	134	193	197
Wexford	129	163	202	255	248
Wicklow	51	55	79	76	79
Totals	7,496	8,972	10,714	11,333	11,162

Social Welfare Overpayments

148. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the circumstances in which overpayment of child benefit took place in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26516/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Child benefit was originally awarded to the person concerned under EU Regulations from 1/4/2008 in respect of her two children who were resident in Poland at the time. Payment was awarded based on her employment in this State.

Payment was stopped from 1/1/2009 when she failed to reply to correspondence. No further correspondence was received until November 2012, when she lodged a further claim for child benefit in respect of her daughter. As the person concerned had ceased employment on 21/5/2008, her entitlement to child benefit ceased on 31/5/2008 and an overpayment amounting to €2,324.00 was assessed for the period 1/6/2008 to 31/12/2008. Correspondence issued on 13/2/2013 advising her of the overpayment, proposing a method of recovering the amount due and advising that if she considered this decision incorrect to forward any further documentary evidence that she considered relevant. She was also advised of her right to appeal. A reply was received to the effect that she agreed to the overpayment recovery proposal.

No claim was received in respect of her son. He is now over the age of 18 and therefore does not qualify for child benefit.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

149. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the correct level of jobseeker's allowance payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26525/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The jobseeker's allowance claim of the person concerned is currently under review. The person concerned will be advised of the outcome once the review is complete.

Exceptional Needs Payment Appeals

150. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection regarding the decision by the appeals officer in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare in respect of exceptional needs payment-dietary allowance, cognisance was taken of the fact that the person is an old age pensioner caring for their grandchild; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26527/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned recently applied for a review of a decision by a designated person to refuse an exceptional needs payment. The review officer was aware of the family composition of the person concerned at the time of the review. The person concerned previously appealed to the Social Welfare Appeals Office a decision of a designated person to refuse a diet supplement. The means calculation for the diet supplement was based upon a percentage of the personal rate of income of the applicant. The family composition of the person concerned is not a factor in determining whether an entitlement to a diet supplement exists. The appeal was disallowed.

FÁS Local Training Initiatives Eligibility

151. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the extent to which suitable FÁS training or an upskilling course will be made available in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare through Kildare Employment Service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26528/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was interviewed by her local employment services on 23 April 2013 at which time all her training options were explored. As part of her career planning, it was agreed that she needed to improve her information technology skills before pursuing further training. To this end, she was given an application form for a technical employment support grant. However, the form has not yet been returned. If the person concerned wishes to proceed, she should return the completed form to her local employment services office.

Child Benefit Eligibility

152. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the basis on which it was concluded that a person (details supplied) in County Kildare did not qualify for child benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26529/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned did not

qualify for child benefit as under Social Welfare legislation she is not the qualified person for receipt of the payment. Section 159 (1) of S.I. 142/2007 provides that the person with whom a qualified child shall be regarded as normally residing shall be determined in accordance with specified Rules. Subject to Rule 2, a qualified child, who is resident with more than one of the following persons, his or her – Mother, Stepmother, Father Step-father - shall be regarded as normally residing with the person first so mentioned and with no other person.

Section 159 (4) of S.I. 142/2007 provides that a qualified child, who is resident elsewhere than with a parent or a step-parent and whose mother is alive, shall, where his or her mother is entitled to his or her custody whether solely or jointly with any other person, be regarded as normally residing with his or her mother and with no other person. While the mother retains custody of the children, it is not possible under Social Welfare legislation to award child benefit to any other person.

Departmental Budgets

153. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments her Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of those adjustments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26554/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In the context of the forthcoming Budget, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (D/PER) has asked my Department to identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The identification of savings options should ensure that a sufficient range of proposals are made by all Departments to help the Government make well-informed choices about spending priorities and allocations across Departments.

The Expenditure Report 2013, which was published by the D/PER last December, provides for additional new expenditure reduction measures of €440 million to be achieved in the Department of Social Protection budget in 2014. Government will be making decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

154. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Carlow will receive a decision on their appeal for carer's allowance. [26564/13]

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 20 February 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 22 April 2013 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Defined Pension Benefit Schemes Issues

155. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans regarding providing legislation to meet the growing issues of the insecurity of many defined benefit schemes; the vulnerability of benefits accruing to members of such schemes; the vulnerability of such schemes to irresponsible employers; if she will provide a timeline for this legislation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26565/13]

156. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide the latest information provided to her on the number of pension schemes that currently fail the funding standard; the extent to which they fail; and the way these figures compare with each of the past six years. [26568/13]

157. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the action she is taking to ensure that the minimum funding standard in respect of defined benefit pensions is adequately enforced. [26569/13]

158. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on the possibility of applying any shortfall from the minimum funding standard in respect of a defined benefit pension scheme as a corporate debt on the company concerned. [26570/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 155 to 158, inclusive, together.

The persistent funding difficulties of defined benefit schemes are well recognised. Employers, unions and trustees have been making strenuous efforts to protect the viability and many measures have been introduced to support these efforts. Between 1980 and 1999, the defined benefit pension environment was healthy with average pension schemes managing fund returns of the order of 20% per annum. Until 2000, few schemes had any difficulty meeting the Funding Standard. DB pension schemes have suffered a series of shocks over the last number of years. At the end of 2007, 80% of defined benefit pension schemes satisfied the Funding Standard. At the end of 2008, following the downturn in financial markets, the situation was reversed with in excess of 80% of schemes failing to meet the Funding Standard at the end of 2008. The Funding Standard was suspended at that time in order to give the trustees and sponsoring employers adequate time to assess their schemes and consider a response to improve the funding position.

The reintroduction of the Funding Standard was delayed on a number of occasions pending changes to legislation which were designed to help trustees respond to the funding challenges facing pension schemes and protect scheme members. These changes were carried out in the context of the publication of the Green Paper on Pensions in 2007, the downturn in financial markets in 2008, and the review of the defined benefit pension model in 2010/2011:

- Significant legislative changes in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act in 2009 allowed for the restructuring of underfunded schemes by removing the priority given to post-retirement increases for pensioners to ensure a more equitable distribution of assets in the event of the wind-up of a DB scheme;

- The powers of the Pensions Board were strengthened to ensure that pension contributions are remitted by employers to scheme trustees;

- The Pensions Insolvency Payments Scheme was established to reduce the cost of purchasing pensions for trustees where the employer has become insolvent;

- Legislation was introduced in 2010 and 2011 to provide the option of a sovereign annuity for trustees;

- Changes to the defined benefit model and the Funding Standard were introduced in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2012. The re-introduction of the Funding Standard followed;

- Legislation is being brought in the current Social Welfare and Pensions Bill to strengthen the powers of the Pensions Board.

The primary change to the Funding Standard in 2012 was the introduction of a requirement for a risk reserve to assist the longer term stability of defined benefit schemes. This was introduced to provide a “buffer” against volatility in the financial markets and provide some level of protection for scheme members. The risk reserve has an in-built mechanism to incentivise trustees to better match their assets with the scheme’s liabilities in their investment strategies and guidance was issued in this regard. In view of the current funding status of defined benefit schemes, an extended time period was given for the introduction of the risk reserve: it will be operable from 2016 and schemes do not have to meet the reserve until 2023.

Trustees of defined benefit schemes are expected to submit funding proposals to the Pensions Board at the end of June 2013. At present, it is considered that 80% of schemes are underfunded. It is the responsibility of the Pensions Board to ensure that the minimum funding standard is enforced and I will be receiving regular updates from the Board on the timeliness of submissions. Following receipt of proposals, it will be possible to get a more accurate indication of the level of under-funding in defined benefit pension schemes. It will also allow for the impact of the many measures already introduced by Government to be assessed, including the potential benefits to schemes of the use of sovereign annuities/bonds. Compliance with the regulatory structure is essential for the future sustainability of defined benefit schemes and to protect members’ benefits.

This requires consideration of a number of policy options, including corporate debt. The Review of the Irish Pension System which was published by the OECD in April this year which described the Funding Standard (including the recent changes) as “undemanding” will also inform further developments in this area. I am keeping the situation under review and will report back to Government in the coming months on these issues. A wider package of legislative proposals and additional reforms will be considered at that stage.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

159. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a domiciliary care allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [26571/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received from the person concerned on the 14th November 2012. This application was referred to one of the Department’s Medical Assessors who found that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. A letter issued on the 10th January 2013 advising of the decision. The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against this decision. As part of the appeal process, the case was reviewed by a second Medical Assessor on the 16th May 2013 who confirmed the opinion that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. The file was forwarded to the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 28th May 2013 to have the appeal processed.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Issues

160. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the consultation, if any, he has had with turf cutters or their representatives regarding the contract issued to them earlier this month; if he will confirm the identity of the third party who drafted the accompanying explanatory document; if he will redraft controversial aspects of the contract including the provision to revise the commitment to relocation post-2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26455/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme, three types of legal agreements have been issued and are being issued by my Department. The first is a legal agreement for qualifying turf cutters who are signing up to the annual payment of €1,500, index-linked, for 15 years. The second is a relocation interim legal agreement for qualifying turf cutters who have expressed an interest in relocation but no relocation site is currently available for them to relocate to. This relocation interim legal agreement provides for the payment of €1,500, index-linked, or a supply of 15 tonnes of cut turf per annum while these applicants are awaiting relocation to non-designated bogs. The third is a relocation final legal agreement. This agreement has been issued to qualifying turf cutters where a site has been assessed as suitable for relocation and is ready or can be made ready for use for domestic turf cutting.

Turf cutters who sign and return the applicable legal agreement to my Department will also receive a once-off incentive payment of €500. The legal agreements are modelled on those which have been agreed with groups of turf cutters from Clara Bog in County Offaly, and from Carrownagappul Bog and Curraglehanagh Bog in County Galway. The explanatory document which accompanies the legal agreements was drafted by officials of my Department. The interim legal agreement is required in the case of relocation sites because, for the majority of raised bog special areas of conservation, the relocation site and the terms and conditions applicable to those sites will take time to finalise. Turf cutters are being asked to sign the interim agreement on the understanding that when a relocation site is sourced, assessed and agreed they will be asked to sign a final legal agreement at that time. If it is not possible to find a suitable relocation site, for example, for reasons of quality or quantity of turf, planning requirements, or issues in relation to the purchase or lease of a site, then the Department will consult with turf cutters as to the best option to take at that time.

For the avoidance of all doubt, it is the absolute aim of my Department to secure a relocation site for every person who has applied for one. That is what my officials are working to achieve, and progress is being made in that task. However, I feel it is important to be upfront with turf cutters and be clear that relocation is a complex process that does take some time to deliver. The agreements being issued reflect this reality. The interim agreement is designed to give all stakeholders the time to deliver relocation options that work for turf cutters. The clear directions that I have given my officials is to examine all relocation options with a view to securing alternative cutting locations for as many turf cutters within the shortest timeframe.

Architectural Heritage

161. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the criteria used for the allocation of the structures at risk fund 2013; if county councils are able to apply for funding in next year's programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26476/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I recently

announced the allocation of €475,000 in grant funding to thirty-four local authorities under my Department's Structures at Risk Fund 2013 to enable conservation works to forty-five heritage structures in both private and public ownership deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration and which are protected under the Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2012. Applications for funding under this scheme received by 24 April 2013 were assessed by an expert panel within my Department based on the following equally weighted criteria:

- Significance of Structure;
- Urgency of works;
- Quality of Method Statement;
- Efficacy of works.

Significance: The Planning and Development Acts 2000-2012 require that a protected structure be of special interest under the following categories: architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social and technical. This element is largely based on the views of the relevant local authority.

Urgency: Works are deemed to be urgent where there are safety, fire or security risks, where there is a risk of water ingress and/or dry rot, where there is evidence of critical damage to the historic fabric (including any significant features, decoration, or artefacts, etc), where there is active structural movement, where the rate of decay has accelerated exponentially or where other extenuating circumstances apply.

Quality of Method Statement: This refers to the relevance and standard of the method statement submitted having regard to the guidance note prepared by my Department, the proposed works, scale of the project and the quality of experience of the person or team charged with delivering the project.

Efficacy of Works: This relates to the value of works being undertaken in securing the survival of the structure in the medium to long-term. Applicants were required to explain how the amount of funding sought was likely to make a significant contribution to eliminating risk and to preventing further deterioration of the structure, thus ensuring its survival into the future.

I hope to be able to continue this scheme in 2014 with applications being made directly by local authorities. However, this is subject to normal budgetary considerations.

Arts Funding

162. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of arts or heritage events in respect of which he or his Department has received requests for funding, the degree to which it is anticipated to respond to such applications in the current year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26502/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The Government's policy on the arts is to promote and strengthen the arts in all its forms, to increase access to and participation in the arts, and to make the arts an integral and valued part of our national life.

The Deputy will be aware that responsibility for the promotion of the arts at all levels throughout the country is primarily devolved to the Arts Council. Under the Arts Act 2003, the Arts Council is statutorily independent in its day-to-day operations and my Department has no

role to play in its executive or funding decisions. Full information on the Council's funding decisions is made available on their funding decisions database on their website www.artscouncil.ie.

Within the current economic constraints, investment in the arts, heritage, culture and creative sectors is more important than ever, having regard to the employment intensity of these sectors. While I know that the Deputy appreciates the funding difficulties facing all Departments at this time, I can assure him that I remain committed to securing the best possible level of funding for these sectors. The specific allocations to be made over the current year will, of course, be dependent on the Department's budgetary position as the year progresses. Full details of all grant payments for the current year will be published on the Department's website in due course.

Question No. 163 answered with Question No. 16.

Tourism Promotion

164. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which he and his Department have engaged with bodies, groups or agencies involved in tourism with the objective of ensuring that Ireland's heritage remains to the fore in the course of any promotional or tourism events; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26504/13]

169. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which efforts have been made to promote and increase visitor levels at various locations of historical, architectural or heritage interest throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26509/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 164 and 169 together.

While promotion of Ireland as a tourist destination is primarily a matter for Tourism Ireland and the development of tourism is the responsibility of Ireland's National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland, I am committed to availing of every possible opportunity to project a positive global image for Ireland. To this aim I recently met with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to enhance co-operation between my Department and both tourism bodies in promoting heritage and tourism.

I am particularly conscious of this in the context of 2013 being the year of The Gathering initiative. My Department is actively engaged in a wide range of activities to this end, both in co-operation with bodies such as Fáilte Ireland and the Office of Public Works, and in promoting its own initiatives such as our 'Places to See' and 'Monuments to Visit' websites, which provide directions to lesser known heritage sites and details of what the visitor can expect to find on arrival. Capital funding is provided by my Department to support the Office of Public Works' conservation programme for the State's heritage portfolio, many properties from which attract high levels of visitors to Ireland.

The unique qualities of Ireland's national heritage play a significant role in enhancing and projecting Ireland's image abroad, and in supporting economic renewal through cultural and heritage tourism and in downstream opportunities, such as in the retail, catering and accommodation sectors. For example, I understand from Fáilte Ireland that some 3.5 million overseas visitors engaged in cultural activities while in Ireland in 2011. Over 2.5 million tourists visited historic houses or castles, while 2 million visited our archaeological monuments, with over 3.7

million visitors to heritage sites where the Office of Public Works provides a guide service.

My Department's network of National Parks and Nature Reserves are also a major part of Ireland's tourism attractions. It is my intention to encourage and facilitate, to the greatest extent possible, public access and appropriate visitor use in these parks and reserves. Such access and use must, of course, be consistent with the ethos of the parks as natural places of peace and tranquillity set in scenic landscapes, as well as being compatible with the conservation and biodiversity considerations that are of necessity associated with the management of heritage properties.

Despite current economic challenges, it is my intention to invest in visitor facilities in the parks and nature reserves to maximise their sustainable use and enjoyment. To this end, and building on previous investment in this area, my Department is working on proposals to further develop visitor facilities, such as walking and cycling routes, enhanced signage and interpretation.

As regards visitor centres, in the last couple of years my Department opened modern visitor focussed centres at Ballycroy National Park, Co. Mayo, Clara Bog Nature Reserve, Co. Offaly, and a visitor information point for the Burren National Park in Corofin, Co. Clare.

I anticipate that the redevelopment of Killarney House in Killarney National Park will be a major tourism asset in years to come. The House, once complete, will serve as the main visitor and interpretative centre for the National Park, highlighting the beauty and interpreting the richness and significance of the Park's landscapes, habitats, flora and fauna, as well as telling the story of man's interaction with the Park over the centuries. It is also intended that some of the formal rooms will be restored to their former glory. This is a major project for my Department and involves collaboration with OPW as project managers and Fáilte Ireland which has committed funding of €5.2 million towards the project, under its Tourism Investment Programme.

In addition, my Department provides core funding for several heritage organisations such as the Heritage Council, which supports a range of initiatives including National Heritage Week, and the Irish Architectural Foundation, which runs the successful Open House event each year.

This year, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, my Department is also initiating a pilot programme, the *Historic Towns Initiative*, in Youghal, Westport and Listowel with the Heritage Council and the local authorities in each town. My primary objective with this initiative is to ensure that the participating towns have access to, and an understanding of, appropriate guidance to assist them in best conserving their heritage assets and, in so doing, underpin the sustainability of their community and local economy. It is my hope that meeting these goals will also, by extension, significantly enhance the visitor experience in these towns, thus helping to maximise the potential positive contribution of tourism to each of these towns and their respective hinterlands.

These are just a sample of the overall range of initiatives and programmes my Department is helping to promote, support or guide as a means of preserving the quality and diversity of our heritage, which in turn, is basis for positively promoting that heritage abroad.

Question No. 165 answered with Question No. 21.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Payments

166. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which settlement has been reached with the various turf cutters and-or bog owners

throughout County Kildare who have been affected by EU generated special areas of conservation or nationally imposed restrictions; the extent to which relocation or other is imminent in respect of the remainder of cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26506/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): There are 2 raised bog special areas of conservation in County Kildare affected by the cessation of turf cutting - Ballynafagh Bog and Mouds Bog. 56 applications for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme have been received and acknowledged by my Department in respect of Ballynafagh Bog and 101 applications have been received and acknowledged by my Department in respect of Mouds Bog. 28 and 39 of these applicants respectively have expressed an interest in relocation to a non-designated bog. 42 payments and 8 deliveries of turf have been made in respect of the applications received from Ballynafagh Bog and 51 payments and 35 deliveries of turf have been made in respect of the applications received from Mouds Bog.

Progress has been made with a view to the relocation of qualifying turf cutters from Ballynafagh Bog to Timahoe North, County Kildare. Discussions have been ongoing with a view to turf cutters being able to commence cutting on the relocation site during this season.

Lattins Bog, also known as Mouds North Bog, in County Kildare has been identified as a potential relocation site for turf cutters from Mouds Bog. Bord na Móna has produced a preliminary suitability assessment report and stratigraphy assessment report for the relocation site, which my Department has provided to the Secretary of the Committee of the Kildare Turf Cutters Association. Officials from my Department met with representatives from the Kildare Turf Cutters Association earlier this month. Following this meeting, my Department has asked Bord na Móna to undertake a full assessment of this site.

There are also 2 natural heritage area raised bogs in County Kildare designated under national law in accordance with the provisions of the Wildlife Acts - Carbury Bog and Hodgestown Bog. In May 2010, the previous Government decided that turf-cutting should come to an end on all raised bog NHAs at the end of 2013. However, as set out in the Programme for Government, the current Government undertook to review the situation with regard to raised bog NHAs. This review is currently underway and the future of turf-cutting on such sites is being considered as part of that review. To assist in this task, my Department has engaged a team of scientific specialists to underpin this review. I hope that the review will be completed in the Autumn.

Architectural Heritage

167. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the measures put in place by his Department to protect at-risk buildings and-or sites of a heritage or historical importance; the location of any such sites or buildings currently under review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26507/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 137 of 25 April 2013. Comprehensive statistics are not available in respect of locations of sites or buildings at risk or under review.

National Monuments

168. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

the extent to which historical sites deemed to be of importance in connection with the 1916 Rising have been identified for preservation purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26508/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 137 on 25th April 2013. Various sites related to the 1916 Rising are protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004. For example, the buildings at Nos. 14-17 Moore Street are a national monument subject to a Preservation Order under the Acts, while many other sites related to the Rising are included on Dublin City Council's Record of Protected Structures, most notably the General Post Office on O'Connell Street.

As is the case with all monuments or buildings of historic or heritage importance, my Department assesses the necessity for protective measures to be applied in individual cases as the need arises. My Department's Commemorations Committee will also continue to advise on any issues that may be identified with regard to monuments or structures associated with forthcoming commemorative events.

Question No. 169 answered with Question No. 164.

Irish Language Issues

170. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which his Department maintains contact with Gaelscoileanna throughout the country in the context of the further promotion of the Irish language as a spoken language; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26510/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): I should explain at the outset that Foras na Gaeilge, an agency of the North South Language Body (An Foras Teanga) under my Department's remit, has a statutory role in regard to supporting both Irish-medium education and the teaching of Irish in both jurisdictions. Foras na Gaeilge co-operates with and acts as an advocate for the promotion of Irish in the education sector. For example, Foras na Gaeilge is represented on the boards of An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the North South Standing Committee on Irish-Medium Education. I understand that regular meetings are held by those fora to progress issues relating to Irish-medium education and the teaching of Irish.

Foras na Gaeilge assists and facilitates the development and provision of Irish language resources as well as Irish language courses at all levels. For example, Foras na Gaeilge produces teaching resources for both primary and post-primary schools through its publication house, An Gúm. Foras na Gaeilge operates schemes which support Irish language groups in organising summer camps and youth events outside of school hours.

Foras na Gaeilge also operates specific schemes in schools, consisting of GLEO (Gaeilge Labhartha san Earnáil Oideachais / Spoken Irish in the Education Sector), a scheme to promote Irish in English-medium primary and post-primary schools, and the Scríobh Leabhar (Write a Book) scheme which encourages creative writing in primary schools. Foras na Gaeilge has also developed a policy on immersion education.

Finally, Foras na Gaeilge currently provides funding to a number of Irish language organisations which have a remit with regard to the Irish language in the education sector, including Gaelscoileanna, Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge, Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta, Altram and An tÁisaonad.

Question No. 171 answered with Question No. 22.

Special Areas of Conservation Designation

172. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 158 of 18 April 2013, when funds will be released to the person's solicitor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26534/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As outlined in my reply to Question No. 158 of 18 April last, the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question has applied to sell his interest in land within a site designated as a special area of conservation, under the voluntary bog purchase scheme administered by my Department. Contracts for sale, the deposit and the outstanding balance of the purchase price were forwarded to the Chief State Solicitor's Office.

I understand that the balance of the purchase monies will be released to the individual's solicitor once the Chief State Solicitor's Office receives all the relevant closing documents from this solicitor and is satisfied that all is in order for the sale to close. I have been advised that the Chief State Solicitor's Office expects this to happen within the next week.

Departmental Budgets

173. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of those adjustments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26542/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): In the context of the forthcoming Budget, the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform has asked my Department to identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The identification of savings options should ensure that a sufficient range of proposals are made by all Departments to help the Government make well-informed choices about spending priorities and allocations. The scale of the adjustments for 2014 were set out in part 1 of the Expenditure Report 2013, which was published in December 2012. Government will be making decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations.

Job Creation Targets

174. **Deputy Ray Butler** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the current figures in relation to direct job creation and sustainability associated with the industrialisation of the wind energy project, applicable specifically to the midlands counties' 1,150 turbines and broken down under headings (details supplied), as well as distinguishing between imported labour and indigenous labour, with any evidence associated with the figures also provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26596/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Ireland has an excellent, largely untapped, wind energy resource. The opportunity to harness this resource for the export market, and realise its potential for investment, job creation and economic growth has been identified. To this end, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding

on energy cooperation with my UK counterpart, Mr Edward Davey, on 24 January this year. This Memorandum of Understanding clearly signals the joint interest of Ireland and the United Kingdom in developing the opportunity for trading in renewable energy to our mutual benefit.

Detailed consideration of how Ireland's onshore and offshore wind resources might be developed for export to the UK is now underway, with a view to determining if it is beneficial for both countries to enter into an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) under the EU Renewable Energy Directive. There are very complex issues to be considered, including the actual scale of the export generation capacity required. Though it is ambitious, the target for completion of this work on the IGA is early 2014.

Should an Inter-Governmental Agreement be entered into, the development of any new wind farms for the export market would be underpinned by a clear policy framework. Such developments would also be subject to a selection process and to the Planning and Development Acts, including their requirements for public consultation. The mechanism for remunerating any wind farms that may in the future export renewable energy to the United Kingdom has yet to be decided, but will not involve any subsidy costs being imposed on the Irish State or consumer. Any Inter-Governmental Agreement would also have to ensure an adequate return to the Irish Exchequer.

There are potentially significant employment opportunities arising from the building of wind farms developed for export under a possible Inter-Governmental Agreement. It is estimated that a 3,000 megawatt development could provide between 3,000 and 6,000 job years in its construction phase, depending on the timescale for completion of the project. There is also potential for jobs in the on-going maintenance of turbines over a 20-year operating life.

Further employment opportunities could arise if turbines or components were to be manufactured in Ireland. All relevant State agencies, particularly in the enterprise area, would have to coordinate their activities early in the process to ensure employment potential of export projects is maximised. This opportunity has already been identified by the Investment Development Agency and Enterprise Ireland in their clean technology growth strategies. Recruitment of the work force for the development of wind export projects would be a commercial decision for the project promoters concerned, and subject to in the normal way to Irish and EU employment law.

Broadband Services Provision

175. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the lack of broadband facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26308/13]

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

Operational matters relating to services provision, the cost of a commercial service and line quality are the responsibility of the commercial operators. Regulatory issues surrounding these matters are the responsibility of ComReg, which is independent in the exercise of its functions. The State can only intervene to ensure access to broadband services in areas where the competi-

tive market has failed to deliver such services, as in the case of the National Broadband Scheme (NBS) and the Rural Broadband Scheme. With basic broadband services widely available across Ireland, the focus is now on accelerating the roll out of high speed services.

The Government's National Broadband Plan, which I published in August last, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed services of at least 30Mbps are available to all of our citizens and businesses, well in advance of the EU's target date of 2020, and that significantly higher speeds are available to as many homes and businesses as possible. During the preparation of Ireland's National Broadband Plan, the commercial market operators indicated that they expect to provide 70Mbps to 100Mbps services to 50% of the population by 2015. Since the publication of the Plan, investments by the commercial sector are underway in both fixed line and mobile high speed broadband services.

The Government is also committed in the Plan to investing in areas where high speed services are not commercially viable and will not be provided by the market. In an important milestone towards delivery of this commitment in the Plan, my Department has recently appointed experts to assist in the design, planning and procurement of the State-led investment. Intensive technical, financial and legal preparations including stakeholder engagement will be ongoing throughout 2013 with a view to the launch of a procurement process in 2014. Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, we are committed to making high speed broadband available nationwide, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in a digitally enabled society.

Gas and Electricity Disconnections

176. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he is concerned at recent figures indicating that 1,800 households are having their gas or electricity supplies cut off every month; the steps he is taking to address this problem; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26336/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Responsibility for the regulation of the electricity market, including disconnections, is a matter for the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER), which is an independent statutory regulator. While disconnections are a matter of concern to me, I have no statutory function in the matter of disconnections of electricity or gas customers regardless of the supply company involved.

The CER provides quarterly and annual updates on the electricity and gas retail markets, including on disconnections. Further information may be found at:

<http://www.cer.ie/en/electricity-retail-market-reports-and-publications.aspx?article=b0ba4820-3227-499f-9879-16de76bdd5b0>.

As mentioned, the number of disconnections is a matter of concern to me as it is for the Government, the CER, voluntary organisations and suppliers. The rise in numbers in recent years has coincided with the economic recession which has caused customer arrears and debt levels to rise.

The CER has specific rules in place to ensure that disconnection is treated as a last resort. These rules are detailed in the CER's Code of Practice on disconnection and include the assistance that must be provided to customers in managing their bills and avoiding disconnection. This assistance includes a requirement that domestic customers in genuine financial hardship be provided payment options/plans that take the customer's ability to pay into account. A customer cannot be disconnected as long as they keep to a payment plan. Pay As You Go meters

are also made available, free of charge, to those customers who would benefit from them most. A customer must be offered a Pay As You Go meter before the supplier moves to disconnect. The latest figures show that by the end of March this year, 22,733 Pay As You Go electricity meters, 18,000 token meters and 38,592 gas Pay As You Go meters had been installed under this provision.

I welcome the fact that the CER continues to work with industry and customer advocacy groups (such as the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and St Vincent de Paul) to ensure that these measures are working as effectively as possible and to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to assist customers through this difficult period and that disconnections resulting from genuine inability to pay are minimised and only occur as a very last resort.

Implementation of the measures set out in the Government's Affordable Energy Strategy, published last November, is pivotal to protecting the interests of vulnerable customers and improving energy affordability. In addition, the Government will continue to support the delivery of energy efficiency measures to vulnerable households in 2013. Funding of €17 million to Better Energy: Warmer Homes in 2013 will support the delivery of energy efficiency measures to approximately 10,000 homes. This will result in energy savings of 18 GWh, corresponding to monetary savings of €1.8 million (4.6kt CO₂).

Hydraulic Fracturing Policy

177. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will report on his recent attendance at the information session on fracking at the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin; his policy on fracking; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26337/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): On 17 April, 2013, I attended the Information Session on Fracking at the Royal Irish Academy. The Academy hosted this discussion in order to place scientific facts on the record in a measured manner. Speakers at this meeting included, Professor Shannon, Geosciences Committee, Professor Richard Davies University of Durham, Professor Padraic O' Donoghue, Chair Engineering Sciences Committee, Dr. Rob Ward, British Geological Survey and Dr. Gareth Ll Jones, Institute of Geologists of Ireland and Conodate.

I spoke at the information session and provided an update on Ireland's current position with regard to fracking in terms of the award of Licensing Options over parts of the Lough Allen and Clare Basins, advising that such Licensing Options are designed to allow companies assess the natural gas potential of the area; that they are largely based on desktop studies of existing data from previous petroleum exploration activity and that any drilling activities that would involve hydraulic fracturing are excluded under these Options. I confirmed that since those Options were granted, my Department has not approved any application for, nor licensed the use of, hydraulic fracturing in the Irish onshore.

I acknowledged in my address that there is a considerable and genuine concern about the potential environmental and health considerations related to this activity and that the nature of the debate so far has tended to exacerbate these concerns and I welcomed input from the Academy because whatever decisions are taken must be based on transparent assessments of solid evidence. For this reason in October 2011 I asked the EPA to examine the whole issue of fracking and its potential environmental implications. I have commissioned the EPA to undertake a broadly-based study, in order to identify best practice in respect of environmental protection for the use of hydraulic fracturing techniques. The terms of reference for this research have gone

out to public consultation, and have elicited a large response. It is anticipated that this research will commence in the second half of this year. The conduct of the study is expected to take at least 12 months, and I confirmed that any applications for exploration licences proposing the use of hydraulic fracking that may be received in the interim will be put on hold, pending publication of this important research.

In the context of my address, I also briefly discussed the global economic perspective to the unconventional oil and gas phenomenon, including the US boom in unconventional fossil fuels which has, in the main, been supported by populations already accustomed to onshore oil and gas production, favourable fiscal regimes, financial interest of land owners in oil and gas production on their property, and the already existing infrastructure in the form of pipelines and service industries.

It is recognised that the advent of unconventional oil and gas has been a ‘game-changer’ on the US energy market with global repercussions, but is also playing a significant role in economic development in the US. As the EU is likely to remain a “higher” energy cost region in the future, it is unavoidable that we consider the impacts that unconventional oil and gas production will have on security of supply, energy prices and competitiveness. At the end of April as President of the EU Council, I hosted an informal meeting of the EU’s Energy Ministers. Several EU member states are weighing the benefits and risks of exploiting shale gas reserves and this meeting afforded an opportunity to compare notes on this issue for the first time.

It will be the end of 2014 before Ireland completes a rigorous interrogation of the geological and ground water data, impacts and mitigating measures and regulatory issues to inform the policy options here and I can confirm that scientific analysis will inform any actions that might be contemplated in Ireland thereafter.

Broadband Services Speeds

178. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will issue a detailed progress report on the rollout of high speed broadband to all parts of County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26386/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Ireland’s telecommunications market has been fully liberalised since 1999 in accordance with the requirements of binding EU Directives. The market has since developed into a well-regulated market, supporting a multiplicity of commercial operators, providing services over a diverse range of technology platforms. Details of broadband services available in each County, including County Kerry, can be found on ComReg’s website at www.callcosts.ie. The State can only intervene to ensure access to broadband services in areas where the competitive market has failed to deliver such services, as in the case of the National Broadband Scheme (NBS) and the Rural Broadband Scheme. With basic broadband services widely available across Ireland, the focus is now on accelerating the roll out of high speed services.

The Government’s National Broadband Plan, which I published in August last, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed services of at least 30Mbps are available to all of our citizens and businesses, well in advance of the EU’s target date of 2020, and that significantly higher speeds are available to as many homes and businesses as possible. During the preparation of Ireland’s National Broadband Plan, the commercial market operators indicated that they expect to provide 70Mbps to 100Mbps services to 50% of the population by 2015. Since the publication of the Plan, investments by the commercial sector are underway in both fixed line and mobile high speed broadband services. More

detailed information on the broadband products offered by the relevant service providers should be available on their respective websites.

The Government is also committed in the Plan to investing in areas where high speed services are not commercially viable and will not be provided by the market. In an important milestone towards delivery of this commitment in the Plan, my Department has recently appointed experts to assist in the design, planning and procurement of the State-led investment. My Department is about to embark on a formal mapping exercise to identify the areas of the country to be targeted in the State-led investment under the Government's National Broadband Plan to ensure the provision of high speed broadband services where the commercial market will not deliver. This exercise will inform an EU State Aids application in respect of the State-led intervention and is a necessary prerequisite for State Aids approval.

Intensive technical, financial and legal preparations including stakeholder engagement will be on-going throughout 2013 with a view to the launch of a procurement process in 2014.

Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, we are committed to making high speed broadband available nationwide, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses, including those in County Kerry, can participate fully in a digitally enabled society.

Departmental Budgets

179. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of those adjustments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26544/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): In the context of the forthcoming Budget, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has asked my Department to identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has asked that the identification of savings options should ensure that a sufficient range of proposals are made by all Departments to help the Government make well-informed choices about spending priorities and allocations. The scale of the adjustments for 2014, were set out in Part 1 of the *Expenditure Report 2013*, which was published in December 2012. The Government will be making decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations.

National Wind Energy Strategy

180. **Deputy Ray Butler** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views in relation to the electricity market here, which is a single 5000 MW market covering the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland; the amount of electricity sourced from wind energy currently connected into the grid here; the proportion available from the Republic of Ireland and the proportion from Northern Ireland; the amount of wind energy currently in planning, development and-or grid connection queuing stage here and in Northern Ireland; the reason the offshore wind development off the Arklow coast, County Wicklow, does not contribute any electricity to the Irish grid or to any other electrical power user; when it is planned to use the electricity generated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26597/13]

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

By end of Quarter 1 of this year there was 1,763MW of wind energy generated electricity connected to the grid in the Republic of Ireland and 551 MW connected in Northern Ireland. In 2012, 15.5% of electricity demand in the Republic of Ireland was met from wind energy generated electricity sourced in the Single Electricity Market (SEM). In Northern Ireland the corresponding proportion was 11.6%. In 2012, 17% of electricity demand on the island of Ireland was met by renewable generation sourced from the SEM.

In order to take a structured approach to the connection of the amounts of renewable generation necessary to achieve the Government's target of 40% of electricity from renewable sources by 2020, the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) established the Gate 3 Connection Process in 2008. Under this process grid connection offers have been made for around 3,900 MW of renewable generation, the bulk of which is wind. It is now a matter for project developers to accept or reject these offers in the coming months. In Northern Ireland, a total of 928 MW of wind energy capacity is contracted to connect to the grid by the end of 2015.

The Arklow Bank wind farm is a distribution connected wind farm and is 25MW in size. I am advised by ESB Networks that this offshore wind farm is operational and has an active connection to the distribution grid. Information regarding the status of renewable generation capacity development in the Single Electricity Market (SEM), including wind, is available on the EirGrid website and I would draw the Deputy's attention to the recently published All Island Renewable Connection Report in this regard.

Housing Adaptation Grants Funding

181. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will report on the current level of funding provided to local authorities in respect of disability adaption grants; his views on the restrictions now placed on the provision of such grants in view of reductions in Exchequer funding for them; and if he has plans to reverse the current cuts in expenditure for this specific area of funding in budget 2014. [26296/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The requirement to reduce public expenditure to sustainable levels is impacting on capital programmes all across the public service, including my Department's housing capital programme. The level of capital funding available has declined significantly in recent years along the lines highlighted in the Medium Term Exchequer Framework for Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-2016. As a result capital spending on housing programmes is subject to constraint over the short-term.

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

In order to deal with any acute or particular strain which might arise in the operation of the schemes over the course of the year I have set aside a small capital reserve. I recently approved additional allocations totalling €1.2 million for 13 local authorities. I will consider further ap-

plications from local authorities where similar difficulties arise. Allocations to local authorities next year will be considered in the context of the Estimates for 2014 and the competing demands for funding across all the measures within my Department's housing programme.

Property Taxation Collection

182. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there is a mechanism for local authorities to collect property tax from council tenants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26353/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In accordance with section 58 of the Housing Act 1966, housing authorities are responsible for determining the rents of their dwellings, subject to complying with broad principles laid down by my Department, notably that the rent payable should be related to income and that low-income households should pay a lower proportion of income in rent. Within these parameters, it is a matter for housing authorities, as an integral part of their housing management functions, to ensure that their rental income reflects, as far as practicable, the cost of managing and maintaining their housing stock.

The current arrangements for determining local authority rents will be substantially replaced on the coming into force of section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, which predates, and does not refer to, the Local Property Tax legislation. On enactment of the Housing (Amendment) Bill 2013 currently before the House, I will be arranging to make regulations under section 31 re-affirming the principle that rents should be related to household income and composition, and reflecting the requirement that housing authorities should set rent levels that take account, as far as practicable, of the cost of providing works and services to, and managing and maintaining, their rented accommodation.

Planning Issues

183. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he considers that, in circumstances in which he and his Department have no function with regard to individual planning decisions, he and his Department do have a function in relation to the overall credibility and integrity of the planning system and if he considers that the continued operation of facilities that are themselves egregious examples of bad planning will tend to undermine public confidence in the planning system that he supervises and oversees; if he will provide a look-back mechanism in the Planning and Development Bill 2013, whereby instances of questionable planning since the 1963 Act can be referred to the regulator for adjudication; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26395/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 167 of 29 May which set out the position in this matter.

Housing Adaptation Grants Funding

184. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he will be in a position to provide funding to Mayo County Council to enable it to provide grant aid to persons to improve their housing conditions under the special housing aid for the elderly scheme and mobility aid grant scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26403/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): On 22 February 2013 I announced capital allocations to local authorities under the suite of Grants for Older People and People with a Disability amounting to €42.750 million. This year I allocated local authorities the full amount of their contractual commitments which, in the case of Mayo County Council, amounted to €1,658,576. The balance of the available funding was allocated on the basis of each authority’s share of the new applications on hand in January 2013. This brought Mayo County Council’s overall allocation to € 2,575,216. In order to deal with any acute or particular strain which might arise in the operation of the schemes over the course of the year I have set aside a small capital reserve. I recently approved supplementary allocations totalling €1.2 million for 13 local authorities. I will consider further applications from local authorities where similar difficulties have arisen. No such application has so far been received from Mayo County Council.

Derelict Sites

185. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has received an official request for permission to demolish a semi-derelict building block (details supplied) in County Dublin; when permission will be granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26430/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department understands that any such work would be carried out by Fingal County Council in accordance with Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 and my consent/approval is not therefore required.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Status

186. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he envisages funding being made available to Fingal County Council in order to proceed with the construction of a scheme to divert sewage from Rush Harbour, County Dublin, to the Portrane sewage plant; if this will be addressed urgently due to Rush Harbour failing to meet Environmental Protection Agency standards in 2013 for quality of bathing water; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26431/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 197 of 15 May 2013; it remains my Department’s intention to issue a decision to the Council on the relevant proposal shortly. In addition, Fingal County Council wrote to my Department on 20 May 2013 requesting approval to move two further elements of the Rush sewer network (North Beach and East Shore sewers) from planning stage to contracts to go to construction in the Water Services Investment Programme. This proposal is under examination and will be dealt with as soon as possible.

Election Management System

187. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the contents of a letter he has recently received from the Chairman of the Standards in Public Office Commission (details supplied) regarding the reform needed of SIPO; if he intends to widen the current legislation to bring third party groups taking part in political campaigns within the commission’s remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[26460/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Chairperson of the Standards in Public Office Commission, Justice Matthew P. Smith, wrote to me earlier this month about the provisions of the Electoral Act 1997 as they relate to third parties. In his letter he recalled recommendations previously made by the Commission for amendment of the legislation and in particular those in a March 2009 report titled Third Parties and the Referendum on The Treaty of Lisbon. In my response to Justice Smith I have confirmed that consideration will be given to the Commission's recommendations in the development and preparation of the Electoral (Amendment) (Referendum Spending and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill which is on the Government's legislation programme. That Bill will provide, inter alia, for the disclosure of expenditure and donations at a referendum campaign.

Commercial Rates Issues

188. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of commercial rates outstanding for each rateable local authority; the timeframe that the rates owed in each of these rateable local authorities have been in arrears for periods of more than one year, two years, five years and longer; and the amount that has been written off over the past five years. [26481/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): 2010 is the latest year for which audited local authority Annual Financial Statement data is available. Detailed information in relation to the value of commercial rates outstanding to local authorities for 2010 and the amount that was written off in the five years up to 2010, sourced from audited Annual Financial Statements, is set out in the table. Information on the periods of time that ratepayers have been in arrears is not available in my Department.

Rates Outstanding (€)

Authority Name	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Carlow	1,973,035	4,247	48,659	63,701	84,558	65,201
Cavan	2,391,924	95,267	106,716	78,828	150,332	767,529
Clare	7,766,009	343,619	301,577	419,856	396,538	205,650
Cork	19,219,960	2,907,572	3,279,302	3,868,254	5,041,167	6,672,558
Donegal	8,978,984	2,011,539	2,137,878	2,302,580	1,363,280	2,492,414
Fingal	21,013,241	652,705	886,521	1,364,689	2,141,388	3,757,096
Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown	19,242,061	0	1,464,053	1,161,247	1,712,032	3,325,110
Galway	5,067,072	1,746,905	1,951,482	2,636,068	2,727,353	4,043,523
Kerry	3,684,073	1,628,376	2,050,403	1,719,763	2,362,878	2,368,421
Kildare	8,422,162	0	0	0	0	0
Kilkenny	1,401,179	507,459	498,011	1,013,476	1,237,416	1,699,530
Laois	1,916,639	158,592	119,570	172,267	271,481	659,583
Leitrim	1,033,781	250,336	339,461	439,741	545,554	696,734
Limerick	2,614,285	1,577,716	1,720,067	1,948,681	2,644,874	4,028,917
Longford	624,804	278,783	272,432	410,706	204,541	117,420
Louth	2,877,506	519,162	617,097	654,051	756,462	946,116
Mayo	2,114,317	1,370,803	1,438,372	1,649,093	2,484,383	2,533,929

Authority Name	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Meath	2,998,706	0	0	0	0	0
Monaghan	1,458,576	290,748	211,786	274,444	602,947	1,022,223
North Tipperary	1,020,703	38,921	44,232	77,122	188,260	316,956
Offaly	516,184	689,566	395,289	567,400	803,689	937,826
Roscommon	2,340,196	26,299	31,383	751,669	1,563,232	1,688,361
Sligo	1,085,081	386,217	176,004	283,838	579,355	671,143
South Dublin	27,360,624	2,453,856	2,192,432	-188,700	1,687,009	3,012,133
South Tipperary	966,969	72,961	3,716	2,380	1,760	24,720
Waterford	2,078,117	364,132	509,005	383,252	408,964	530,506
Westmeath	1,405,350	34,301	66,805	1,480	236,607	178,733
Wexford	4,630,691	532,622	606,820	509,989	660,644	398,791
Wicklow	4,123,984	408,539	579,045	1,260,842	1,464,190	1,730,389
Cork	12,864,927	216,922	188,362	313,373	1,852,616	3,483,443
Dublin	63,446,842	19,900,844	17,718,465	5,616,183	6,247,794	9,035,651
Galway	14,502,756	1,358,281	1,500,777	2,627,132	2,435,131	4,664,801
Limerick	14,349,874	2,454,506	2,742,128	2,079,954	1,823,528	2,676,147
Waterford	2,784,426	116,822	89,214	143,235	189,950	192,323
Clonmel	1,047,678	32,531	0	0	47,189	38,886
Drogheda	3,484,434	368,612	952,938	928,391	2,149,886	2,517,366
Kilkenny	1,575,708	148,418	234,328	457,958	555,533	838,460
Sligo	2,697,570	745,744	1,322,193	661,977	890,046	1,127,339
Wexford	3,317,643	292,330	303,771	209,381	467,995	714,075
Arklow	1,989,988	87,576	258,683	413,109	520,877	638,080
Athlone	1,066,455	0	14,374	0	0	99,142
Athy	376,238	0	0	0	0	0
Ballina	679,060	479,587	554,858	525,779	729,526	851,891
Ballinasloe	368,680	234,974	272,079	321,894	324,172	437,460
Birr	314,570	197,494	205,713	270,109	233,453	0
Bray	2,079,907	467,251	541,561	734,883	704,429	369,999
Buncrana	787,813	359,229	282,927	282,303	762,828	569,131
Bundoran	423,118	30,008	36,039	54,630	87,232	76,240
Carlow	1,741,387	62,202	58,618	161,463	110,825	116,322
Carrick on Suir	291,231	69,100	14,523	3,253	4,606	0
Carrick-macross	338,964	44,482	36,121	51,037	88,280	78,791
Cashel	98,900	0	0	0	0	0
Castlebar	731,267	374,745	424,300	537,165	682,085	800,826
Castle-blaney	536,426	78,488	90,093	150,298	133,134	143,966
Cavan	704,417	85,465	259,398	213,192	300,985	271,722
Clonakilty	322,179	20,874	12,773	12,343	52,862	159,339
Clones	222,016	113,373	65,752	51,175	128,492	121,380
Cobh	250,676	88,714	64,784	125,741	146,664	303,998
Dundalk	7,382,613	816,465	874,504	409,189	966,133	1,831,808
Dungarvan	2,084,189	372,368	434,906	276,356	311,792	478,296

Questions - Written Answers

Authority Name	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Ennis	1,754,132	263,553	339,577	540,437	591,822	528,930
Enniscorthy	535,799	10,588	11,661	51,780	58,316	131,649
Fermoy	116,267	112,936	102,313	138,402	204,826	224,882
Kells	90,986	0	0	0	0	0
Killarney	2,880,804	759,775	715,466	654,326	833,203	918,274
Kilrush	186,646	16,304	4,793	1,970	7,777	12,820
Kinsale	479,229	19,041	15,216	51,171	14,472	309,488
Letterkenny	3,835,422	147,578	154,583	347,679	388,328	869,900
Listowel	242,301	96,957	103,557	217,702	209,707	244,837
Longford	914,715	117,150	339,919	339,023	591,740	526,848
Macroom	156,528	34,395	4,899	5,855	51,661	191,450
Mallow	498,038	54,023	56,559	135,168	171,242	246,973
Midleton	356,423	42,296	94,332	80,524	108,601	159,674
Monaghan	781,009	234,785	308,221	299,864	538,040	566,891
Naas	1,477,192	27,490	5,473	886	0	3,828
Navan	1,147,224	0	0	0	331,598	996,615
Nenagh	529,237	310,078	177,348	247,242	377,330	386,733
New Ross	335,005	0	24,976	12,565	8,065	93,602
Skibbereen	238,477	89,479	118,618	133,064	161,644	168,981
Templemore	68,147	7,002	5,925	14,354	16,509	39,623
Thurles	610,362	92,734	121,320	215,490	344,008	409,940
Tipperary	123,768	0	1,278	0	0	39,348
Tralee	1,821,045	974,664	982,956	1,179,870	2,912,370	2,696,114
Trim	360,297	0	0	0	0	0
Tullamore	1,184,004	346,570	543,070	855,628	736,996	701,140
Westport	328,554	89,385	164,327	121,984	149,391	282,849
Wicklow	454,121	207,178	191,001	230,205	291,953	256,035
Youghal	265,473	178,204	182,887	440,598	339,981	321,338

Departmental Budgets

189. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of those adjustments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26547/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In the context of the forthcoming Budget, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has asked my Department to identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future ministerial ceilings. The scale of proposed savings for 2014 was set out in part 1 of the Expenditure Report 2013, which was published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in December 2012.

Juvenile Offenders

190. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has considered the findings of recent research by a team from the Central Mental Hospital on the

mental health needs of inmates in St. Patrick's Institution; if he has plans to ensure that his Department will assist St. Patrick's Institution to make a drug-free unit available for inmates under 18 years of age in the institution without delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26364/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to advise the Deputy that the report referred to has not yet been received by the Irish Prison Service. Notwithstanding that I can confirm that the National Forensic Mental Health Service has been providing an in-reach service to St. Patrick's Institution for the last two years. Currently a consultant forensic psychiatrist attends one day a week, a community psychiatric nurse attends one and a half days' a week and a non-consultant hospital doctor attends for a half day. In addition a multi-agency healthcare meeting is convened on a weekly basis in St. Patrick's Institution attended by the prison doctor, a representative from the psychiatric in-reach team, nurses, psychologist, addiction counsellors, probation officer and chaplain for the purpose of addressing healthcare issues pertaining to the inmates which includes mental health.

It is Irish Prison Service Policy not to mix under 18s with adult prisoners and while there is a dedicated Drug Free Unit in St. Patrick's Institution it facilitates those over 18. However, there are a range of drug rehabilitation programmes available to those under 18 in St. Patrick's Institution which involve a significant multidimensional input from general primary care, mental health services, psychology, addiction psychiatry and addiction counselling. Any inmate who is engaged with services whilst in prison are referred to community addiction services as part of their pre-release plan. Once the report is received it will be given due consideration by the Irish Prison Service.

Garda Equipment

191. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of marked and unmarked Garda vehicles that are fitted with automatic number plate recognition; and his plans, if any, to increase the number of vehicles fitted with ANPR in 2013. [26293/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have sought the information referred to by the Deputy and I will contact him in relation to this matter as soon as possible.

Immigration Policy

192. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the reasons given to the 2,240 persons who were refused entry into the State in 2012; and if he will provide, in tabular form, the nationalities of the various persons who were thus refused. [26294/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The legal provisions governing refusals of permission to land are set-out in Section 4(3) of the Immigration Act, 2004. I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the principle reasons persons are refused permission to land are as follows:

- that there is reason to believe that the person intends to enter the State for purposes other than those expressed by the non-national concerned;
- the person is not in possession of a valid Irish visa and is not exempt from this requirement;

– the person concerned is not in possession of a valid passport or other equivalent document; or

– the person concerned intends to travel (whether immediately or not) to the UK and would not qualify for admission had they come directly to the UK.

The principal nationalities of persons refused permission to land in the State and subsequently removed were Brazil, South Africa, China, Bolivia, and Albania. I might add that in all cases, removals from the State, whether in respect of those who are removed on arrival at ports of entry or those already in the State, are conducted in accordance with the law with removals at the Port of Entry being, essentially, an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

The removal of illegal immigrants from the State is a necessary feature of the enforcement of immigration legislation with the purpose of upholding the integrity of the immigration system. In enforcing the law in this respect, Ireland is no different from other countries who also remove individuals who have no lawful right to remain within their territory.

Road Traffic Offences

193. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of fixed penalty notices that have been issued to motorists in each of the past four years for the offence of breaking a red light. [26295/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the following table shows the number of fixed charge notices issued for the offence of breaking a red light for the years 2009 to 2012 and in 2013 up to 30 April. Figures provided are operational and liable to change.

The number of fixed charge notices issued for the offence of breaking a red light for the years 2009 to 2012 and in 2013 up to 30 April

Year	Fixed Charge Notices
2013 (up to 30 April)	1,264
2012	5,516
2011	6,236
2010	7,416
2009	8,667

Anti-Social Behaviour

194. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on anti-social behaviour in an area (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [26302/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): 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.

Anti-Racism Measures

195. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding an incident of racism. [26314/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I sympathise with the person who has written to the Deputy about the problem of racism which she has encountered and I fully share her view on the need to use every effort to combat this. Racism such as is evidenced here is completely unacceptable and a source of serious concern to me. In my Presidency capacity at EU level during the first six months of this year, I very specifically raised this issue with my EU Ministerial colleagues with a view to establishing a mechanism to better support protection of fundamental rights and the Rule of Law in Member States by sharing best practice, monitoring standards and formulating appropriate recommendations and guidelines for action across the Union as an effective response to this problem.

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

The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration has responsibility for leading and co-ordinating work relating to the integration of legally resident immigrants. The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration continues to work with many sectors including An Garda Síochána, local authorities, sporting bodies, Government Departments, the social partners and broader civil society including cultural and ethnic minorities, to further progress the integration and diversity management agenda.

Funding has been provided to a number of local authorities around the country and local programmes have been undertaken to educate the public on issues such as immigration, integration and anti-racism. For example, Dublin City Council ran an anti-racism campaign on the Dublin transport system in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 using funding provided by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration. Dublin City Council also support a number of festivals supporting diversity such as the Chinese New Year and the Indian Diwali 'festival of lights'.

The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration also provided support to an NGO called Show Racism the Red Card to run a creative competition for school children in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. Funding was also provided to the Holocaust Educational Trust for educational initiatives that teach children the dangers of racism and the importance of integration and tolerance. Further details of the work done by this Office in the area of managing diversity and combatting racism including details of the funding granted to promote integration between the established and immigrant communities is available at www.integration.ie.

The Garda Racial, Intercultural and Diversity Office is also constantly working through community engagement to urge people to come forward and report any suspected racist crime to their local Gardaí. It advises the public about the existence of Ethnic Liaison Officers and also of the services available to victims of hate crime at the Garda Racial Intercultural and Diversity Office. The services of Ethnic Liaison Officers are advertised on the Garda website and appointed officers are named with details of their station.

The Deputy's correspondent may also wish to consult the links on the website at <http://www.integration.ie/> where she will note the many non-governmental organisations active in

this field. She might also consider bringing her concerns and ideas to the attention of one or more of such bodies.

Prisoner Numbers

196. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in prison; the number in each institution; the total number of prisoners not held in single cells or rooms; the number of these in each institution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26320/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The average number of prisoners in custody in Ireland has risen in the last 5 years, from 3,321 during 2007 to 4,318 during 2012, an increase of over 30%. Likewise the total number of committals to prison has also risen sharply during the same period, from 11,934 in 2007 to 17,026 in 2012 – an increase of over 43%.

Given the current number of prisoners in custody - 4,254 on 28 May 2013 - the Irish Prison Service is not in a position to provide single cell accommodation to all prisoners. Single cell occupancy across the system would result in a bed capacity of less than 3,000 and would not be possible to achieve without releasing sizeable numbers of prisoners considered to represent a threat to public safety.

In addition it should be borne in mind that in some cases prisoners are housed together for reasons other than lack of capacity. Family members, friends and co-accused prisoners often elect or are assigned a shared cell. Shared cell accommodation can be very beneficial from a management point of view particularly for those who are vulnerable and at risk of self-harm. There will always be a need for certain prisoners to be accommodated together.

As outlined in the Irish Prison Service Three Year Strategic Plan, it is intended to align the capacity of our prisons with the guidelines laid down by the Inspector of Prisons by 2014, 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 was be given to reducing the chronic overcrowding in Mountjoy, Cork, Limerick Prisons and the Dóchas Centre.

The information requested by the Deputy is set out on the table below and is reflective of the information available on 28 May 2013.

Institution	In custody	Single cells/rooms	Prisoners not in single cells/rooms
Arbour Hill	143	84	59
Castlerea	349	144	205
Cloverhill	419	51	368
Cork	225	42	183
Dochas	140	68	72
Limerick	237	78	159
Loughan	135	82	53
Midlands	746	324	422
Mountjoy (Male)	528	324	204
Portlaoise	258	178	80
Shelton	110	37	73

Institution	In custody	Single cells/rooms	Prisoners not in single cells/rooms
St Patricks Institution	155	155	n/a
Training Unit	112	80	32
Wheatfield	697	211	486
Total	4254	1858	2396

Prison Accommodation

197. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners in total and in each institution that are at present in custody; the number required to slop out; the number required to use normal toilet facilities in the presence of others; the number that are sole occupants of a cell that has normal flush toilet installed or have access at all times to normal toilet facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26321/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to assure the Deputy that the Government is committed to the elimination of slopping out in all prisons and places of detention. As you are aware I published the Irish Prison Service Three Year Strategic Plan in April 2012. The Plan includes a 40 month capital plan to provide in-cell sanitation in all cells and radically improve prison conditions in the older part of the prison estate.

I am pleased to note that the number of prisoners currently slopping out has decreased by over 32% in the past 12 months from 836 to 565 and will reduce further to 360 in September this year when the D Division in Mountjoy closes for refurbishment.

This refurbishment project, which forms part of the 40 month Capital Plan, includes the installation of in-cell sanitation to all cells in Mountjoy Prison. You will be aware that the C and B wings were completed in 2012 and work on the A wing is due for completion in September this year. As I have said, slopping out will finally end in Mountjoy Prison, later this year, when work on the final wing, the D wing, commences.

In addition, construction of a new prison in Cork, on the site of the current car park and adjacent green-field site will also commence this year. This new prison will have a capacity of 275 and will replace the existing outdated prison with modern cellular accommodation containing in-cell sanitation and showering facilities supported by a full range of ancillary services.

The construction of a new wing at Limerick Prison, to replace the outdated A and B Wings, also forms part of the 40 month capital plan and the tender process for this project is expected to commence in June.

You will be aware that a new accommodation block for in the Midlands Prison was opened in December 2012. The opening of this new accommodation block has allowed the Prison Service to reduce the capacity of both Cork and Limerick Prisons resulting in the closure of the antiquated B wing of Limerick Prison.

In May 2013, approximately 86% or 3,668 of the prisoners in custody across the prison system had access to in-cell sanitation or had access to normal toilet facilities at all times. A detailed breakdown is set out in the following table.

The following table refers to the information requested as at 28th May, 2013

Institution	No. in Custody	No. of prisoners who are required to slop-out	No. of prisoners who are required to use normal toilet facilities in the presence of others	No. of prisoners that are sole occupants of a cell with normal flush toilet installed or have access at all times to normal toilet facilities
Arbour Hill	143	Nil	59	84
Castlerea	349	Nil	203	146
Cloverhill	419	Nil	364	55
Cork	225	222	Nil	3
Dochas*	140	Nil	Nil	59
Limerick	237	46	100	91
Loughan	135	Nil	75	60
Midlands	746	Nil	399	347
Mountjoy (Male)**	528	193	68	260
Portlaoise	258	58	49	151
Shelton	110	Nil	Nil	110
St Patrick's Institution	155	Nil	Nil	155
Training Unit	112	16	Nil	96
Wheatfield	697	Nil	542	155
Total	4254	535	1,859	1,772

*Difference relates to those in shard cells with access to toilet facilities. (-81)

**Difference relates to 7 prisoners sharing two cells with a private toilet in each cell. (-7)

Total difference in figures = 88

Prison Regulations

198. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners in total and in each institution that are locked up for 23 hours or more in a normal day, for 22 to 23 hours in a normal day, for 20 to 22 hours in a normal day, for 18 to 20 hours in a normal day; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26322/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): It has not been possible, within the timeframe available, to collate the information required by the Deputy. I will contact the Deputy directly when the information is to hand.

Prisoner Numbers

199. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of male and female prisoners under 21 years of age; the number in each of the institutions in which they are held; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26323/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that the total number of persons under 21 years of age in prison custody on 27 May, 2013 was 274. This figure is made up of 273 males and 1 female. Their location is set out in the following table.

Establishment Name	Number of prisoners
Castlerea Prison	20
Cloverhill Remand Prison	8
Cork Prison	19
Limerick Prison (Male)	10
Limerick Prison (Female)	1
Loughan House	3
Midlands Prison	21
Mountjoy Prison (Male)	7
Portlaoise Prison	8
Shelton Abbey	2
St Patrick's Institution (17 year olds)	20
St Patrick's Institution	137
The Training Unit	1
Wheatfield Prison	17
Total	274

As the above figures illustrate, a significant percentage (57%) of prisoners in this age category are detained in St Patrick's Institution which is the State's designated committal institution for males aged 17 to 21 years of age and accommodates both remand and sentenced prisoners. Of the 274 in question 20 were under the age of 18 and were accommodated in a special unit (B Division) of St. Patrick's Institution. The unit has a bed capacity of 44 and is self-contained. This has created an enhanced regime for under -18s, with communal dining.

The balance of persons in the other institutions are generally located in those places in order to facilitate family visits or to assist in their reintegration back into the community.

Prison Education Service

200. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of workshop and work training posts that are vacant in each prison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26324/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that the following table shows the existing vacancies for workshop and work training posts in each Prison:

Prison	Vacancies
Arbour Hill	7
Castlerea	8
Cloverhill	3
Cork	6
Dochas	5

Prison	Vacancies
Limerick	10
Loughan House	1
Midlands	24
Mountjoy	11
Portlaoise	14
Shelton Abbey	2
St. Patrick's Institution	2
Training Unit	2
Wheatfield	19

Many of these vacant posts are currently being filled by officers 'acting-up' to the role. Vacancies are in the process of being filled by a combination of redeployment of Clerks under the Croke Park Agreement and a competition for promotion to Work Training Officer will be held in the coming weeks.

The Irish Prison Service places a strong emphasis on improving prisoners' employability prospects through work training activities and accredited vocational training courses.

A wide range of training workshops operate within the institutions e.g. printing, computers, braille, woodwork, metalwork, construction, industrial cleaning, crafts and horticulture. There are over 100 workshops and service activities across the prison estate. In March, the latest month for which statistics are available, an average of over 1,100 prisoners engaged in these vocational training activities and courses each day - just over 26% of the average prison population in that month.

The Irish Prison Service has also been expanding the number of accredited courses and opportunities available to prisoners in Work Training in recent years. Enhanced partnership arrangements with accrediting bodies such as City and Guilds, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), and the Guild of Launderers and Cleaners and the centralising of coordination and quality assurance arrangements have enabled us to extend the number of available courses and activities with certification.

The Irish Prison Service now has over 100 qualifications available across 20 skill sets. The numbers of prisoners participating in accredited vocational training courses has increased from 314 in 2007 to 1,459 in 2012 and 1,030 prisoners received certificates in the last year.

Prisoner Rehabilitation Programmes

201. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of hours the library in each prison is scheduled to open each week; the percentage of scheduled opening times that these libraries were actually open during 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26325/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The number of hours the library in each prison is scheduled to be open is set out in the table under. The libraries for Arbour Hill, Dóchas, Mountjoy, Shelton, St. Patrick's and the Training Unit are open as the demand requires.

PRISON	Scheduled Opening Hours (per week)	% hours open January - December 2012
Arbour Hill	On demand	As required
Castlerea	27.5	25 (Est.)
Cloverhill	35.5	38
Cork	31.25	86
Dochas	On demand	As required
Limerick	22	60 (Est.)
Loughan House	7.5	100
Midlands*	39	33.4
Mountjoy	20	46.5
Portlaoise C Block	30	100
Portlaoise E Block	20	100
Shelton Abbey	8	100
St. Patrick's Institution	On demand	As required
Training Unit	On demand	As required
Wheatfield East Wing	35	100
Wheatfield	16	59

* During 2012 the Librarian position in the Midlands prison was vacant.

Libraries in prisons are regarded by prison management as key elements in the process of normalisation and rehabilitation for prisoners. Library services in prisons are mainly provided by Local Authority library personnel deployed to prisons. In some cases, libraries are managed by prison officers or prisoners, with professional librarian oversight. While it is the case that a shortfall in staffing numbers on a particular day can impact negatively on service provision, the Irish Prison Service are actively pursuing the option of having all libraries in prisons managed by long-term, suitably trained prisoners, with professional oversight in order to maximise the service.

Prison Education Service

202. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the allocations within the education subhead of the prison Vote to each of the following areas of education in 2013: the education unit in each prison, each public library service involved in prisons, the Open University, the National College of Art and Design, Arts Council projects in prison, the Alternative to Violence Project and post-release educational support for prisoners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26327/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The allocations within the education subhead of the prison vote to each of the following areas of education in 2013 are as follows:

Education Unit in each Prison	2013
Arbour Hill	23,000
Castlerea	51,000
Cloverhill	29,000
Cork	40,000
Dóchas	38,000
Limerick	49,000

Questions - Written Answers

Education Unit in each Prison	2013
Loughan Hse	31,000
Midlands	90,000
Mountjoy	55,000
Portlaoise	60,000
Shelton Abbey	28,000
St.Patrick's	52,000
Training Unit	21,000
Wheatfield	80,000
TOTAL	647,000

Teacher's salaries are funded by the Department of Education and Skills who currently provide an allocation of 220 whole-time teacher equivalents to the prisons through the VECs.

LIBRARIES 2013	Salaries	Stock
	(Fixed Cost)	
Dublin Prison Libraries	156,824	
Midlands	Vacancy	
Portlaoise	Vacancy	
Castlerea	Vacancy	
Limerick	Vacancy	
Shelton	10,000	
Loughan	8,158	
Cork	-	
TOTALS	174,982	48,675
ALL COSTS LIBRARY		223,657

The Librarian salary costs are fixed as set out in the table, the final allocation in respect of library stock will be available following a review of library service provision in each prison.

-	2013
HOPE Project, Cork	17,000
Dillons Cross	10,000
Alternatives to Violence	7,000
National College of Art & Design	-
ARTS Council	23,000
Open University	100,000

Education Units in prisons are involved in the development and implementation of a wide variety of courses catering for the needs and interests of prisoners. While Open University courses represent the higher end of academic achievement in prisons, the majority of courses on offer lead to certification, mainly State examinations or FETAC accreditation.

The allocation for the Open University is € 100,000, this is a demand led service subject to a uniform application procedure with associated guidelines where prisoners demonstrate by proven academic ability that they can complete a third level course of study.

Prison Education Service

203. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners actively following a course with the Open University at the present time, in each institution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26328/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Education Unit in each of the prisons offers a broad and flexible programme of education to prisoners, ranging from basic literacy classes to Open University courses. With regard to Open University, there is a uniform application procedure with associated guidelines and prisoners must demonstrate the proven academic ability required to complete a third level course of study, prior to funding being approved.

Education Units in prisons are involved in the development and implementation of a wide variety of courses catering for the needs and interests of prisoners. While Open University courses represent the higher end of academic achievement in prisons, the majority of courses on offer lead to certification, mainly State examinations or FETAC accreditation.

The number of prisoners actively following a course with the Open University at the present time, in total and in each institution is set out in the table under.

Open University	2013
Arbour Hill	12
Castlerea	6
Cloverhill	-
Cork	1
Dóchas	3
Limerick	-
Loughan Hse	1
Midlands	11
Mountjoy	-
Portlaoise	5
Shelton Abbey	1
St.Patrick's	-
Training Unit	3
Wheatfield	6
TOTAL	49

Prisoner Numbers

204. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans, in the interest of transparency, to publish on the Irish Prison Service website the numbers in custody in each institution on a daily basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26330/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that with effect from 4 June 2013 the number of prisoners in custody will be published on the prison service website www.irishprisons.ie on a daily basis excluding weekends and bank holidays, numbers for those days will be published the next working day.

Prison Regulations

205. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners in each institution who are diagnosed as on an enhanced regime, a standard regime or a basic regime, under the new incentivised regime arrangements; the weekly gratuity paid in each of these three categories; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26331/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that Incentivised Regimes were introduced on a phased basis across all prisons in 2012. Incentivised Regimes provides for a differentiation of privileges between prisoners according to their level of engagement with services and quality of behaviour. The objective is to provide tangible incentives to prisoners to participate in structured activities and to reinforce good behaviour, leading to a safer and more secure environment. The weekly gratuity is paid at the following rates: Basic €6.65, Standard €11.90 and Enhanced €15.40.

The table following show the number of prisoners at each level broken down by institution on 27 May, 2013.

Institution	Basic	Standard	Enhanced
Arbour Hill	0	3	140
Castlerea	13	163	176
Cloverhill	8	290	119
Cork	2	135	88
Dochas	0	80	58
Limerick	4	169	67
Loughan House	0	2	126
Midlands	11	270	461
Mountjoy	24	250	255
Portlaoise	11	35	152
Shelton Abbey	0	0	107
St. Patrick's	5	86	65
Training Unit	0	15	99
Wheatfield	34	357	307

Restorative Justice

206. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on the restorative justice programme that was introduced on a statutory basis for the first time in the Children Act 2001; his views on the success of the rolling out of the two restorative justice initiatives that were provided in the Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26340/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The delivery of restorative justice approaches are primarily a matter for the Irish Youth Justice Service strategic partners - An Garda Síochána and the Young Persons Division of the Probation Service. Restorative justice in the context of youth crime was introduced on a statutory basis for the first time in the Children Act 2001, as amended. There are two restorative justice initiatives provided for in the Act: a restorative conference or restorative caution included in the Garda Diversion Programme and a court-ordered restorative justice family conference delivered through the Probation Service.

An Garda Síochána use Restorative Justice processes in the delivery of the Diversion Programme under Part IV of the Children Act, 2001, as amended. Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLOs) are trained as Restorative Justice Practitioners and in Mediation Skills. The latest Annual Report of the Committee to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme indicates that JLOs dealt with over 900 cases using a restorative justice approach where a crime was committed by a young person. In addition since 2010, the report indicates that eight 8 JLOs qualified as trainers in restorative practices and collaborated with local communities and other agencies, in particular, the Probation Service in delivering training and developing restorative practice communities. Restorative Justice philosophy has also been introduced to Garda Youth Diversion Projects which are managed by the Irish Youth Justice Service and operate on the basis of a strategic partnership between IYJS, An Garda Síochána and community based organisations. Since 2011, facilitator skills training in Restorative Justice has been rolled out to Youth Justice Workers working in the projects. This training programme is ongoing during 2013.

Young Persons Probation (YPP) works within the Children Courts nationally to implement all relevant requirements of the Children Act 2001, (as amended) in particular Part 8 (Probation family conference) and Part 9 (orders relating to community supervision) of the Act.

All Young Persons Probation staff have been trained in the preparation, delivery and action planning/monitoring which are essential to the Probation family conference (Part 8 of the Children Act 2001 as amended). Conferences are convened at the request of the Courts within 28 days and subject to the satisfactory production and completion of the action plan, there is an option for full diversion from the Criminal Justice system. The Probation Service in conjunction with its partner agencies has also introduced and consolidated a number of Restorative Practices/approaches in the management of court ordered supervision in the community and more infrequently supervision following a period of detention. These include, victim awareness/empathy work, Restorative conferences (not court ordered but part of supervision contract with young person and parent), Victim Impact Panels which include community volunteers and Victim/Offender Mediation. YPP staff have received accredited training in Restorative Practices and the majority of dedicated staff are now up skilled in this area. This training is frequently provided on an interagency basis.

While I am satisfied with the work undertaken to date and the ongoing developments in the roll out of restorative justice initiatives, I will continue to monitor the impact of these latest developments in conjunction with the criminal justice agencies involved, and the results will be taken on board in considering future developments in this area.

Spent Convictions Legislation

207. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions) Bill 2012 will be initiated; if a person who was convicted of cannabis possession in 2005 will have their conviction spent under the Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26346/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): In relation to the timeframe for the enactment of the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions) Bill 2012, I would refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 210 of 22 May 2013, copy under.

As regards a conviction for the possession of cannabis, the Bill's provisions are based on the sentence imposed rather than on the offence committed. Sentences of 12 months or less are covered by the Bill and the longest rehabilitation period is 5 years. There is a limit of 2 on the number of convictions that may become spent and the spent convictions regime does not apply

where the person is applying for certain employments or licences.

The Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions) Bill 2012 is awaiting Report Stage in the Dáil. It has passed all stages in the Seanad. The Bill is intended to work in harmony with the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012. However, elements of that Act concerning the disclosure of convictions are under review at present having regard to a recent judgment of the UK Court of Appeal in (On the Application of) T and others v Chief Constable of Greater Manchester [2013]. The Court considered the circumstances in which it is appropriate to disclose convictions for minor offences with particular regard to Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. While the judgment concerns legislation that differs from the 2012 Act and the proposed Bill, I take the view that the legal principles identified by the Court in relation to the application of Article 8 merit consideration.

In the event that some modifications are required to the 2012 Act my intention is to bring them forward by way of amendment to the Bill and to make any consequential changes to the Bill itself that are required to ensure that the two regimes work in harmony. Until this work is complete I am not in a position to give an indication of the likely timing of Report Stage. However, I am conscious of the importance of the Bill to the reintegration of offenders and I will endeavour to ensure that there is no undue delay.

Court Accommodation Refurbishment

208. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the plans there are to upgrade and-or improve a court house (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26351/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy may be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service. The Act provides that the Service is independent in the performance of its functions, including the maintenance and provision of courthouse facilities. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that there are currently no plans to upgrade the courthouse in Donegal Town.

Asylum Applications

209. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed by a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath who has two dependent children and who wishes to be reunited with their son's father, currently a British citizen, who has recently made an application for asylum which is on appeal in the High Court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26352/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order and her son is the subject of a Judicial Review in relation to his asylum application. The matter is therefore *sub judice*.

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

Prison Policies

210. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the incentives, excluding new gratuity rates, that have been made available to underpin the incentivised regimes policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26434/13]

212. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if individual incentivised regime policies have been introduced in each prison; if he will detail these individual policies; the number of prisoners involved in these policies in each prison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26436/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 210 and 212 together.

I can inform the Deputy that the Incentivised Regimes Policy was introduced on a phased basis across all prisons in 2012. Incentivised Regimes provides for a differentiation of privileges between prisoners according to their level of engagement with services and quality of behaviour. The objective is to provide tangible incentives to prisoners to participate in structured activities and to reinforce good behaviour, leading to a safer and more secure environment. There are three levels of privilege - basic, standard and enhanced.

Each prison has developed an information booklet on how the scheme operates and specifically on the criteria and privileges associated with each level of regime.

The standard set of core privileges provided in each prison comprises of different levels of daily gratuity ranging from €0.95 to €2.20, the number and length of visits a prisoner is allowed to receive and the number of telephone calls a prisoner is allowed to make. Each prison has drawn up a list of privileges available under each regime level. The list of available privileges is likely to vary between prisons and within different areas of a prison, depending on the operational and infrastructure requirements of each prison. Examples of other incentives offered include improved accommodation (e.g. move from dormitory accommodation to a single cell in an open centre, move to a cell with in-cell sanitation), access to facilities such as DVD player, games consoles, etc, and access to employment opportunities within the prison e.g. kitchens, laundries etc.

The table following shows the number of prisoners at each level broken down by institution on 27 May, 2013.

Institution	Basic	Standard	Enhanced
Arbour Hill	0	3	140
Castlerea	13	163	176
Cloverhill	8	290	119
Cork	2	135	88
Dochas	0	80	58
Limerick	4	169	67
Loughan House	0	2	126
Midlands	11	270	461
Mountjoy	24	250	255
Portlaoise	11	35	152
Shelton Abbey	0	0	107
St. Patrick's	5	86	65

Institution	Basic	Standard	Enhanced
Training Unit	0	15	99
Wheatfield	34	357	307

Prison Staff

211. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of officers that have been made available to integrated sentence management in each prison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26435/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Irish Prison Service is implementing an Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) initiative within the prison system. ISM involves a new orientation in the delivery of services to prisoners and an emphasis on prisoners taking greater personal responsibility for their own development through active engagement with both specialist and non-specialist services in the prisons. The end result is a prisoner-centred, multidisciplinary approach to working with prisoners with provision for initial assessment, goal setting and periodic review to measure progress.

Over 1,000 new prisoners participated in ISM in 2012. At the end of April this year there were over 2,300 current and active cases and over a thousand prisoners had sentence plans in place at that time.

Currently 16 ISM Co-ordinators are in place in 10 institutions as set out in the table underneath. The staff concerned are made up of redeployments and others who are functioning on an acting basis into the roles. It is envisaged that, through further redeployments and a forthcoming internal competition, full time ISM Co-ordinators will be assigned to all prisons in the coming months. Having a dedicated team of ISM Co-ordinators in all prisons will enhance the effectiveness of the sentence management system and facilitate the growing numbers of prisoners participating in the process. A complement of over 20 ISM Co-ordinator posts have been identified to date, through the Transformation process, to provide vital coordination and support for the initiative at prison level.

Institution	No.
Arbour Hill	1
Castlerea	2
Cloverhill	2
Dochas	2
Loughan House	1
Portlaoise	1
Midlands	2
Mountjoy	2
Training Unit	1
Wheatfield	2
Total	16

Question No. 212 answered with Question No. 210.

Drugs in Prisons

213. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details of the review carried out in 2012 by the Irish Prison Service of its drug treatment policy; the policies it produced; the extent to which those policies have been implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26437/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy may be aware that an agreed Drug Treatment Clinical Policy document was first issued by the Irish Prison Service in 2008. It was reviewed during 2012 to ensure that the Irish Prison Service continued to match best practice in the community, insofar as is possible in the prison setting and within the context of the current budgetary constraints. The policy was examined in detail by a multidisciplinary group, including representatives from community, voluntary and statutory stakeholders, and Irish Prison Service healthcare staff. It was amended to reflect changes in legislation and practice in the community, including the statutory requirements in relation to HIV testing and notification, and the development of In Reach services for the treatment of Hepatitis C.

The Drug Treatment Clinical Policy now encompasses the following:

- Addiction Treatment Charter;
- Clinical Interdisciplinary Care Planning;
- Psychosocial Supports and Pharmacological Interventions for Opioid Dependence;
- Drug Testing;
- Dispensing and Administration of Methadone;
- Viral Screening;
- Immunisation Guidelines;
- Assessment and Treatment of Benzodiazepine Addiction;
- Assessment and Treatment of Alcohol Withdrawals;
- Cocaine Treatment Policy; and
- Nicotine Replacement Therapy Policy.

The Irish Prison Service will continue to implement the policies set out ensuring that its drug treatment services reflect best practice insofar as is possible. The Deputy may also wish to note that the Irish Prison Service has recently conducted a review of its existing Drug Treatment programmes and has developed proposals to reorient and extend its drug treatment options.

Garda Retirements

214. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason he waived the normal retirement age for Garda Commissioner Martin Callinan to ensure that the Commissioner received an extension of two years past the normal retirement age of 60, in view of details supplied; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26464/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The appointment of the Garda Commissioner is, under Section 9 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, made by the Government. The Government decided to extend the term of office of the present Commissioner, as an exceptional measure, to provide continuity at a time of significant organisational change aimed at achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of the policing service. The extension will be for a period of two years.

Prisoner Numbers

215. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current number of persons incarcerated in Irish prisons; and the number for each of the last five years. [26484/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that there were 4,245 persons in custody on 27 May 2013. A breakdown of the number of persons in custody on the same date for the previous five years are included in the table.

Number in custody	Year
4,245	2013
4,483	2012
4,465	2011
4,277	2010
3,905	2009
3,588	2008

Prison Staff

216. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prison officers employed by the State for each of the past five years. [26485/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that the following table outlines the number of prison officer grades* employed by the Irish Prison Service for each of the past five years. Figures are based on whole time equivalent numbers serving on 31 December for each year:

Year	No. employed
2012	3,262
2011	3,310
2010	3,338
2009	3,388
2008	3,463

*All Prison grades are included from Recruit Prison Officer to Governor level

Garda Retirements

217. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of retirees from the Garda Síochána from all ranks in each of the past five years. [26486/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the number of members, broken down by rank, who have retired from the force on voluntary, compulsory or other grounds, in the years ending 31 December 2008 to 2012 and up to 30 April 2013, the latest date for which figures are readily available, is set out in the table:

Year	Com	D/Com	A/Com	C/Supt	Supt	Insp	Sgt	Gda	Total
31/12/08	0	1	3	4	12	13	55	192	280
31/12/09	0	0	3	14	26	29	179	480	731

Year	Com	D/Com	A/Com	C/Supt	Supt	Insp	Sgt	Gda	Total
31/12/10	1	0	2	3	14	8	97	254	379
31/12/11	0	0	3	8	22	19	106	286	444
31/12/12	0	0	1	5	19	24	116	264	429
30/04/13	0	0	0	0	1	3	22	53	79

Garda Deployment

218. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí deployed to the traffic corps in each of the past five years. [26487/13]

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

I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that while all Gardaí have responsibility, inter alia, to deal with traffic policing issues as and when they arise, the number of personnel assigned to the traffic corps on 31 December 2008 to 2012 and also on 30 April 2013, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was as set out in the table hereunder:

Year	Strength
31/12/08	1,101
31/12/09	1,053
31/12/10	1,018
31/12/11	947
31/12/12	877
30/04/13	846

Asylum Applications

219. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which application for residency or eligibility for naturalisation has been established in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26514/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned, along with his wife and four dependant children, applied for asylum in the State on 4 May, 2004. Their applications were refused following consideration of their cases by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. A letter was sent to the person concerned from the Department dated 30 January, 2006 informing him that it was proposed to make a deportation order in respect of him. The letter outlined the three options open to the person concerned, one being to make written representations to the Minister under section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) setting out the reasons as to why a deportation order should not be made. The person concerned was given 15 working days to respond.

On 17 January, 2006 the wife of the person concerned was informed that the Minister proposed to make deportation orders in respect of her and her children. Similarly, the letter outlined the three options available, one being to make written representations to the Minister under section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) setting out the reasons as to why deportation orders should not be made. Deportation orders were made in relation to the person concerned, his wife and their dependants on 30 October 2008. Judicial review proceedings were instituted in the High Court on 21 August, 2008. An appeal to the Supreme Court was instituted on 4 August 2010. Accordingly, as the matter is sub judice, I do not propose to comment further.

I should remind the Deputy that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. The service enables up-to-date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek this information through the more administratively expensive parliamentary questions process.

Naturalisation Applications

220. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding determination of residency/eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26515/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned was initially granted permission to remain in the State on 23 September 1999 under the arrangements then in place for the non-EEA parents of Irish born children. The permission has been renewed on a regular basis and is currently valid until 8 May 2014. I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in July 2012. The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

Naturalisation Applications

221. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position and progress made to date in the determination of eligibility for residency or naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 8; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26519/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned was

granted temporary permission to remain in the State under stamp 4 conditions on 6 April 2005 for an initial two year period, under the revised arrangements applicable to the non-EEA national parents of Irish born children born in the State before 1 January, 2005, more commonly known as the IBC/05 Scheme. The permission was renewed in 2007 and was renewed by the Garda National Immigration Bureau, GNIB, subsequently with the last renewal period expiring on 6 April 2013.

I am informed that the person concerned attempted to register with the GNIB on 15 May 2013, however, his registration was not processed and he was advised to contact the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, with a view to regularising his status in the State. Accordingly the person concerned should now make a formal written renewal request to INIS, PO Box 10003, Dublin 1. Upon receipt of such request, his case will be examined and a decision made on his future status in the State.

I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in May 2012. The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

Naturalisation Applications

222. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the determination of eligibility for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26520/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, that the person mentioned by the Deputy became a naturalised Irish citizen on 13 December 2012.

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

Immigration Status

223. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding entitlement to residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath who has worked in insurable employment here for more than five years but who appears to have no proper residency status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26521/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, that the person referred to by the Deputy arrived in the State on 24 August 2006 as a visitor and would appear to have remained here without the appropriate permission. This is in breach of section 5(1) of the Immigration Act 2004 which provides that no non-national may be in the State other than in accordance with the terms of any permission given to him by or on behalf of the Minister. Furthermore, section 5(2) of the Act provides that a non-national who is in the State in contravention of subsection(1) is for all purposes unlawfully present in the State. The person concerned should immediately contact their local Garda immigration officer.

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

Immigration Status

224. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current or indicated residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26523/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have been advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, that the person mentioned by the Deputy has permission to remain in the State until 15 November 2013. I am further informed by INIS that they have no application on hand from the person referred to.

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

Naturalisation Applications

225. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding an application for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26524/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in May 2011. As the person referred to by the Deputy did not confirm on his application form that he intended to reside in the State after naturalisation, one of the statutory conditions for naturalisa-

tion, his application was deemed to be ineligible. The person concerned was informed of this in a letter dated 6 July 2011. It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended.

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

Naturalisation Applications

226. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding an application for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26526/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in September, 2011. The application is at an advanced stage of processing and will be submitted to me for decision in due course.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

Naturalisation Applications

227. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status and entitlement to naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26531/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned was granted permission to remain in the State for the three year period to 14th June, 2010. This permission was renewed for a further three year period, to 14th June, 2013. On 27th May, 2013 the person concerned submitted an application to have his permission to remain in the State renewed for a further period. This application is currently under consideration.

I am advised also that a valid application for a Certificate of Naturalisation was received from the person concerned in December, 2012. This application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the person concerned meets the statutory conditions for the granting of

a Certificate of Naturalisation, in areas such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as soon as possible.

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

Departmental Budgets

228. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of those adjustments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26552/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy will be aware the vote for the Department of Justice and Equality is one of five Votes in the Justice Vote Group. The scale of the adjustments for 2014 were set out at vote group level in part 1 of the Expenditure Report 2013, which was published in December 2012. In the context of the forthcoming Budget, there will be further communication with the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. Government will make decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations.

Departmental Records

229. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if records of Garda briefings to him or the Department concerning members of the Oireachtas are recorded and archived by his Department. [26578/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Questions Nos. 147 and 148 of 23 May 2013. The position is unchanged.

In the course of my statement in this House on 21 May I made it perfectly clear that there is no suggestion of my being routinely provided with information on members of the Oireachtas. I gave the House a solemn assurance that I am not in the business of receiving, seeking or maintaining confidential, sensitive information from An Garda Síochána about Members of this House, the Seanad or, indeed, anyone in political life. Nor are the Gardaí in the business of providing it. I also repeat my view that it would be entirely unacceptable if the Gardaí were to collect information about anyone, whether in public life or not, for political purposes.

I did make the point that the House would appreciate that there could be exceptional circumstances, which the Deputy will appreciate, where it would be necessary for the Minister for Justice of the day to receive confidential information about the activities of members of the House - for example if members of the House were involved with organisations carrying out terrorist activities.

As I indicated to the House Section 41 of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005 provides a clear statutory basis for the information which is provided to me by An Garda Síochána. In turn, I

am subject to the laws of the land in relation to what use I make of that information but, more importantly still, I am responsible to the House for how I discharge my office.

Garda Operations

230. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has requested a report from the Commissioner on an incident (details supplied) under section 41 of the 2005 Garda Síochána Act. [26580/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The matter to which the Deputy refers in his Question has been comprehensively addressed by me in statements to this House on 21 and 28 May 2013 respectively. There was no question of my seeking a report of the kind referred to by the Deputy.

Fodder Crisis

231. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Defence if grass cut on lands at Baldonnel, County Dublin, or any lands under the control of his Department, will be made available to farmers, whose animals are suffering as a result of the shortage of fodder; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26400/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The question of making grass available to farmers for fodder on Defence lands, including Casement Aerodrome Baldonnel, does not arise as leases and lettings are currently in place with third parties for lands suitable for grass harvesting.

Defence Forces Properties

232. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No.180 of 23 May 2013, the exact current location of the plaques and the details of the relevant contact person. [26425/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The plaques are currently in the care of RDF personnel who served with the Unit in Kells prior to its closure. Arrangements are being made to relocate the plaques to Cathal Brugha Barracks, Rathmines in the near future. Any future queries or correspondence on the matter should be addressed to the Property Management Branch of my Department, telephone 045-492075.

Departmental Budgets

233. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Defence if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of those adjustments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26545/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): In the context of the forthcoming Budget, the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform has asked my Department to identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the

setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The identification of savings options should ensure that a sufficient range of proposals are made by all Departments to help the Government make well-informed choices about spending priorities and allocations. The scale of the adjustments for 2014 was set out in part 1 of the Expenditure Report 2013, which was published in December 2012. Government will be making decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Payments

234. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue on a suckler welfare scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26301/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named registered 7 animals in 2011 and 9 animals in 2012 under the Suckler Welfare Scheme.

Applicants undertake to carry out all of the measures required under the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme on all eligible suckler cows and the calves. Applicants also undertake to record and notify my Department, or its agents, of the details of each measure through the Animal Events System for the full 5 year duration of the Scheme. In August 2011, applicants were informed of the requirement to notify all of the measures within one year from the date of birth of each animal.

The required data was not received within the prescribed timeframe for the animals born during 2011 and therefore the animals are not eligible for payment. It is, however, open to the person named to seek a review, if he feels there are mitigating circumstances for the late supply of data. As regards 2012, data has not yet been received in respect of 3 of the 2012 born animals and errors have been identified with the remaining 6 animals. The case cannot be progressed until these outstanding issues have been resolved.

Animal Welfare Issues

235. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the criteria adopted by local authorities when dealing with stray horses; the timeframe involved from a local authority taking a stray horse to the local authority putting down that animal; if this rule also applies to horses in foal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26326/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Matters relating to stray or abandoned horses in urban and rural areas come within the scope of the Control of Horses Act, 1996 under which Local Authorities have been given extensive powers. These powers include the making of bye-laws for the control and welfare of horses in the local authorities' functional area, together with provisions on licensing of horses within control areas and seizure and detention of stray or abandoned horses. In order to ensure greater uniformity in practice throughout the country, a Protocol, agreed between my Department and Local Authorities in May 2012 to ensure greater efficiencies in control of horses operations, recommended that all local authorities amend their bye-laws to allow for a maximum of five working day retention period for horses seized under the act prior to disposal. The advice to euthanize animals, where no possibility of re-homing or returning to owner exists, is in keeping with advice on humane disposal of horses from the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council (which comprises representatives from a wide range of stakeholder organisations including farming, equine and welfare bodies).

Beef Slaughtering Plants

236. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of cattle slaughtered in the period from January to May 2012 compared to that in the period of January to May in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26349/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The numbers of cattle slaughtered in plants supervised by my Department in the months concerned are set out in the following table:

-	2012	2013
January	117,872	128,869
February	112,178	121,058
March	106,689	110,231
April	104,539	120,347
May	111,820	125,000 (est)
Total	553,098	605,505 (est)

The numbers slaughtered are primarily a function of commercial considerations and I understand that cattle prices in 2013 are higher than in 2012. I am advised that other factors which may be contributing to the increased numbers being slaughtered include the fact that cattle disposals through live exports have been on a downward trend since 2010; that cattle slaughterings in 2012 were considerably lower than previous years; and fodder shortage issues in the period concerned.

Animal Disease Controls

237. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the availability of a vaccine to the farming sector (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26388/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Licensing of veterinary medicines and vaccines is subject to a comprehensive EU legislative code under which individual products may not be marketed or used in individual Member States in the absence of the requisite authorisation. Such authorisations can only be granted following submission by the sponsoring company of an application dossier to the required standard and no such application has as yet been lodged in Ireland.

The Irish Medicines Board (IMB) is designated as the competent authority in Ireland for the grant of full marketing authorisations for veterinary vaccines. Any application for a marketing authorisation which is submitted to IMB will be examined in accordance with the legislation and associated scientific standards. However, in certain circumstances, including while a validated application for a full marketing authorisation is being considered, my Department is enabled under the EU legislation to consider an application for an exceptional, interim, authorisation, should the sponsoring choose to pursue this option at the appropriate time. My Department will examine any application for an exceptional marketing authorisation in respect of a vaccine against Schmallenberg in the context of this legislation.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Applications

238. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person in County Mayo will receive their payment for cow suckler welfare scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26391/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named registered 6 animals under the 2012 Suckler Welfare Scheme. A letter issued to the applicant on 27 May 2013 with a view to resolving errors associated with all 6 animals.

Common Agricultural Policy Negotiations

239. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will give details of the developments on a range of policy areas, with his ministerial colleagues, made at the 26-28 May 2013 informal meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Council held in Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26415/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The informal meeting of Agriculture Ministers discussed a number of outstanding political issues across all four CAP reform dossiers. In keeping with the normal practice at informal meetings, no binding decisions were made, but the meeting made a very valuable contribution to the ongoing negotiations by giving all three institutions the opportunity to discuss each other's positions and explore the potential for reaching common ground on these issues.

As regards direct payments, attention focused on the distribution of payments within Member States (also known as internal convergence), capping and reduction of payments (the latter also known as degressivity), and voluntary coupled support. On capping, the Council has a clear mandate from the European Council conclusions on voluntary capping, and much of the discussion focused on the question of whether degressivity should be voluntary or mandatory. On voluntary coupled support, the Parliament argued for a higher level of support than that proposed by the Council.

As to internal convergence, this is clearly the biggest issue for Ireland in the negotiations. There is much common ground between the Parliament and the Council concerning the model of partial convergence originally proposed by Ireland and supported by a number of Member States, as an option for Member States. However, the Commission re-stated its preference for a minimum rate of convergence. Further discussion on the issue of redistribution or internal convergence will take place between now and June and Ireland very clearly raised concerns at the informal Council with regard to the Commission's proposals on a minimum payment.

Three issues under the Single CMO regulation, namely, sugar quotas, export refunds and vine planting rights, were addressed. On sugar quotas, the main issue is the date of expiry of the quota regime, with the Council position (2017) between the Commission (2015) and Parliament (2020) positions. On export refunds, attention focused on whether this measure should be confined to exceptional or crisis circumstances only, as now suggested by the Parliament, or whether it should remain a normal part of the so-called 'safety net' measures, as agreed by the Council last March. On vine planting rights, the debate focused on two key points, namely, the commencement and expiry date of a proposed new authorisations regime, in respect of which the Council generally occupies the middle ground between the Commission and Parliament positions.

As regards the rural development proposals, attention focused on proposed areas of natural constraint (formerly known as less favoured areas), and particularly on the commencement date for the new arrangements, where again, the Council generally occupies the middle ground.

Finally, on the so-called 'horizontal' regulation, which deals with the financing, management and monitoring of the CAP, discussion centred on the number of paying agencies per Member State, where the Council wants to keep the number to the minimum necessary.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

240. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a disadvantaged area scheme payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26449/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, holdings of eligible applicants are required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of six consecutive months, in addition to maintaining an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. While the holding of the person named was confirmed as having stock on the holding during 2012, the applicant failed to hold sufficient livestock numbers to meet the minimum six month requirement. Therefore no payment is due under the 2012 Scheme.

Bovine Disease Controls

241. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason compensation is not paid to farmers who have to dispose of calves that test positive for BVD; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26450/13]

242. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the requirements on farmers who have calves that test positive for BVD; where and the way they must dispose of such calves; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26451/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 241 and 242 together.

BVD is a viral disease of cattle that is estimated to cost Irish farmers around €102m each year. The issue of compensation during the compulsory phase of the BVD programme must be placed in the context of the economic benefits accruing to farmers arising from the eradication of this disease as well as the scarce budgetary resources available to my Department. The benefits of the BVD programme represent a private good to farmers: profitability improves as a result of the removal of BVD persistently infected (PI) animals from herds and the payback period for the removal of these animals is very short (6 months for dairy cattle and one year for beef cattle).

Eradication of BVD disease is important to farmers and the strategy of my Department remains one of concentrating its scarce resources in continuing to support Animal Health Ireland financially in its ongoing work in developing the necessary infrastructure to eliminate the occurrence of BVD from the national herd, thereby minimising financial losses for farmers and improving animal welfare. The BVD Order (SI 532 of 2012) requires all calves born on or after 1 January 2013 in the State to be tested for the BVD virus. Persistently infected (PI) animals will shed high levels of virus throughout their lifetime and are a major source of infection for other animals. In light of this, the Order prohibits the movement of these animals except for disposal directly to slaughter or under Ministerial permit.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

243. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a farmer who is in REP scheme 4 will receive their 2012 disadvantaged areas scheme payment; the reason for the delay in making this payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26452/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, eligible applicants are required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of six consecutive months, in addition to maintaining an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. While the holding of the person named did not satisfy the stocking requirement, the case has been recently reviewed in light of an Agri-Environment plan on the holding. Following this process, the application has been accepted for payment, which will issue shortly, directly to the nominated bank account.

Fodder Crisis

244. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to a topical issue of 22 May 2013, the progress made, if any, regarding the importation of fodder by ship from the Netherlands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26453/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I mentioned in the topical issue debate of 22 May that I had understood that one of our main Dairy Co-Ops was considering bringing a ship from the Netherlands. This is a commercial matter entirely for that Company.

Fodder Crisis

245. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to topical issue of 22 May 2013, the progress made, if any, on facilitating the release of financial support and-or credit for farmers to allow them to purchase fertiliser; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26454/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): On 24 April I established a €1 million transport fodder scheme to help alleviate the difficulties being encountered by farmers. 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 to €2 million. Fodder, eligible under the scheme and delivered into the country was covered up to Friday 24 May. I also decided, as an exceptional measure, that any definite purchases that were placed by that date, but which will not be delivered until this week, will be included under the scheme.

By the end of this week some 2,300 loads of imported fodder, amounting to about 34,000 tonnes, will have benefited from my Department's contribution to these transport costs. My Department continues to monitor the situation on a day by day basis and I am very aware of and have seen at first hand, the difficulties farmers are experiencing.

It is also important that while continuing to focus on the emergency fodder position in the short term, farmers should also focus on growing and conserving fodder for next winter's

needs. We should be maximising production in the coming period and I have asked Teagasc to prioritise this policy in their advisory campaigns over the summer months.

It is clear that the main cut of silage will be delayed this year and as a consequence we need to look at the potential for the growing of additional fodder later into the season. In this regard myself and my colleague the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr Phil Hogan, T.D., have announced a temporary and targeted adjustment of two provisions of the Nitrates Regulations to support additional fodder production on Irish farms in the coming months.

The adjustments involve:

- A discounting of some concentrate feeding when calculating the overall level of phosphorus allowed on grassland farms in 2013 and 2014; and

- an extension of two weeks to the period during which chemical fertiliser can be applied to grassland.

Phosphorous is essential for grass growth. In order to ensure sufficient allowance of phosphorus for grassland application this year and 2014, some meal feeding in 2012 and 2013 will be discounted. The period during which chemical fertiliser can be applied to land this year has been extended by two weeks up to and including 30 September 2013. These measures will provide every opportunity to farmers to maximise grass growth and conservation into next Autumn.

For many farmers, concerns regarding access to credit and flexibility around loan repayments have been a significant issue. I have been in regular contact with the banks, co-ops and feed merchants to urge flexibility and co-operation at this challenging time. I am delighted that these co-ops introduced a number of extremely helpful initiatives such as interest free credit, within limits, to farmers for the purchase of fertiliser, limited to the month of May and reduced price in respect of feed supplies of meal. Both banks and co-ops have asked farmers to contact them to discuss the terms that are available and have indicated that they will show flexibility on the basis that the longer term outlook for farming is positive and prices are strong across most areas.

The Animal Welfare Hotline which I established remains open for those with emergency situations or who need information about where to source fodder: 1850 21 19 90 (Low-call). The majority of calls received are enquiring about fodder availability and these callers are being referred to Co-ops in their respective areas. Those farmers with animal welfare issues (i.e. animals starving) are being referred to the DVOs where there are systems in place to deal with them on a case by case basis. Further information on the scheme is available from the Department website: <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/fodderassistanceapril2013/>.

Fodder Crisis

246. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will extend the closing date for the fodder subsidy scheme in view of the rainfall experienced in west of Ireland on the night of 26 May last; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there still remains significant demand for fodder in the region; if he will visit the region to experience the problems first hand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26467/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): On 24 April I established a €1 million transport fodder scheme to help alleviate the difficulties being encoun-

tered by farmers. 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 to €2 million. Fodder, eligible under the scheme and delivered into the country was covered up to Friday 24 May. I also decided, as an exceptional measure, that any definite purchases that were placed by that date, but which will not be delivered until this week, will be included under the scheme.

By the end of this week some 2,300 loads of imported fodder, amounting to about 34,000 tonnes, will have benefited from my Department's contribution to these transport costs. My Department continues to monitor the situation on a day by day basis and I am very aware of and have seen at first hand, the difficulties farmers are experiencing.

It is also important that while continuing to focus on the emergency fodder position in the short term, farmers should also focus on growing and conserving fodder for next winter's needs. We should be maximising production in the coming period and I have asked Teagasc to prioritise this policy in their advisory campaigns over the summer months.

It is clear that the main cut of silage will be delayed this year and as a consequence we need to look at the potential for the growing of additional fodder later into the season. In this regard myself and my colleague the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr Phil Hogan, T.D., have announced a temporary and targeted adjustment of two provisions of the Nitrates Regulations to support additional fodder production on Irish farms in the coming months.

The adjustments involve:

- A discounting of some concentrate feeding when calculating the overall level of phosphorus allowed on grassland farms in 2013 and 2014; and
- an extension of two weeks to the period during which chemical fertiliser can be applied to grassland.

Phosphorous is essential for grass growth. In order to ensure sufficient allowance of phosphorus for grassland application this year and 2014, some meal feeding in 2012 and 2013 will be discounted. The period during which chemical fertiliser can be applied to land this year has been extended by two weeks up to and including 30 September 2013. These measures will provide every opportunity to farmers to maximise grass growth and conservation into next Autumn.

The Animal Welfare Hotline which I established remains open for those with emergency situations or who need information about where to source fodder: 1850 21 19 90 (Low-call). The majority of calls received are enquiring about fodder availability and these callers are being referred to Co-ops in their respective areas. Those farmers with animal welfare issues (i.e. animals starving) are being referred to the DVOs where there are systems in place to deal with them on a case by case basis. Further information on the scheme is available from the Department website. <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/fodderassistanceapril2013/>.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

247. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total savings in 2012 disadvantaged areas scheme payments solely due to the changes in the stocking rates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26477/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme is not yet finalised, it is not possible at this stage to give precise figures as to the overall level of savings that will be achieved on foot of the various changes introduced to the Terms and Conditions of the 2012 Scheme. However, to date, payments worth in excess of €208 million have issued to 95,302 beneficiaries; a total of 102,070 applicants went identified as having declared DAS-eligible land under the 2012 Scheme.

It will be recalled that, arising from the 2012 budgetary process, savings needed to be found in my Department's expenditure for 2012 to keep it in line with government targets. Accordingly, it was necessary to adjust the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme. However, rather than simply apply an across the board cut to the rates payable or reduce the maximum payable area, I decided that real efforts should be made to focus the Scheme on those farmers who are most actively contributing to achieving the aims of the Scheme, namely:

- ensuring continued agricultural land use, thereby contributing to the maintenance of viable rural communities;
- maintaining the countryside; and
- maintaining and promoting sustainable farming systems, which take account of environmental protection measures.

I was also determined that those adversely affected by the 2012 changes should be afforded the opportunity to appeal, where they could show legitimate reasons for their inability to meet the new requirements. In total, my Department wrote to in excess of 10,000 beneficiaries under the 2011 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme whose holdings had not achieved the minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare, as required under the Terms and Conditions of the 2012 Scheme. These appeals have largely been processed, with the residue of cases expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. It is only at that stage, therefore, that it will be possible to determine the definitive outcome.

Fodder Crisis

248. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will reduce below seven months the holding period for animals under the 2013 disadvantaged areas scheme and revise down the stocking rates in view of the impact that this may have on animal welfare due to the current and projected fodder shortage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26478/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The 2013 Disadvantaged Areas 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.

Fodder Crisis

249. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of aid that has been distributed per county for animal fodder in 2013. [26498/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Fodder Transport Subsidy Scheme had played an important role in contributing to the efforts of recent weeks, with the transport costs of sizeable quantities of fodder being significantly offset by my Department's contribution. While the Scheme itself ended on Friday, 24 May, as an exceptional measure, I announced that any definite purchases that had been placed by that date, but which will be delivered on or before 31 May, will be included under the Scheme. As with all fodder included under this Scheme, only fodder sold to individual farmers is eligible for the transport subsidy.

Application forms (the relevant sections of which were required to be completed by individual farmers at time of purchase), were initially be retained by the Dairy Co-operative/Milk Purchaser/Mart; these are now in the process of being submitted, en bloc, suitably completed and verified, to the Department for checking of individual thresholds and payment. It is intended that only one payment will issue to each Dairy Co-operative/Milk Purchaser/Mart in respect of their submission for aid on behalf of participating farmers. In excess of 2,300 loads of imported fodder have benefited from my Department's contribution to the transport costs under this Scheme; this amounts to in excess of 34,000 tonnes of fodder.

Common Agricultural Policy Negotiations

250. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the timetable for Common Agriculture Policy negotiations over the coming days. [26499/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Following what I think were extremely useful and productive informal discussions between the Council, European Parliament and Commission in Dublin earlier this week, my attention is already firmly focused on what I hope will be the final phase of the CAP reform negotiations over the coming weeks, culminating in an overall political agreement between the three institutions at the end of June. The three institutions have been involved in so-called 'trilogue' negotiations since early April. These trilogues are scheduled to continue across all four CAP reform dossiers until 20 June, and it is intended that these discussions will resolve the vast majority of issues, which could be described as being of a largely technical nature. A separate and parallel informal process of discussion on the most sensitive political issues, which fed into the formal May Council and continued in a more substantial way at the informal meeting in Dublin, will also continue right through the month of June. These are the issues that will prove most difficult

to resolve, and it is hoped that this parallel process will reduce the number of such issues to a manageable number of outstanding points that will be finalised, from a Council perspective, at the meeting of Agriculture Ministers in Luxembourg from 24-26 June.

It is worth noting that in the course of the informal meeting in Dublin, all three European institutions re-stated their commitment to reaching an overall political agreement by the end of the Irish Presidency. This encouraging statement of intent, which was reinforced by the constructive approach taken by the participants, makes it clear that the target of reaching an overall agreement by the end of June remains very much on schedule.

Sugar Industry

251. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the estimate for the overall capital cost costs involved in building a manufacturing plant for the production of sugar. [26500/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I would like to give the Deputy the background to this issue. The EU Sugar Regime underwent a radical reform in 2005 following major EU decisions to restructure the industry. A temporary restructuring scheme was introduced with the aim of reducing EU sugar production. Greencore, the holder of the entire Irish sugar quota, availed of this voluntary scheme, dismantled its facilities and ceased production in 2006. Ireland secured €353 million as part of the reform package of which €220 million went to beet growers, €127 million to Greencore and €6million to machinery contractors. There is no mechanism under the present EU Regulations which would allow for the re-instatement of the sugar quota for the growing of sugar beet in Ireland for the production of sugar.

I know you will be aware that in 2011 I met with two separate groups which had conducted feasibility studies, into the possibility of establishing a new sugar/bioethanol facility in the country. I understand from figures published by the interested groups who are investigating the possibility of building a new facility, that the overall capital cost costs involved could range from €250 million to €400 million, depending on what type of facility will be constructed. At the meetings I stated that any venture to develop a combined sugar/bioethanol production facility would have to be a commercial proposition, financed in total by investors and interested parties and make sound economic sense in order to be viable. I also further suggested to both groups, the desirability of there being only one single proposition in play, as both studies had indicated a potential for only one such viable project and both groups had appeared to accept the reasonableness of this position at the time. Only recently, I re-stated that any business plan for a new venture in this area, would need to be competitive and that it would have to justify the very substantial investment to build a new facility.

I have strongly supported the current EU Commission's proposals to completely abolish sugar quotas from 30 September 2015, as part of the ongoing CAP Reform discussions. At each meeting of the EU Council of Agriculture Ministers since October 2011, which has addressed this issue, I have intervened to fully support the Commission proposals for quota abolition. I also raised the issue with EU Agriculture Commissioner Ciolos during his visits to Ireland last year and in several other contacts with him, I have informed him of the growing momentum here for the revival of the sugar industry.

In recent discussions at the Council of Agriculture Ministers, which I am chairing under our EU Presidency responsibilities, a deep divide emerged between one group of Member States, including Ireland, which favoured abolition of quotas in 2015 and another group of Member

States which wished to extend quotas to 2020 and beyond. As current President of the Council, I made a compromise proposal that garnered the support of a large majority of Member States, to extend the quota regime for a further two years until 30 September 2017 when it will finally cease. This is the formal negotiating mandate for the Agriculture Council, as we enter the final phase of the ongoing CAP Reform negotiations. The European Parliament is in favour of extending quotas to 2020. The Council is now in detailed trilogue discussions between the EU Commission and the Parliament on the general CAP Reform package, including the future of the EU sugar regime, and I am hopeful that I can bring these talks to a successful conclusion before the end of our Presidency role on 30 June next.

Fodder Crisis

252. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will extend the imported fodder transport scheme for at least a further two weeks in view of the difficulties facing the farming community particularly in areas such as counties Cavan and Monaghan where very unfavourable weather conditions continue to prolong and intensify the fodder crisis and farm income problems; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26533/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): On 24 April I established a €1 million transport fodder scheme to help alleviate the difficulties being encountered by farmers. 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 to €2 million. Fodder, eligible under the scheme and delivered into the country was covered up to Friday 24 May. I also decided, as an exceptional measure, that any definite purchases that were placed by that date, but which will not be delivered until this week, will be included under the scheme.

By the end of this week some 2,300 loads of imported fodder, amounting to about 34,000 tonnes, will have benefited from my Department's contribution to these transport costs. My Department continues to monitor the situation on a day by day basis and I am very aware of and have seen at first hand, the difficulties farmers are experiencing. It is also important that while continuing to focus on the emergency fodder position in the short term, farmers should also focus on growing and conserving fodder for next winter's needs. We should be maximising production in the coming period and I have asked Teagasc to prioritise this policy in their advisory campaigns over the summer months.

It is clear that the main cut of silage will be delayed this year and as a consequence we need to look at the potential for the growing of additional fodder later into the season. In this regard myself and my colleague the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr Phil Hogan, T.D., have announced a temporary and targeted adjustment of two provisions of the Nitrates Regulations to support additional fodder production on Irish farms in the coming months. The adjustments involve:

- A discounting of some concentrate feeding when calculating the overall level of phosphorus allowed on grassland farms in 2013 and 2014; and
- an extension of two weeks to the period during which chemical fertiliser can be applied to grassland.

Phosphorous is essential for grass growth. In order to ensure sufficient allowance of phos-

phorus for grassland application this year and 2014, some meal feeding in 2012 and 2013 will be discounted. The period during which chemical fertiliser can be applied to land this year has been extended by two weeks up to and including 30 September 2013. These measures will provide every opportunity to farmers to maximise grass growth and conservation into next Autumn.

The Animal Welfare Hotline which I established remains open for those with emergency situations or who need information about where to source fodder: 1850 21 19 90 (Low-call). The majority of calls received are enquiring about fodder availability and these callers are being referred to Co-ops in their respective areas. Those farmers with animal welfare issues (i.e. animals starving) are being referred to the DVOs where there are systems in place to deal with them on a case by case basis. Further information on the scheme is available from the Department website: <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/fodderassistanceapril2013/>.

Departmental Budgets

253. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of those adjustments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26541/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has asked my Department to identify options for savings which will ensure that there is a sufficient range of proposals to assist the Government in making informed choices about spending priorities and allocations in the preparation of the 2014 Estimates. The scale of the adjustments for 2014 were set out in the Comprehensive Expenditure Report 2013, which was published in December 2012. The Government will also make decisions on the future ceilings, including 2015, as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations and in that context, my Department has been asked to identify measures that could yield savings equivalent to 5% of the Department's gross current spending in 2013 in order to provide a range of options to inform the decision-making process.

School Enrolments

254. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the availability of a school place in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26530/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, established the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) with the statutory responsibility to ensure that each child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives a certain minimum education. The Act provides a comprehensive framework promoting regular school attendance and tackling the problems of absenteeism and early school leaving. The NEWB, through its network of Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) works with schools and families to provide appropriate support in relation to the procedures for enrolment in schools. In this way, the NEWB works to assist parents where they are experiencing difficulties in finding school places. In considering any individual case, the NEWB will have regard to the needs of the child concerned and will liaise with other agencies as appropriate including the National Council for Special Education.

I would also note that the selection and enrolment of pupils in schools is the responsibility of

the authorities of the individual school concerned. Where a Board of Management of a school, or a person acting on behalf of the Board, refuses to enrol a student in a school, expels a student or suspends a student for 20 or more days in any school year, the parent or guardian may appeal under section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 to the Secretary General of the Department of Education & Skills, or in the case of a Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) school to the VEC in the first instance.

I have requested the NEWB to make contact with the parent/guardian identified by the Deputy and offer appropriate advice and assistance in accordance with the Board's statutory remit. The Deputy may also wish to advise the parent/guardian concerned to contact the NEWB at 01 463 5513 for the Regional Office concerned or centrally at 01 873 8700.

Proposed Legislation

255. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she is intending to amend the forthcoming Children First legislation to extend the scope of the guidelines to include childminders on the list of persons to whom the Children First legislation is applicable because of the large number of children who are cared for by childminders either in the childminder's home or elsewhere. [26363/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Work on the development of Ireland's first Early Years Strategy for children aged from birth to 6 years, is already underway in my Department. The approach I am taking in developing the Strategy has received Government approval. My intention is to create an innovative and dynamic blueprint for the future development of Ireland's early years sector and a coherent approach to seeking to improve the lives of children from birth to 6 years.

A broad range of issues relating to regulations, standards, quality assurance, and inspection are currently being considered by the Expert Advisory Group which is advising my Department on the Strategy. As Minister I am committed to ensuring high standards in early years service provision, both in terms of care and curriculum. The role of quality provision is critical in contributing to childhood development and I am determined that this key objective will be reflected fully in the Early Years Strategy. One of the specific issues of policy which I have identified for consideration in the preparation of the new Strategy is the future role and regulation of the childminding sector, which is already an important component of early childhood care and education. At present preschool services are subject to the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No.2) Regulations 2006, as provided for under Part VII of the Child Care Act 1991.

Services providing care for children who have not yet commenced primary school are required to notify their service to the Pre-School Inspectorate of the Health Service Executive (HSE) and are subject to inspection and report by the Inspectorate on a regular basis. Services covered by the Regulations include full-time, part-time and sessional services as well as childminders taking care of more than three preschool children from different families in the childminder's home.

The National Guidelines for Childminders, compiled by the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee established under my Department, provide guidance to childminders in regard to the Regulations and good practice in the provision of child care services. In that context, the City and County Childcare Committees, which assist my Department in implementing its early childhood care and education programmes, encourage childminders to voluntarily notify themselves to their local Committee. As is the case with all regulatory requirements, the Child Care Regulations set the minimum standards which services are legally required to comply with. My

Department will continue to adopt a pro-active approach to promoting the highest standards of care and education throughout the sector, including childminders, given their importance in this crucial phase of children's lives.

The Deputy will be aware that I published the Draft Heads and General Scheme for the Children First Bill 2012 on 25 April 2012 and immediately referred the Heads of Bill to the Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children for consideration and advice. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children published their report in July 2012. As part of the Joint Committee's consultation process a number of submissions were received. Overall there was a welcome that the legislation would increase the focus on child protection. The contributions in the main came from organisations already implementing Children First. Submissions were not all in agreement and many points emerging needed to be considered and reconciled. This involves consideration of policy and operational issues, including those pertaining to childminders, as well as the best legal approach to achieving Children First objectives. In this regard, officials within my Department have consulted with a number of organisations and individuals and I recently met with a number of key stakeholders to discuss the complex issues that have arisen. I have also taken the opportunity to consult with a number of experts in relation to the development of the policy in this area. These discussions will inform the preparation of enhanced policy proposals that is currently underway.

The obligations of mandatory reporting are onerous and the inclusion of specific professionals and post holders is being considered very carefully at this time including persons working in the child care sector generally. I should emphasise that under the existing Children First National Guidelines, there is very clear advice available to all employees, volunteers and parents on how to raise any concerns they have about a child's safety and welfare. It is my intention to submit further proposals to Government as soon as possible with a view to the drafting of the Children First Bill as a priority.

Foreign Adoptions

256. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will outline her Department's engagements, if any, with families who have adopted children born in Mexico and who have subsequently been unable to have these adoptions recognised or registered here; and if she will report on the extent to which her Department is working with families affected to come to a resolution of their difficulties. [26365/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The responsibility for the registration of intercountry adoptions is a matter for the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI), an independent quasi judicial entity established under the Adoption Act 2010. It is a matter for the AAI to ensure that all adoptions are made in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption Act 2010. Accordingly, as Minister, it is not open to me to intervene in individual cases. The Authority has advised me that they have examined this matter comprehensively and taken legal advice in this regard. The Adoption Authority has determined that it does not have the statutory power to recognise certain adoptions of children born in Mexico or to register the adoption on the Register of Intercountry Adoptions. The matter is now the subject of legal proceedings in the High Court.

Children in Care

257. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if

he will provide in tabular form, by the name of institution and its location, the various institutions in which children detained under a special care order granted by the High Court have been placed in facilities outside the State since January 2013 up until the present date. [26366/13]

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

Child Care Reports

258. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if inspection reports of creches will be added to her website; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26413/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006, the inspection of preschools is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive (HSE). As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, driving the early childhood care and education quality agenda is one of my key objectives. I believe we can achieve this objective by taking a number of steps in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills, including the adaptation of the existing preschool inspection system to provide a more comprehensive and broader-based inspection regime for preschools, moving to a greater focus on outcomes for children. In support of this, a Joint Pilot Inspection of Early Years Services was carried out by Inspectors from the HSE and the Department of Education and Skills between September 2011 and May 2012. This pilot will inform the proactive approach being taken by my Department. I believe that it is important that inspection reports be made available publicly, and I have been consulting with the HSE with a view to ensuring that this happens as soon as possible. I would hope that HSE preschool inspection reports will be available on-line before September this year at the latest.

Departmental Budgets

259. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments her Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of those adjustments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26543/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): In the context of the forthcoming Budget, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has asked my Department to identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The identification of savings options should ensure that a sufficient range of proposals are made by all Departments to help the Government make well-informed choices about spending priorities and allocations. The scale of the adjustments for 2014 were set out in Part 1 of the Expenditure Report 2013, which was published in December 2012. Government will be making decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations and it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this time.

Youth Work Projects Funding

260. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will ensure that the organisations that are involved in youth work, for which funding is vital, and for which funding has already been cut by 30%, should not be subject to further and additional expenditure adjustments in light of a reduction of 10% forecast for 2014; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that if Big Brother, Big Sister programme, which is an extremely important youth mentoring programme, incurs further funding losses, it will eventually close, despite being an extremely cost-effective programme which is volunteer led; if she will ensure that no further cuts are implemented in 2014; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26584/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department provides a range of funding schemes, programmes and supports to the youth sector. Funding of some €53.498m is available in 2013 to support the provision of youth services and programmes to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. Targeted supports for disadvantaged, marginalised and at risk young people are provided through the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2 and Local Drugs Task Force Projects. These funding schemes support national and local youth work provision to some 400,000 young people and involve approximately 1,400 paid staff and 40,000 volunteers working in youth work services and communities throughout the country.

In 2013, my Department's Youth Affairs Unit will provide total funding to Foróige of €5.93 million.

Programme	Amount in 2013
Youth Service Grant Scheme	€2,651,154
Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund (1 and 2)	€1,195,283
Special Project for Youth	€2,083,572
Total	€5,930,009

This total does not include local youth clubs grants, funded by my Department, but allocated to local clubs by; and at the discretion of local VECs.

This total does not include funding provided to Foróige with respect to Garda youth diversion projects or funding from other state agencies such as the HSE.

The savings required under the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure in respect of 2013 amounted to €5.393m which equated to almost a 10% reduction on 2012 funding available for the provision of youth services. The savings required in 2014 in the youth budget under the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure amount to €2.976m. Having regard to the savings requirements identified in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure my Department has tried to be as equitable as possible in achieving these savings. In considering how best to manage within the reduced budgets available, organisations are being asked to consider the scope for reducing administration costs and overheads, if this is at all possible, in order to maintain the front line youth services for young people. I have met, and continue to meet with, many youth organisations and groups to try and see how we can work together to minimise the impact of these necessary savings in order to ensure that the provision of quality youth services to young people is sustained in these challenging times.

In 2011, Foróige, following an internal review of the organisation's wide range of provision for young people, reprioritised its areas of youth provision and programmes. This reprioritisation, which was proposed to my Department, enabled Foróige to strengthen their Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) Programme nationally. Foróige decided, with the permission of my De-

partment, to reallocate the funding provided by my Department from their Youth Information services to the Big Brother Big Sister Programme. Additional funding was also provided by my Department to Foróige for the Big Brother Big Sister Programme in 2012 and 2013. While I fully appreciate the value of the Big Brother Big Sister Programme and the challenges facing it in the current fiscal climate, given the savings required within my Department's budget under the CRE, I do not envisage any further scope for the provision of any further increase on the funding already provided to Foróige.

A comprehensive Value for Money and Policy Review of youth funding has been commenced in my Department and it is anticipated that the findings of this report will inform the future development of youth programmes and services. My Department is developing a new youth policy framework for publication later this year. The new youth policy framework will aim to enhance the provision of youth services and activities and it will, inter alia, promote co-ordination between government departments and youth sector organisations with a view to maximising the effectiveness of the State funding available to support services for young people in future years.

Health Services Issues

261. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a commitment to the long-term future of a school (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26557/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I am having enquiries made of the Health Service Executive in relation to the matter raised by the Deputy. I will be in further communication with the Deputy.

Health Services Issues

262. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a commitment to the long-term future of a school (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26558/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I am having enquiries made of the Health Service Executive in relation to the matter raised by the Deputy. I will be in further communication with the Deputy.

Hospital Staff

263. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his views on claims made by the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine of an expected significant worsening of the current, very precarious medical staffing levels in emergency departments here, that evidence from around the country currently indicates that staffing deficits will worsen significantly from July 2013 and that it is likely that many departments will have difficulty filling medical staff rosters with inevitable cuts in services and more prolonged waits for patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26287/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE is actively managing the recruitment process for the next rotation of Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors in order to ensure that as many as possible are recruited and that all critical service needs are met. (It should be noted that

Registrars in Emergency Medicine are in short supply internationally.) A number of separate recruitment processes are currently underway including:

- Filling by the Postgraduate Training Bodies of posts on training schemes;
- HSE Centralised Applications process;
- Local recruitment - which fills approximately 70% of service posts;
- External HSE funded initiatives, including a partnership arrangement with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan and recruitment in South Africa. These initiatives are focusing on key specialties including Emergency Medicine.

In addition, the HSE is taking steps to improve the working conditions of NCHDs, enhance retention and, in particular, achieve compliance with the European Working Time Directive by the end of 2014. In this context, the HSE is working intensively with hospitals on measures to progress compliance with the requirements of the Directive and to facilitate the early introduction of electronic time recording and rostering systems.

Hospital Services

264. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the status of catering services at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin; his views on whether there are plans to outsource the provision of catering services at Beaumont Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26288/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Tobacco Control Measures

265. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide the number of prosecutions initiated by the Office of Tobacco Control or the Health Service Executive under the Public Health Tobacco Acts, in tabular form, for each year since 2004. [26289/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Smoking is the greatest single cause of preventable illness and premature death in Ireland, killing over 5,200 people a year. Ireland's public health policy objective in relation to tobacco is to promote and subsequently move towards a tobacco free society. As this is a service matter, I have referred this question to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Equipment

266. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if the health insurance management system is currently live at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin. [26290/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am informed by the Health Service Executive that Claimsure is the Health Insurance System currently being used in Beaumont Hospital.

Cancer Screening Programme

267. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to remove the upper age limit for eligibility, which is currently 64 years of age, for testing under the national breast screening programme, BreastCheck. [26291/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The BreastCheck Programme provides free mammograms to all women aged 50-64. The Programme for Government includes the extension of BreastCheck to women in the 65-69 age group, in keeping with EU Guidelines on effective screening for breast cancer. The main priority for the HSE's National Cancer Screening Service (NCSS) at present is to maximise national uptake in the 50-64 year age cohort and it aims to extend the upper age range from 65 - 69 in 2014 in keeping with the Programme for Government. In the meantime women of any age who have concerns about breast cancer should seek the advice of their GP who will, if appropriate, refer them to the symptomatic breast services in one of the eight designated specialist cancer centres.

In addition, an Efficiency Review of the BreastCheck Screening Programme in order to prepare for the age extension of BreastCheck to women up to the age of 69, was published recently. The review, which was commissioned by my Department, makes a number of recommendations on how the screening process could be enhanced to increase the number screened. The NCSS has set up an internal working group to begin the planning and costing process for the extension of the age range. The group is reviewing all aspects including population growth, impact of higher rate of breast cancers in the older age range, resource requirements and implementation options. My Department will continue to work with the HSE to ensure that national priorities and Programme for Government commitments are met.

General Practitioner Services

268. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the existing legislation or guidelines that permits a general practitioner to levy a charge of €20 for the provision of a prescription; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26298/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): General Practitioners (GPs) who hold General Medical Services (GMS) contracts with the HSE must not seek or accept money from medical card or GP visit card holders in respect of routine treatment or for the provision of prescriptions. Consultation fees charged by general practitioners to private patients and to GMS patients outside the terms of the GMS contract are a matter of private contract between the clinicians and the patients. While the Minister for Health has no role in relation to such fees, it is expected that clinicians would have regard to the overall economic situation in setting their fees.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

269. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health if persons suffering from Ehler's Danlos syndrome are eligible for the treatment abroad scheme; if such treatment is available in both public and private hospitals abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26299/13]

270. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients with Ehler's Danlos syndrome who have travelled to foreign hospitals or clinics for specialist ser-

vices under the treatment abroad scheme each year for the past ten years, respectively; if he will provide details of where such treatment was accessed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26300/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 269 and 270 together.

The HSE operates a Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS), for persons entitled to treatment in another EU/EEA member state or Switzerland under EU Regulation 1408/71 as per the procedures set out in EU Regulations 574/72, and in accordance with Department of Health Guidelines. Within these governing EU Regulations and the Department of Health Guidelines, the TAS provides for the cost of approved treatments in another EU/EEA member state or Switzerland through the issue of Form E112 (IE). A decision is made on each application in accordance with this legislation and guidelines and on the basis of a review by clinical experts. The cost of the treatment is not a deciding factor when approving an application. The treatment must not be available within the State or not available within a time normally necessary for obtaining it.

The TAS allows for an Irish based medical consultant to refer a patient that is normally resident in Ireland for treatment, in a public hospital, in another EU/EEA member state or Switzerland, where the treatment in question meets the following criteria:

(a) The application to refer a patient abroad has been assessed and a determination given before that patient goes abroad.

(b) Following clinical assessment, the referring Consultant certifies the following:

- They recommend the patient be treated in another EU/EEA country or Switzerland;
- The treatment is medically necessary and will meet the patient's needs;
- The treatment is a proven form of medical treatment and is not experimental or test treatment;
- The treatment is in a recognised hospital or other institution and is under the control of a registered medical practitioner;
- The hospital outside the state will accept EU/EEA form E112 (IE).

and wish to confirm that applications for the Treatment Abroad Scheme are assessed on a case by case basis.

Applicants are eligible for the Scheme in general where they are referred abroad for a specified treatment that is not available in Ireland, which is a proven form of therapy, where the accepting facility abroad will accept Model Form E112 (IE). The referral must be from a Irish based consultant who is currently treating the patient in as a public patient. Patients can only be referred to the public facilities systems in another EU/EEA member state or Switzerland.

The information requested by the Deputy, concerning the number of patients with Ehler's Danlos syndrome who have travelled for treatment under the treatment abroad scheme is recorded over a six year period to date. However, in line with the HSE's policy in ensuring patient confidentiality; only data where instances of 5 cases or more are identified would be eligible for release. With this in mind, this information will not be released.

271. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the reason funding for the fair deal scheme is suspended; when it will reopen and the timeframe that he envisages approved applicants will have to wait for necessary funding. [26305/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Firstly, I would like to clarify that the HSE did not suspend accepting applications for the Nursing Homes Support Scheme. On 15 April 2013, the HSE temporarily suspended the chronological operation of the placement list for the Nursing Homes Support Scheme. Instead, funding under the Scheme was targeted at hospitals with the highest number of delayed discharges in an effort to alleviate pressure in Emergency Departments. The hospitals targeted were the Dublin Academic Teaching Hospitals (DATHs) and Cork University Hospital.

It is understood that the HSE re-commenced the chronological operation of the placement list with effect from 9 May 2013. This ensures that funding is available to people in the community, people in nursing homes and people in all acute hospitals. The latest information provided to the Department shows that there are 873 people awaiting funding and that the average time spent awaiting funding is 49 days.

Mobility Allowance Decision

272. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on plans for a replacement for the motorised transport and mobility grants for disabled persons, following the recent decision to close the existing schemes because they were operating unlawfully. [26309/13]

282. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health further to the abolition of the mobility allowance and the motorised transport grant, if he will ensure that there is an immediate way of supporting the persons who are affected by this basic right, which is to be mobile and which at present is being jeopardised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26410/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 272 and 282 together.

Following detailed consideration arising from the position of the Ombudsman regarding the legality of the mobility allowance and motorised transport grant schemes, the Government decided in February that the schemes could no longer continue and that an alternative must be devised. An independently chaired Review Group is seeking solutions which will not run counter to the Equal Status Acts. The Review Group's interim report regarding the immediate issue of the closure of the schemes is now under consideration by Government. A final report looking at the wider issue of general transport for people with disabilities will be submitted by the Review Group in June.

At this stage, I am not in a position to pre-empt any decision Government may make. However, I can assure the Deputies that the Government is aware of the needs of those relying on these supports and will take all of this into consideration when making a decision on future arrangements.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

273. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to include Ad-

dison's disease as one of the qualifying medical conditions under the long-term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26315/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Long Term Illness scheme. Under the Drug Payment Scheme, no individual or family pays more than €144 per calendar month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines. The scheme significantly reduces the cost burden for families and individuals incurring ongoing expenditure on medicines. In addition, people who cannot, without undue hardship, arrange for the provision of medical services for themselves and their dependants may be entitled to a medical card. In the assessment process, the Health Service Executive can take into account medical costs incurred by an individual or a family. Those who are not eligible for a medical card may still be able to avail of a GP visit card, which covers the cost of GP consultations.

Mental Health Services Provision

274. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Health the facilities in place, for those diagnosed with mental health problems including Asperger's syndrome, for those between 16 and 18 years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26329/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Service Executive provides a range of community based and in-patient mental health services to children and adolescents, informed by A Vision for Change and funding prioritised by the Government for new service developments now planned or underway. On-going initiatives include increasing child and adolescent in-patient bed provision nationally from 39 to 66 beds by the end of this year, with further expansion due in 2014. Also, 150 additional posts were allocated for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams in 2012, and a further 80 posts for this purpose in 2013. A significant number of these posts have been filled, and the HSE is progressing recruitment of the remaining number as a matter of priority.

In general, up to now, children were admitted to child appropriate centres or, in the absence for whatever reason of such facilities, for older children, the latter were admitted to adult units if this was the only viable care option. The provision of additional bed capacity in recent times reflects, for children 16 -18 years reflects an almost 50% decrease in admission of children to adult units since 2008.

Under Mental Health Commission guidelines, admission of 17-18 year olds to adult units is permitted in circumstances where a child and adolescent bed is not available, and where admission to such a bed is determined to be in the best interest of the young person. Where admission to an adult unit is required, liaison between the relevant community team, the adult team and the in-patient unit is maintained to ensure the best possible outcomes for the young person concerned. It should be noted also that, in 2012, the HSE finalised "Access Protocols for 16 and 17 year olds to Mental Health Services", which came into effect from 1 January this year. In an effort to ensure that children are treated in an age appropriate manner, the new protocols provide that from 1 January, 2013, CAMHS accept referrals of all new cases of children up to their 17th birthday, and from 1 January 2014 referrals will be accepted for all new cases up to age 18.

I have asked the HSE to provide a detailed reply to the Deputy in relation to mental health facilities, as raised in this question, and also to reply in respect of services provided by the Executive concerning Asperger's Syndrome.

Home Help Service Provision

275. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will advise on the rights of home help care companies that do not want to amalgamate and are being forced to do so by the Health Service Executive; the impact on service level agreements; and if they can be compelled to do so by the HSE. [26338/13]

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.

Health Services Staff Issues

276. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff required to be on duty at any one time in each acute psychiatric facility in the Health Service Executive west region; the grades of those staff; the acceptable staff to patient ratio for each of those facilities; if there are staff shortages in any facility; if he is satisfied that the staffing levels currently available in each facility are sufficient; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26341/13]

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

Nursing Staff Provision

277. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether there are adequate nursing staff employed within acute psychiatric facilities across the country; the vacancies which currently exist; the steps he is taking, if any, to ensure the safety of staff employed in such facilities where there may be staff shortages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26342/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The HSE National Service Plan sets out the quantum and type of health services to be provided in 2013 within the overall level of funding provided. Subject to overall parameters set by Government, the HSE has the responsibility for determining the composition of its staffing complement, including nursing. The Government has decided that the numbers employed across the public service must be reduced in order to meet its fiscal and budgetary targets. The health sector must make its contribution to that reduction. This policy requires that by the end of 2013, the health service achieves a workforce of 98,955 whole time equivalents (WTEs).

The Croke Park Agreement has been crucial to the health service's ability to manage through the very difficult circumstances of recent years. The flexibility and adaptability shown by staff has meant that even with reducing staff numbers, service levels have largely been maintained. Where critical service needs are concerned, limited recruitment of key staff has taken place.

The Deputy will be aware that there has been significant investment in mental health services in both 2012 and 2013 with an additional €35 million provided in each of these years. While this funding was provided primarily to enhance community mental health services in line with *A Vision for Change*, the HSE, in 2012, converted 31 of the posts originally intended for community mental health teams in the Dublin Mid-Leinster region to nursing posts in acute inpatient mental health services in the same region. Some of the funding provided in 2013 will be used to fund nursing posts in Emergency Departments to implement the Clinical Programme in Self Harm.

Issues relating to quality and safety of all services, including mental health services are kept under regular review by the Department of Health and the HSE and as an employer the HSE is committed to ensuring that appropriate systems, processes and resources are in place to ensure the safety, health and welfare of staff, particularly those staff affected by their activities at work.

The specific details asked by the Deputy in the question are operational matters for the HSE. Accordingly, I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

278. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the bed capacity of each psychiatric facility in the Health Service Executive west region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26343/13]

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

General Practitioner Services

279. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health when free general practitioner care as outlined in the programme for Government will be introduced; the timeframe for same; the illnesses or disabilities to be covered under the new provision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26347/13]

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.

On examining the progress made in the universal GP care plan, it has become clear 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, with 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.

To conclude, far from abandoning its commitment to universal GP care, this Government is determined to expedite the implementation of a national GP service for the entire population, something to which no previous Government has ever aspired.

Hospital Waiting Lists

280. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny will receive an appointment for hip replacement surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26392/13]

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.

Counselling Services

281. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath is entitled to free counselling and support services. [26399/13]

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

Question No. 282 answered with Question No. 272.

Cancer Screening Programme

283. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason women, who may be in danger of developing breast cancer, have to wait 18 months for a proper diagnosis in many instances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26411/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Breast cancer is the most common invasive cancer diagnosed in women in Ireland. The lifetime risk of developing breast cancer is 10% to 11% for the general population. Five to ten per cent of all breast cancers are explained by the presence of BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 gene mutations, which increases the lifetime risk to 60% to 80%.

The HSE's National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) established a National Hereditary Cancer Programme in 2011 with the National Centre for Medical Genetics in Crumlin Hospital. There are two groups of women involved – those who have been diagnosed with cancer and those who have a family member who has been found to carry a gene mutation.

The NCCP has launched cancer genetic clinics in St James's and the Mater Hospitals in 2011 and 2012 respectively, with the addition of a new service in Cork University Hospital in 2013. The programme is primarily focussed on patients who have hereditary breast, ovarian and bowel cancer.

This has led to a 30% increase in the number of patients seen and assessed. In 2012 the clinics in St James's and the Mater Hospitals have assessed and tested almost 200 women (with breast or ovarian cancer) for the BRCA gene mutation. This represents over a 100% increase in the number of women tested nationally, compared with 2011.

The NCCP has confirmed that there are waiting times for genetic testing for patients with suspected hereditary cancer mutations. This delay relates mainly to the need for genetic counselling prior to being tested, in order that women are fully informed of the implications of a positive test result. It is inappropriate to have the test without counselling.

The NCCP and the National Centre for Medical Genetics are continuing to work to ensure that the service is expanded to meet national needs. This improvement in access to counselling and genetic testing will reduce the current waiting times.

The NCCP will also work to implement the recommendations of the recent HIQA Report on Breast Cancer Surveillance, which outlined the potential benefits of a standardised surveillance programme for women aged less than 50 years at elevated risk of breast cancer due to a genetic predisposition or a strong family history.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

284. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will receive confirmation of funding under the nursing home support scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26418/13]

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

Medical Card Drugs

285. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding medication not covered under the medical card in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [26427/13]

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

Health Services Issues

286. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health if he will request an immediate audit of staffing and services at a unit (details supplied) in view of recent incidents involving both staff and patients that give rise to serious concern; the steps that have been taken following these incidents to ensure both the safety of staff and patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26446/13]

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

Accident and Emergency Departments Closures

287. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views regarding the proposed closure of the accident and emergency unit at Bantry Hospital, County Cork, from 8 p.m. until 8 a.m.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26469/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Dental Services Provision

288. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason a dentist is only available on Mondays and Tuesdays at Kerry General Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26471/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Medical Card Numbers

289. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical cards issued to persons by county in 2012. [26488/13]

290. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioner cards issued to persons by county in 2012. [26489/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 289 and 290 together.

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.

Health Services Access

291. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which diagnostic and support services are being made available to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26517/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Card Reviews

292. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a medical card review will be concluded and updated in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26532/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

Departmental Budgets

293. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of those adjustments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26550/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In the context of the forthcoming Budget, the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform has asked my Department to identify savings which will feed into the expenditure decisions by Government for the Estimates 2014 and the setting of future Ministerial ceilings. The identification of savings options should ensure that a sufficient range of proposals are made by all Departments to help the Government make well-informed choices about spending priorities and allocations. The scale of the adjustments for 2014 were set out in part 1 of the Expenditure Report 2013, which was published in December 2012. Government will be making decisions on the future ceilings as part of the forthcoming budgetary deliberations.

Ambulance Service Provision

294. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Health if any of the new intermediary care vehicles will be located in the east Cork area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26563/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): A significant reform programme has been underway in recent years in pre-hospital care services, to ensure a clinically driven, nationally

co-ordinated system, supported by improved technology. The programme involves a number of measures, including the Performance Improvement Action Plan, development of the intermediate care service (ICS), the trial emergency aeromedical service (EAS), and the NAS Control Centre Reconfiguration Project.

In July 2012, the HSE National Ambulance Service commenced developing non-emergency transport, through a national intermediate care service (ICS), which is key to resolving bed and clinical management pressures. ICS will allow for safe, planned and timely clinical transfers of inpatients to the most appropriate facility, depending on their acuity and clinical needs. This will allow for beds to be made available for higher acuity admissions through emergency departments. ICS will also release emergency resources for emergency functions, for improved response times and performances in pre-hospital care. To date, ICS has been implemented in Cavan, Castleblayney, South County Dublin, Letterkenny, Sligo, Galway, Limerick, Roscommon, Mallow and Bantry. Supported by the 2013 National Service Plan, the NAS intends to expand ICS to Waterford, Cork Tralee, Castlebar and Drogheda and to increase services in Dublin and Galway during 2013. In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Hospital Appointment Delays

295. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment will be brought forward in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26574/13]

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 Procedures

296. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Health if he will address the issues regarding the delay in having neurosurgery carried out at Cork University Hospital due to the neurological service having had 45% of its routine operating list cut since January 2012; if he will address the issue of more than 12 patients waiting more than nine months for neurological surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26575/13]

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

297. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health the steps he will take to have a person (details supplied) in County Longford admitted to Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26582/13]

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.

Primary Care Reimbursement Service Payments

298. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health the reason arrears due to a medical practice (details supplied) in County Limerick have not yet been paid pertaining to secretarial subsidies owed since 2009 and nursing subsidy due since 2012; the reason general practitioners are being penalised while providing medical services to the public under the PCR services; when the arrears payments will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26586/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Under the General Medical Services (GMS) Contract, provision is made for the payment of subsidies towards the cost of employing practice nurses, secretaries and managers. The current rates of payments are set out in the Health Professionals (Reduction of Payments to General Practitioners) Regulations 2010 (S.I. 638/2010). The HSE’s Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) is responsible for the payment of fees and allowances to general practitioners (GPs) who are contracted by the HSE to provide services under the GMS Scheme, therefore, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy in relation to this matter.

Tourism Capital Investment Programme

299. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on the strategic investments his Department plans to make under the tourism capital investment programme; and if he will outline the way the funding provided for this programme will be spent. [26292/13]

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.

Taxi Regulations

300. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason people who sit the SPSV knowledge test are not being provided with information on the specifics of their results in terms of area and route knowledge therefore making it difficult to improve

on their weak points. [26420/13]

301. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider introducing taxi licences specific to certain large urban and suburban areas to recognise the difference between the knowledge requirements for drivers in areas (details supplied). [26421/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 300 and 301 together.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for the regulation of the taxi industry under the provisions of the Public Transport Regulation Act, 2009, including the development and administration of the Skills Development Test. Your correspondence has been forwarded to the NTA for direct reply. If you do not receive a response within ten working days please notify my private Office.

Rural Transport Programme Issues

302. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the rural transport scheme. [26466/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): Local Development Companies (LDCs) are known by a number of different names nationwide, including Local Area Partnerships, LEADER Partnerships, Integrated Development Companies as well as Local Development Companies. The Programme is administered by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. The future of the LDCs is a matter for that Department.

An overall budget of €9.133 million has been allocated by the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport to the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) for 2013, representing a small decrease on the 2012 allocation of €9.77 million, at a difficult time financially. My aim is to strengthen the RTP by ensuring a more efficient delivery structure by maximising integration with other state transport services and by making the programme a sustainable part of the public transport system. This is in line with the Programme for Government commitment to maintain and extend the RTP with other local transport services. To this end national responsibility for local and rural transport services integration, including the RTP, was assigned to the National Transport Authority (NTA) with effect from 1 April 2012, putting such services in a broader transport context.

I am well aware of the very valuable work done by RTP Groups in identifying and delivering the transport needs of their local community. However, given that resources are limited and that the Value for Money and Policy Review of the RTP, published last year recommended organisational restructuring to achieve efficiencies and the better alignment of the 35 RTP groups with local authorities, it is necessary that the current delivery mechanisms and structures are examined and revised. Current structures are not sustainable if the required efficiencies and savings are to be achieved. If these are not achieved then with the limited resources available services will decline. Work has been underway over the last six months to determine the optimal structure for the delivery of rural transport from an efficiency and service perspective. This has involved consultations with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, the County and City Managers Association and the Rural Transport Network.

I have not as yet taken any decisions on restructuring. I am awaiting proposals from the NTA when they have concluded their deliberations and discussions but I am hopeful to 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 administration costs. I will ensure that any future structure for the RTP will be based on community input, local flexibility and involving the voluntary sector. Rural Transport by its nature is community-based and this will remain under any new structure.

Departmental Budgets

303. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has received any indicative figure from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the fiscal adjustments his Department will be asked to make in 2014 and 2015; the size of those adjustments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26555/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Expenditure Report 2013 published by the Department of Expenditure and Reform in the context of Budget 2013 sets out the target for savings €56m in 2014 in gross current expenditure. In preparation for the 2014 Estimates and Budgetary processes, my Department is, at the request of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, seeking to identify measures that could yield additional savings in gross current expenditure for 2015 and 2016. It will be a matter for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to publish the outcome of these deliberative processes in due course.

Road Projects Status

304. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding a road project (details supplied) and if the project will be given precedence under any European stimulus project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26559/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. The route is recommended for inclusion in the Trans European Comprehensive Road Network along with a number of other routes across the country. No specific funding stream is available for works on these routes. The final decision on the inclusion, or otherwise, of specific routes has not yet been reached.

As mentioned above, responsibility for the sequencing of any works on TENS route, will rest with the NRA and the relevant local authority. Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

