

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 12, inclusive, answered orally.

Employee Shareholding Scheme

13. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on the ESB Employee Share Option Trust; its future viability; its impact on the strategic direction of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35046/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): An Employee Share Ownership Plan (ESOP) was put in place in the ESB in 2001. The ESOP was an element of the Cost and Competitiveness Review (CCR) agreed between the Government, ESB Management and ESB Group of Unions in 1996. Under the CCR, 5% of the shares in ESB were made available to employees, without actual cash transfer from the employees in return for specific, substantial, verifiable, future changes to be delivered.

The terms of the ESB ESOP are in line with Government policy and Revenue rules on Employee Share Ownership Plans, which also applies to ESOPs in other semi-state companies. Under the terms upon which the ESOP was established, ESB has no ability or rights to exert control over the assets or management of the trustee company, which is chaired by an independent professional trustee director, with two trustee directors representing the company and four trustee directors representing ESB employees.

Responsibility for the management and operation of the ESB Employee Share Option Programme (ESB ESOP) therefore rests with the ESB ESOP Trustees (ESOT) and I have no role or function in the matter.

An ESOP is designed as a tax efficient mechanism to enable company employees to acquire shares in that company or its parent company. In acquiring shares, this mechanism enables employees to share in the success of the company, in terms of aligning their goals with those of the company and for their shareholding to have a positive impact on the company and its future. Alignment of objectives is particularly important in the current climate as ESB seeks to address several difficult challenges while also seeking to continue to innovate and invest for the future.

Broadband Services Speeds

14. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a breakdown of the average broadband speed by county; and if he

will make a statement on the matter. [35022/13]

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

The Commission for Communications Regulation, ComReg, has established a callcosts website which provides information to the public on the alternative broadband services marketed by competing service providers on a county by county basis. ComReg does not publish averages of the available broadband speeds.

The ESRI published a working paper last year, based on the callcosts data, which compared median broadband speeds marketed by county across Ireland. The report, concluded that the number of broadband plans, download speeds and prices were relatively comparable across all counties in Ireland, whilst concluding that there were variations in speed within counties, especially in more rural areas of the country.

Since the publication of the ESRI report, investments by the commercial sector are under-way in cable, fixed line and mobile high speed broadband services, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas.

The variation in access to higher broadband speeds is therefore more likely to be a consequence of residing in an urban, suburban or rural area rather than any assessment of average or median broadband speeds on a county basis.

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 are available to all of our citizens and businesses. For rural areas in particular this will mean much higher speeds.

During the preparation of the National Broadband Plan, the commercial market operators indicated that they expect to provide high speed broadband services to 50% of the population by 2015. In tandem with these commercial developments, intensive work is underway in my Department to progress a State-led investment to secure countrywide access to next generation broadband services by ensuring high speed broadband is accessible in the less densely populated areas.

My officials have commenced a comprehensive mapping exercise of the current and anticipated investment by the commercial sector to identify where the market is expected to succeed and, more importantly, to identify those areas of the country where the competitive market will not deliver high speed services.

The results of this mapping exercise will identify the level of Government intervention that may be required and the areas that need to be targeted in the State-led investment so as to deliver on the target for high speed broadband services access for to all.

Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, we are committed to increasing the availability of next generation speeds significantly, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in a digitally enabled society.

Sugar Industry

15. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on the potential to develop bioenergy from the sugar beet industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35026/13]

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

The Government is committed to increasing renewable energy in the electricity, transport and heating sectors in order to meet the binding target of 16% of all energy to come from renewable sources as set out in the EU Renewable Energy Directive.

Currently, Ireland imports around 90% of its fuel to meet demand at a cost of approximately €6bn per annum. Developing indigenous renewable sources of energy, including bioenergy, will help Ireland reduce its dependence on these imports.

Just over 5% of sugar beet production in the EU is consumed in the EU as biofuel. The development of any plant in Ireland for the production of bioenergy from sugar beet would be a matter for commercial decision by interested parties.

In this regard, I understand that there are consortia which have been examining the feasibility of restarting the production of sugar from sugar beet with a view to also producing bioethanol which can be used as a biofuel in the transport sector. I also understand that the absence of a sugar quota for Ireland was seen as a stumbling block to the proposed projects. However, recently, agreement was secured by the EU Council of Agriculture Ministers to abolish the sugar quota regime by 30 September 2017, and I understand this development has been welcomed by those who are interested in seeking to re-establish a sugar industry here.

The Biofuel Obligation Scheme was introduced in July 2010 as the primary means to meet the target of 10% renewable energy in transport by 2020. The scheme works by obligating large road transport fuel suppliers to bring a certain amount of biofuels to the market. The current obligation is 6% by volume, which I increased from 4% at the beginning of this year and which will be increased further in the coming years. This will see Ireland's biofuel market grow even further by 2020 and will continue to create opportunities for indigenous industry to produce biofuels here in Ireland.

Alternative Energy Projects

16. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the way his Department can assist the development of biomass and wave energy power stations here; if any actions are planned by his Department in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35061/13]

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

The REFIT scheme for biomass (REFIT3), which was opened in February 2012, is designed to incentivise the addition of 310 MW of renewable electricity capacity to the Irish electricity grid. The technologies being supported include anaerobic digestion and biomass combined heat and power. REFIT3 also provides incentives for co-firing of biomass in peat powered generation plants.

The scheme operates by guaranteeing a minimum price for renewable electricity generated and sent to the grid over a 15 year period. The REFIT schemes are funded through the Public Service Obligation (PSO) levy which is paid for by all electricity consumers. Separate to the above, public funding has been allocated to the wave and tidal energy sector in recent years. This sector is still at the research and development phase and is not yet commercially viable. However, Ireland has some of the best ocean energy resources in Europe. Much work has been done across Government to identify the potential of this sector. The Strategy for Renewable Energy, the Research Prioritisation Report and 'Harnessing our Ocean Wealth', the Government's integrated Marine Plan for Ireland, all identify Ireland's potential to become an interna-

tional leader in research, development and innovation for ocean energy.

A range of supports have been deployed since 2009 in support of wave and tidal development. The cumulative amount of expenditure on Ocean Energy in the period 2009 – 2013, including the estimated 2013 allocation, is almost 21 million euro.

The Ocean Energy Development Unit in the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has been taking forward the development of the sector through administration of a Prototype Development Fund of grants for industry, aimed at supporting industry led development and deployment of ocean energy devices and systems. SEAI is currently holding a call for expressions of interest and applications for this fund.

SEAI has been allocated funding by my Department to progress development of the grid connected wave test site – known as the Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site or AMETS – off County Mayo. In April this year I launched a call for expressions of interest from organisations wishing to use AMETS at the SEAI Energy Show. The call remains open with SEAI, and I understand the first memorandum of understanding has already been signed by the SEAI with an interested company.

Other supports for the sector include support for Irish Maritime Energy Research Cluster (IMERC), which is seeing the upgrading of the Beaufort Laboratory as part of the IMERC campus at Ringaskiddy in Cork. This work, which is being part-funded by my Department and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, will see a re-housing of the wave tank facility and will bring together researchers in the area currently based in the Hydraulics and Maritime Research Centre (HMRC) and the Coastal and Marine Research Centre (CMRC), as part of a broader campus approach with the Naval College, UCC and Cork Institute of Technology.

All of these developments are critical to ensure that Ireland provides the world class research and deployment infrastructure necessary to support the future development of the ocean energy sector, and realise the potential it holds for sustainable economic growth and job creation, not least in our coastal communities which are among those areas most in need of economic stimulus.

Finally, my Department is currently finalising an Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan. The process began with the carrying out of a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Informed by the findings of the SEA, the OREDP will identify how best to coordinate action across the environmental, energy and economic development policy areas in order to best facilitate the realisation of Ireland's abundant ocean energy potential.

Alternative Energy Projects

17. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will report on the progress and or status of the smaller Irish wave energy developers (details supplied), all of whom received grant aid from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's ocean energy development unit. [34275/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I am advised by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) that the wave energy developers to which the Deputy refers have all received payment in respect of funding approved and allocated for their projects with the exception of one, which was deemed to be of insufficient technical merit and, therefore, was not approved for funding. All of the approved projects were completed between 2009 and 2012. I understand that, based on their contacts with the SEAI, 5 of the 7 companies listed remain active in the area of wave energy research and development.

Wind Energy Guidelines

18. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to seek the publication of renewed wind energy guidelines; if he is satisfied with the current planning process for wind farms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35052/13]

40. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in the context of proposed wind generation of electricity, the extent to which it is proposed to address the concerns of persons living in the vicinity of such wind farms; if guidelines have been set down regarding minimum distances from homes, schools or buildings accommodating persons; if regard will be had for best international practice of the highest possible safety standards in deciding on the location of such installations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34972/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Question Nos. 18 and 40 together.

The Wind Energy Planning Guidelines were developed by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in 2006 to offer advice to planning authorities with regard to their preparation of Development Plans and their consideration of applications for planning permission from wind farm developers. The Guidelines were issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, which requires both planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála to have regard to these guidelines in the performance of their functions.

However, since 2006 there have been a number of new developments: wind turbine technologies have evolved; experience has been gained from applying the current guidelines; new research has been undertaken internationally on wind turbine noise; and the EU has set legally binding targets for renewable energy for Member States by 2020. Ireland must achieve 16% of all energy from renewable sources by 2020. In order to achieve this, Ireland is committed to ensuring that 40% of electricity is generated from renewable sources by 2020.

In light of the above, and in order to ensure that Ireland continues to meet its renewable energy targets, while at the same time ensuring that wind energy does not have negative impacts on local communities, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government - in conjunction with my Department and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland - is undertaking a targeted review of certain aspects of the existing Wind Energy Planning Guidelines. This review will examine the manner in which the Guidelines address key issues such as noise (including separation distance) and shadow flicker. It is expected that revised guidelines will be published for consultation later this year, with a view to the finalisation of the new guidelines in the first half of 2014.

The development and operation of a wind farm in Ireland requires planning permission from the relevant planning authority. The issue of planning permission is a matter between the developer of a wind farm and the relevant planning authority, subject to the Planning Acts, which include requirements for public consultation. I do not have a role with regard to the permitting of wind farms.

Broadband Services Provision

19. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if, in the wake of recent announcements, it is expected that the highest, quality

and speed of broadband service is likely to become available in the short and medium term in all areas throughout the country; the extent to which the quality of services is likely to compare with the best available throughout Europe and worldwide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34973/13]

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

The Digital Agenda for Europe set out specific targets for the achievement of high speed broadband services across all Member States. Ireland'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 30Mbps are available to all of our citizens and businesses 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.

The Plan aims to deliver high speed broadband to all parts of Ireland through two principal means:

(a) by providing a policy and regulatory framework that assists in accelerating and incentivising commercial investment, and

(b) by providing a State-led investment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest.

Since the publication of the Plan, investments by the commercial sector are underway in both fixed line and wireless high speed broadband services, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas. There is evidence that industry is investing beyond the targets to which they committed in the Plan with investments of up to €1bn underway. Some of the key developments in the short and medium term are as follows:

- Eircom launched its next generation broadband services on 16th May last, with speeds of up to 70Mbps, immediately available to over 300,000 premises. By the end of this year, Eircom aims to reach more than 600,000 homes and businesses. It has a target to pass 1.2m premises by June 2015;
- UPC is continuing with its investment in the cable network, which should see 750,000 homes able to access services at data speeds of at least 150Mbps by 2015;
- Other fixed operators also continue to invest in Local Loop Unbundling (LLU). BT Ireland now supplies broadband access to both Vodafone and Sky Ireland, and along with other operators, is also investing in fixed infrastructure;
- Mobile wireless operators are making plans for the rollout of 4G services later this year. The operators are obliged, under the terms of the licences, to cover 70% of the population.
- ESB is currently considering the prospect of utilising its distribution network to rollout fibre broadband services.

In tandem with these commercial developments, intensive work is underway in my Department to progress a State-led investment to secure the countrywide introduction of next generation broadband access. The National Broadband Plan commits the Government to investing with the private sector to deliver high speed services to areas, which are not commercially viable and will not be provided by the market alone.

In order to progress the State-led investment, a full procurement process must be designed and EU State Aids approval must be obtained. My Department has recently launched a formal mapping exercise, the results of which will inform the level of Government interaction that may be required and the areas that need to be targeted in the State-led investment so as to deliver on the targets envisaged in the National Broadband Plan.

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.

It is the case, in Europe and elsewhere that all countries are seeking solutions to the challenge of rolling out quality broadband services. A study published by the EU Commission in June last, based on data gathered in March 2012, compares marketed headline broadband speeds to the speeds experienced by users over cable, fibre and fixed lines in the EU 28, Iceland and Norway, found that the average download speed accessed in Ireland was above the EU average of 19.47 Mbps or 74% of marketed speeds. It is difficult however, to draw definitive conclusions on inter-country comparisons because of the range of variables in identifying actual, marketed speeds and locations.

I can however, assure the Deputy that the Government is committed to increasing the availability countrywide of quality next generation broadband services through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan. This will ensure that citizens or businesses, wherever they are located, can avail of a broadband connection which meets their needs to interact effectively with society and business in a global digital environment.

Electricity Transmission Network

20. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the barriers that remain in the integration of the Irish electrical grid with the rest of the European grid; the actions he will take to ensure the full integration of the Irish grid with the rest of the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35039/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The interconnected power systems of Ireland and Northern Ireland form a single synchronous power system and all electricity generated on the island is traded in the Single Electricity Market (SEM), the wholesale electricity market for the island of Ireland, regulated jointly by the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) and its counterpart in Belfast, the Utility Regulator (UR). The Irish system is not physically connected to the synchronous system of continental Europe. It is connected to electricity system of Great Britain system via two Direct Current (DC) interconnectors, the Moyle Interconnector and the East-West Electricity Interconnector (EWIC).

The Moyle subsea Interconnector links the electricity grids of Northern Ireland and Scotland. It went into commercial operation in 2002 and has a capacity of 500 Mega Watts (MW). EWIC links the electricity grids of Ireland and Great Britain. It has a capacity of 500 MW, and therefore doubled Ireland and Northern Ireland's electricity interconnection with Great Britain when it went live in 2012. The two interconnectors allow market participants to trade electricity between the SEM on the island of Ireland and the British Electricity Trading and Transmission Arrangements (BETTA) market in Great Britain. EWIC's increasing of this island's interconnector capacity greatly enhances our ability to trade electricity with our neighbours and accelerates the integration of Ireland with other electricity systems.

Further interconnection across the entirety of the European Union is necessary to achieve the goal of completing the Internal Market for Energy in Europe. The European Commission estimates that, by 2020, around €200 billion will be needed for the construction of gas pipelines and electricity grids, of which €140 billion will be required for high-voltage electricity transmission systems, storage and smart grid applications.

At the European Council of 22nd May last, it was noted that significant investments in new

and intelligent energy infrastructure are needed to secure the uninterrupted supply of energy at affordable prices and that the financing for such investments should primarily come from the market. All stakeholders in the European energy system, including governments, regulators, energy industry and energy consumers, as well as the Europe Union's institutions such as the Commission, have parts to play in ensuring the required investment is achieved.

In this context, the implementation of EU Regulation 347/2013 on Guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure, known as the Energy Infrastructure Package, should assist in securing that investment. The Regulation gives priority to twelve strategic trans-European energy corridors and areas. It provides for the identification of projects of common interest necessary to implement them.

The Commission will adopt the first Union-wide list of projects of common interest on the basis of the regional lists by 30 September 2013. Subsequently, the Union list will be drawn up every two years. Irish project promoters have a number of candidate projects on the list. Some of them, if developed and implemented, will further facilitate increased cross-border electricity interconnection and integration of the Irish grid with the rest of the EU.

Community Radio Stations Funding

21. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide funding to non-profit community radio stations from the new broadcasting charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35030/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): In terms of public funding, the Broadcasting Funding Scheme represents an already significant source of support for non-profit community radio stations. This Scheme is currently funded by way of a set proportion of net television licence fee receipts and I do not expect this position to change with the introduction of the new Public Service Broadcasting Charge.

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) is assigned responsibility under Part 10 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 for the administration of the Broadcasting Funding Scheme which aims, inter alia, to develop local and community broadcasting by providing funding for the provision of high quality, diverse and innovative programming by community broadcasters.

In addition, the BAI operates the Community Broadcasting Support Scheme, which is a development fund that allows community radio stations to conduct evaluations of their activities. The scheme provides funding for stations to carry out key review work to assist with their overall performance and to build capacity.

Community radio stations in Ireland also receive funding from various other sources, including funds derived from donations, advertising and sponsorship.

Prize Bonds

22. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his attention has been drawn to the concerns expressed by postmasters over the changes to the anti-money laundering requirements for prize bonds purchased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35063/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I received correspondence from the Irish Postmasters' Union in which they outlined their con-

cerns regarding the application of anti money laundering requirements in respect of the purchase of prize bonds. I understand my colleague the Minister for Finance is exploring with the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) and the Minister for Justice and Equality whether or not exemptions available under EU Directives may be applied to small value purchases of prize bonds facilitated on behalf of the State by An Post and the Prize Bond Company. I have written to the Minister for Finance to indicate my support for this course of action. I have also written to the Irish Postmasters' Union and informed them of my position in this regard.

National Gas Grid

23. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 67 and 68 of 11 June 2013, his views on whether any lapse in standards for the depth of a high pressure gas main at a depth of 1.2 m would be a very serious matter and one which should be of concern to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35079/13]

29. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will request Bord Gáis Éireann to explain why it is placing a high pressure gas main at a depth of 1.2 m along main residential areas in Dublin city; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35078/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 23 and 29 together.

The Deputy will be aware from my replies to previous Parliamentary Questions raised by him on this issue that this is an operational matter for Bord Gáis Éireann (BGE). The company operates in accordance with the safety framework established by the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER), which has statutory responsibility for gas safety. In addition, in accordance with section 39A of the Gas Act 1976, as amended, the CER has responsibility for the assessment of applications to construct transmission pipelines. I have no function in these operational matters.

BGE owns and operates the national transmission and distribution gas network. BGE and the CER have advised that all transmission pipelines, including those in residential areas, are designed, constructed, tested, operated and maintained in accordance with Irish Standard 328:2003, Code of Practice for Gas Transmission Pipelines and Pipeline Installations.

I understand that pipelines in suburban and urban areas are constructed using high grade steel pipe and laid in accordance with Irish Standard 323:2003. In order to ensure the safety of the pipeline a desired minimum level of cover of 1.2 metres is specified throughout. However, it is recognised in the standard that this will not be possible in some circumstances over short sections, for example where existing major services are located and cannot be moved. In these cases, additional pipeline protection measures are specified, such as concrete impact protection, are put in place in accordance with Irish Standard 328:2003. All transmission pipelines must be installed fully in accordance with the requirements of the standard with no breaches or lapses of the standard considered acceptable. Once commissioned, a scheduled routine maintenance and inspection programme is applied to all pipelines.

Following completion of construction, the consent of the CER is required before BGE may operate the pipeline. This consent is subject to a review of all relevant data and test records by a CER commissioned independent consultant. Safety is BGE's top priority and the company is committed to ongoing development and maintenance of the gas networks and systems to ensure

safety and to deliver continuous safety improvement and performance. I have every confidence in BGE's priority commitment to safety.

I understand the Deputy is referring to the Santry to East Wall gas pipeline. In regard to that pipeline, the consent of the CER to BGE's undertaking of these works was informed by the advice of independent consultants engaged by the CER. This advice dealt with matters such as the pipeline's technical compliance with design requirements, including minimum depth specifications, and compliance with the relevant Irish Standard 328:2003.

National Gas Grid

24. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on the Western Development Commission paper, *Why Invest in Gas*, which outlines the clear benefit of extending the natural gas distribution network to the north west; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34751/13]

41. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans for the extension of the gas network in the north west; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35066/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 24 and 41 together.

The Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) is the statutory, independent body, charged with the assessment and licensing of prospective operators seeking to develop and operate a gas distribution system within the State. I have no direct statutory function in relation to the connection of towns to the gas network.

The CER, in 2006, approved a network connections policy which enabled reassessment of the feasibility of connecting certain towns to the gas network. In order for any town to be connected to the gas network, certain economic criteria need to be satisfied as a prerequisite. The policy allows for the appraisal of a town either on its own or as part of a regional group of towns.

This policy framework provides that, over a certain period, the costs of connecting a town, or group of towns, to the network are recouped through the actual economic consumption of gas and the associated tariffs. Uneconomic projects would increase costs for all energy consumers.

Under the CER's policy framework, Bord Gáis Networks, and latterly Gaslink, carried out a comprehensive review of towns not connected to the national gas network. Gaslink published its *New Towns Analysis Phase 3* report in 2010.

The study included a review of the feasibility of connecting 11 towns in the West and North West region which are the focus of the Western Development Commission paper, "*Why Invest in Gas*". However, the Gaslink review found that none of the towns qualified for connection on economic grounds.

Gaslink will continue to review the towns which did not qualify for connection under the 2010 Study as well as other towns. The key factor which would qualify a town or group of towns in any future review would be a significant increase in demand for natural gas, usually as a result of the addition of a new large industrial or commercial facility.

Wind Energy Guidelines

25. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on whether greater regulation of the wind energy sector is needed to attract more long-term investment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35023/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive set Ireland a binding target where at least 16% of our energy requirements should come from renewable sources by 2020. In order to meet our overall 16% requirement, Ireland is committed to meeting 40% of electricity demand from renewable sources.

Though these targets are challenging, I am confident that they can be met. My Department's Strategy for Renewable Energy 2012 to 2020 sets out the key strategic goals for the various renewable energy sectors in the context of Ireland's EU obligations.

In addition, under the Directive, Ireland was required to set out in a National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP), the trajectory towards meeting its legally binding targets. The NREAP and the First Progress Report on the NREAP, which are available on my Department's website, show the sectorial and technology breakdown that we anticipate in the achievement of our target.

To date, wind energy has been the largest driver of growth in renewable electricity, contributing most towards the achievement of the 2020 target. In 2012 15.5% of Ireland's electricity demand was met by wind generation. By the end of quarter one 2013, 1,763 MW (megawatts) of wind generation capacity was connected to the grid. At the end of May this year, the total amount of renewable generation capacity connected to the grid was just over 2,000 MW.

It is estimated that between 3,500 and 4,000 MW of renewable generation capacity will be required to allow Ireland meet its 40% renewable electricity target. There are a number of policy measures in place designed to incentivise the development necessary to meet Ireland's renewable energy obligations. These policy measures, which take into account the long term nature of energy investments, are underpinned by an appropriate regulatory regime.

The primary support mechanisms for renewable electricity are the Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff (REFIT) schemes. These schemes are designed to provide certainty to renewable electricity generators by providing them with a minimum floor price for each unit of electricity exported to the grid over a defined period. Using a fixed feed in tariff mechanism, the certainty afforded by a guaranteed minimum price allows developers to access finance for renewable developments.

Under REFIT 2 a total of 4,000 MW can be supported. In order to ensure the necessary incentives are in place to encourage the level of investment required to maintain the rate of build of onshore wind necessary to meet our national target for renewable electricity, earlier this year I decided to amend the terms of REFIT 2 to extend the closing date for applications to 31 December 2015, with projects required to be built by the end of December 2017. Support under REFIT 2 cannot exceed 15 years and will not extend beyond the end of December 2032.

Under the Gate 3 grid connection process, grid connection offers have now issued to just under 4,000 MW of renewable generation, the bulk of which is wind. Under Gate 3 rules, generators must accept an offer within 50 business days of its receipt. I understand that Gate 3 acceptances are scheduled to complete in October this year.

Media Mergers

26. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide an update on the planned introduction of legislation to deal with the issue of media ownership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35065/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): As the Deputy will be aware, responsibility for the control of merger and acquisitions, including those relating to the media in the State, lies with my colleague the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. At present I have no function with regard to media, outside of that relating to my broadcasting remit.

However, legislation is in train in the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to significantly update the media mergers function presently contained in the Competition Act of 2002, and to transfer it to my Department.

Energy Resources

27. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the capital investment plans that are being prepared between the Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Scottish Government in the energy sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35036/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): While a number of players in the all-island energy market, including a number of the State energy companies are currently engaged in planning, developing and implementing a variety of capital projects, there are no capital investment plans being directly prepared between the Irish Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Scottish Executive in the energy sector.

However, positive inter-governmental engagement and cooperation on energy matters at a regional level continues to operate on a very active level, particularly in the area of marine and ocean energy.

Other areas of common interest in the energy field are being developed between Ireland and Scotland and also involve the European Commission. Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland have recently completed two major projects of regional significance, which were both supported by the EU INTERREG programme. The first project, the BioMara project, examined the potential for energy from marine algae. Final reports in respect of that project are in the process of being completed.

The second project, ISLES, (Irish Scottish Links on Energy Study) was a feasibility study into how to optimally interconnect the Scottish, Northern Ireland and Irish electricity grid systems so as to facilitate the development of offshore marine renewable energy. This was a wide-ranging study with technical, economic, environmental and regulatory workstreams and its reports have value and application right across Europe.

At the recent Strategic Energy Technologies (SET) Plan conference held in May during the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU, I made an announcement confirming that the administrations of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland had decided that the collaborative process on the ISLES project would enter a further phase. Consequently, the three governments have obtained further INTERREG support to further progress the regulatory and environmental workstreams involved in the ISLES project, to be known as the ISLES II project. I look forward

to seeing the results of that further study.

In relation to co-operation at European level which will assist in strengthening energy infrastructure, a Regulation on guidelines for Trans-European Energy Infrastructure came into force on 15th May this year. The Regulation contains guidelines for the identification of “Projects of Common Interest” (PCI). The PCI designation carries certain conditions and entitlements, including more streamlined planning and regulatory processes at Member State level and eligibility for CEF funding.

A number of projects with cross border impacts between Ireland and the UK have been selected by the relevant Regional Group for possible designation as Projects of Common Interest in electricity transmission, gas transmission and storage, and smart grids. These projects are important in terms of enhancing the resilience and efficiency of our energy networks, improving security of supply and facilitating the development of our renewable energy sector.

Final decisions on the possible projects will be made by Member States and the Commission later this month before legal adoption in October.

Youth Unemployment Measures

28. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his Department has engaged in any initiatives to help reduce the level of youth unemployment; if he will consider coordinating with the Department of Social Protection to see how best both Departments can help increase employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35044/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): A range of initiatives in the Communications and Energy sectors are in place to promote competitiveness and productivity and stimulate youth employment.

Under the Action Plan on Jobs, my Department is committed to a number of measures and policies which will be central to the objective of maximising the country’s growth potential, bringing about economic recovery and creating employment.

The following specific measures will assist in job creation, including for young persons.

Last week I launched the National Digital Strategy which aims to help Irish business gain competitiveness by having access to new markets and a wider customer base. The objective is to get 10,000 Irish businesses online for the first time and to achieve a further 2,000 small Irish businesses trading online over a period of two years. New research, commissioned as part of the National Digital Strategy, shows that the digital economy now accounts for 4.4% of GDP and supports 95,000 jobs.

The Government’s National Broadband Plan, which I published last August, will facilitate the provision of high speed broadband to every home and business in the State and should help smaller non-urban businesses to realise the full potential of trading in a digital economy.

My Department is also co-funding an investment programme with the Department of Education and Skills to deliver 100Mbps to all second level schools. This investment is facilitating innovative learning and helping second level students develop the key skills required in the current and emerging jobs markets. The Digital Hub Development Agency is also funding a Future Creators Programmes which provides computer programming and digital media training for second level students.

In the energy area, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland operates a number of grant programmes under the Better Energy programmatic banner that stimulate employment in the constructions and retrofit sectors. The 2013 Budget for the Better Energy programme is €55 million which will result in the creation and retention of approximately 1,500 jobs. In addition, plans are at an advanced stage to establish an Energy Efficiency Fund, which will provide finance to energy efficiency projects in the public and commercial sectors. The fund will seek to disburse project finance and in the process will have a positive impact on job creation and retention.

My Department is also developing a Better Energy Financing/Pay As You Save (PAYS) scheme which will allow consumers to finance energy upgrades directly through the energy savings generated. Roll out will be developed following comprehensive consultation with all stakeholders and will aim to continue supporting jobs in green construction and retrofit.

Question No. 29 answered with Question No. 23.

Alternative Energy Projects

30. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans for biomass home heating. [35067/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): My Department, along with a number of other Government departments including the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government as well as the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is currently finalising a Bioenergy Strategy, which will be published in the autumn. This will set out in detail the actions required to optimise the bioenergy sector's contribution to the 2020 renewable energy targets.

Renewable Energy Generation Targets

31. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his strategy for reaching a target of 40 GW of energy from offshore wind farms by 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35025/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive set Ireland a binding target of meeting at least 16% of our energy requirement from renewable sources by 2020. As part of the strategy to meet this overall target, Ireland is committed to meeting 40% of electricity demand from renewable generation by 2020. It is estimated that this will require the installation of between 3,500 and 4,000 MW of renewable generation. Currently there is just over 2,000 MW of renewable generation capacity installed on the Irish electricity system.

I understand that 25 MW of offshore wind generation is currently operational, and that, under the Gate 3 process, around 800 MW of offshore wind projects have received grid connection offers. Under Gate 3 rules, generators must accept an offer within 50 business days of its receipt. I understand that Gate 3 acceptances are scheduled to complete in October this year.

With regard to Ireland's potential to produce renewable electricity beyond the level required by the 2020 target, expert advice suggests that Ireland has the capability to achieve our national targets for renewable electricity from onshore renewable generation alone. However, in ad-

dition, it is widely recognised that Ireland has an excellent and abundant renewable energy resource - both onshore and offshore - which has the potential to produce amounts of renewable electricity significantly in excess of the amounts required to meet our 2020 target.

It is in this context that the opportunity to harness this resource for the export market, and realise its potential for investment, job creation and economic growth has been identified. Following my signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on energy cooperation with my UK counterpart on 24 January this year, 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. Though it is ambitious, the target for completion of this work is early 2014, with a view to electricity being exported to the UK by 2020 in order to be counted towards the UK's national target under the Renewables Directive.

Finally, my Department is currently finalising an Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan. The process began with the carrying out of a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Informed by the findings of the SEA, the OREDP will identify how best to coordinate action across the environmental, energy and economic development policy areas in order to best facilitate the realisation of Ireland's abundant offshore renewable energy potential, using both existing offshore wind, and emerging ocean, renewable technologies.

Electric Vehicle Grants

32. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the planned actions his Department has to improve the ease of use of electric cars; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35055/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): In April 2011, I introduced the Electric Vehicle (EV) Grant Scheme to incentivise and support, through grants of up to €5,000, the early deployment of electric vehicles in Ireland in order to provide an early critical mass of such vehicles and to encourage the growth of a stable and robust market for these vehicles.

Since its introduction, the scheme, which is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, has provided grants for 252 vehicles, including 24 in 2013. A €1 million capital allocation has been made in my Department's 2013 budget for grants towards the purchase of new electric vehicles.

As well as the EV Grant Scheme, the ESB, through its Ecars programme, is continuing to roll out both publicly accessible charging infrastructure and domestic charge points, and has informed my Department that its targets are to install at least 1,000 publicly accessible charge points in all main towns and cities and 60 fast chargers on major roads by the end of 2013.

National Oil Reserves Agency

33. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on the recent announcement that the Whitegate Oil Refinery is for sale; if he is satisfied that the National Oil Reserves Agency will not be affected by any sale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35057/13]

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

Security of oil supply is central to the economy and to our economic and social development. While significant efforts are underway to improve energy efficiency and increase renewable energy, Ireland remains dependent to a large degree on imported oil. Oil comprised 59% of total final energy consumption in Ireland in 2011 and it is clear that oil will continue to play a pivotal role in the medium to longer term. Security of oil supply is therefore of central importance to the Irish economy and society and ensuring a robust oil infrastructure on the island is an essential part of our security of energy supply strategy.

Oil is either imported in the form of petroleum products or as crude oil. The crude that is imported into Ireland is refined in the Whitegate refinery. The refinery supplies about a quarter of the petroleum products on the domestic market. Some 75% of the Irish oil supplies are imported in final product form from neighbouring markets.

The Whitegate refinery was in state ownership for some years and was operated by Irish National Petroleum Corporation (INPC) who sold the refinery together with the Bantry Terminal in 2001 to a private company known as Tosco Corporation. Tosco subsequently sold on the refinery to Conoco Phillips and the day to day operation of the refinery and terminal is a matter for the current owners, Phillips 66. Under the terms of the sale from INPC to Tosco, the refinery and terminal must continue to be operated until 2016. This obligation applies also to Phillips 66 and any subsequent owners.

Phillips 66 recently confirmed that it commenced a process to market the Whitegate refinery, the storage terminal and the associated business. Phillips 66 has confirmed that it intends to continue operating the assets as usual during the marketing process which is expected to last for several months. My Department is maintaining close liaison with Phillips 66 in the context of the proposed disposal of the refinery. I can confirm that I attach importance to the availability of refining capacity in the State from a security of supply perspective.

More generally, discussions on the oil refining sector in Europe have been ongoing at EU and IEA level. In light of ongoing rationalisations in the EU refining sector and the expiry of Whitegate's refining obligation in 2016, earlier this year the Government considered the strategic case for oil refining requirements on the island of Ireland. To inform its deliberations, the Government considered a report I commissioned on this topic, as well as evolving IEA and EU work on the refining sector. I intend to publish this report shortly.

This report, in addition to findings on refining, also includes important analysis and findings on the security of oil supplies on the island of Ireland. In particular, the report demonstrates that the improved motorway network and the robust capacity at Irish ports has enhanced the resilience of the oil supply infrastructure in recent years.

In relation to the National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA), I am pleased to say that it has made excellent progress in rebalancing Ireland's strategic oil stockholding. In 2008, only 46% of NORA's stocks were held in Ireland, with the remainder held abroad or in the form of stock tickets (short term contracts for delivery of oil in the event of an oil supply disruption.) Since then, NORA has worked diligently to increase its access to storage on the island of Ireland and has opened three new strategic oil storage facilities in Antrim, Dublin and Kerry. As a result, by April this year, NORA held 74% of its strategic oil stocks as physical stocks on the island of Ireland and had eliminated its dependence on stock tickets. This has considerably enhanced Irish oil security.

Under the terms of the original sale of the refinery and terminal by INPC to Tosco in 2001, two 15 year contracts with NORA were included as part of the sale - one of the contracts relates to delivery by the refinery over a 5 week period of a certain portion of refined product in the event of an oil supply disruption and the other relates to NORA maintaining a significant por-

tion of Ireland's strategic oil reserves at the Bantry storage terminal. The sale of the refinery by Tosco to Conoco Phillips and the subsequent transfer of ownership to Phillips 66 has not impacted on the holding by NORA of strategic oil stocks at the Whitegate and Bantry facilities and I do not foresee any immediate impacts arising from the current process.

I will continue to liaise with Phillips 66 on the proposed sale of the refinery, storage terminal and associated business.

National Postcode System Establishment

34. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the up to date position in relation to the introduction of postcodes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35021/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The procurement process to select a postcode management licence holder to implement a National Postcode System is currently underway. Intensive work has taken place on what is an extremely complex national project and the procurement process has now entered the final stage. I can say that the final tender has issued and the process is expected to come to a conclusion shortly.

The final decision to proceed with implementation of a National Postcode System will be for decision by Government and will be based on appropriate financial, technical and operational considerations. I cannot give a precise date on when this decision will be made but I intend that it will be no later than the third quarter of this year.

Job Creation Issues

35. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to consult stakeholders in any plans for job creation in the area of natural resources; and his proposals to progress such a plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35076/13]

36. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to utilise Ireland's natural resources for job creation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35074/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): I propose to take Question Nos. 35 and 36 together.

I am committed to facilitating the exploration and development of Ireland's mineral, oil and gas resources with a view to maximising their contribution to Ireland's society and economy, including the provision of employment, whilst having due regard to any potential environmental impact.

Exploration and development of mineral, oil or gas resources is by its very nature a high cost and high risk activity, best suited to private sector investment. The key to attracting such mobile investment is a facilitative regulatory regime and the availability of exploration data.

In respect of mineral resources, the State's regulatory regime facilitates exploration and development through the grant of exclusive prospecting licences to permit the search for new commercial mineral deposits.

Availability of exploration data, free of charge and on-line, using geographical information systems, also assists in attracting mineral exploration investment.

There are currently 600 prospecting licences in operation. In addition there are three main operating mines and one mine in closure mode. Ireland has been successful in the past in bringing deposits into production and in 2012 exploration and mining in Ireland supported over 1,300 full-time equivalent jobs distributed across the regions.

My Department has been working on a new Minerals Development Bill, to update and consolidate legislation for the sector from the 1940s through to the 1990s in order to provide a new legislative regulatory framework fit for the 21st Century. Subject to other legislative priorities, I hope to be able to publish this Bill in the near future.

As regards oil and gas, it is important that the State provides the right environment to encourage private exploration investment.

This is achieved through a number of mechanisms, including:

- offering attractive and innovative licensing opportunities, such as the 2011 Atlantic Margin licensing round;
- providing a fit-for-purpose, transparent and robust regulatory regime;
- deepening knowledge of our offshore petroleum potential, in particular through data acquisition and supporting key research projects and;
- actively promoting the opportunity to invest in exploration in the Irish offshore, in particular to companies not currently active here.

The job creation potential of a successful commercial oil or gas find in the Irish offshore is evidenced by the Corrib Gas field find. For example, over 1,000 people were employed at the height of the construction phase of the Corrib gas terminal, and even today the project continues to provide both direct and indirect local employment opportunities in North Mayo. A more active exploration and production industry would also encourage the development of a range of support services, in particular around key port facilities, thus facilitating employment creation in these areas and in the wider economy.

In addition, through the Geological Survey of Ireland, I have recently established Geoscience Ireland. This is a business cluster, involving Enterprise Ireland, where nineteen companies active in the Geoscience service sector have come together to collaborate in winning work overseas and creating and sustaining employment.

To date the initiative has carried out a marketing study, built the dedicated website www.geoscience.ie, appointed a business development manager based at the Geological Survey of Ireland, and engaged in trade missions and sectoral studies. The 19 companies involved in the cluster have reported a growth in overall staff numbers since the initiative commenced of 84, to a total of 1,078.

In facilitating the exploration and development of Ireland's mineral, oil and gas resources, with a view to enhancing employment prospects, both I and my Departmental officials meet with stakeholders and consider their views.

National Postcode System Establishment

37. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the timeline for the introduction of a national postcode system; if he will re-

port on the types of system being explored by his Department; and when it is expected to have the new system in place. [34719/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The procurement process to select a postcode management licence holder to implement a National Postcode System is currently underway. Intensive work has taken place on what is an extremely complex national project and the details of the procurement process are confidential. I can say that the final tender has issued and the process is expected to come to a conclusion shortly.

The final decision to proceed with implementation of a National Postcode System will be for decision by Government and will be based on appropriate financial, technical and operational considerations. I cannot give a precise date on when this decision will be made but I intend that it will be no later than the third quarter of this year.

Hydraulic Fracturing Policy

38. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when the Environmental Protection Agency will begin work on its report on unconventional gas exploration and extraction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35031/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): Earlier this year the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), announced the draft terms of reference for the more extensive second stage of its research into the use of hydraulic fracturing, the final results of which are expected in early 2015. The key questions to be addressed by this research are,

- To establish if shale gas exploration and extraction involving the use of the fracking technique can be carried out in a manner that will not cause significant environmental pollution.
- To identify all possible environmental risks associated with the fracking technique and to ascertain if these risks are manageable; and,
- To identify best practice with respect to environmental protection for the use of the hydraulic fracturing technique for the exploration and extraction of shale gas.

The proposed terms of reference were the subject of a Public Consultation and I understand that in excess of 1,300 submissions were received. These are currently being assessed by the Steering Group established by the EPA to oversee the appointment of the appropriate experts to carry out in-depth scientific research into the potential environmental impacts of hydraulic fracking. It is expected that a call for tender will issue in this regard shortly.

Broadband Services Provision

39. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the level of broadband access in Gaeltacht area; the steps being taken to improve same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35020/13]

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 Gaeltacht areas, can be found on ComReg's website at [.www.callcosts.ie](http://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. Broadband services under the NBS are available since October 2010 from the NBS service provider, "3", to persons with a fixed residence or fixed business in the designated NBS Electoral Divisions, including those Gaeltacht areas where broadband coverage, at the time of the mapping exercise prior to the launch of the Scheme in 2008, was deemed to be insufficient. The combination of private investment and State interventions means that Ireland has met the EU Commission's Digital Agenda for Europe target of having a basic broadband service available to all areas by 2013.

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 30Mbps are available to all of our citizens and businesses, 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.

Since the publication of the Plan, investments by the commercial sector are underway in both fixed line and mobile high speed broadband services, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas. In tandem with these commercial developments, intensive work is underway in my Department to progress a State-led investment to secure the countrywide introduction of next generation broadband access. The National Broadband Plan commits the Government to investing with the private sector to deliver high speed services to areas, which are not commercially viable and will not be provided by the market alone.

In order to progress the State-led investment, a full procurement process must be designed and EU State Aids approval must be obtained. My officials have commenced a comprehensive mapping exercise of the current and anticipated investment by the commercial sector to identify where the market is expected to succeed and fail in the delivery of high speed broadband services over the coming years.

The results of this mapping exercise will inform the level of Government interaction that may be required and the areas that need to be targeted in the State-led investment as envisaged in the National Broadband Plan.

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 increasing the availability of next generation speeds significantly, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in a digitally enabled society.

Question No. 40 answered with Question No. 18.

Question No. 41 answered with Question No. 24.

Post Office Network

42. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the steps being taken to support the maintenance of the post office network; and if he

will make a statement on the matter. [34750/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Operational matters and the role of developing commercial strategies for the post office network are a matter for the management and Board of An Post and one in which I have no statutory function.

As shareholder, however, I have a strong concern in relation to the ongoing commercial position of the Company and I regularly liaise with the Company in this regard. An Post has many strengths and has the largest retail presence in the country. I have impressed on the Company the need to further exploit its unique position in this regard and have been supportive of its attempts to diversify its income streams and to win a wider range of commercial contracts offering higher margins.

I am also, however, conscious that An Post faces a difficult financial position. The efforts by the Company to generate new income streams are most welcome. Equally, An Post must ensure that it has a competitive costbase. In this context, I recognise the efforts of the Company, in co-operation with its workforce to ensure constraint in operating costs, especially payroll which is such a major component of the Company's fixed costs.

In May this year, I addressed the annual conference of the Irish Postmasters' Union and emphasised the intrinsic strengths of the network and the opportunities for new developments. Having invested in the computerisation of all post offices, An Post is well positioned to become the front office provider of choice for Government and the financial services sector.

I also recently addressed the Seanad and engaged in a lively discussion with Senators on the Joint Committee on Transport and Communications 'Report on Promoting a Sustainable Future for the Post Office Network', which I find both positive and ambitious. The Report's recommendations reflect a common sense approach to improving the viability and sustainability of the network and I am pleased to say that many of the suggestions made have been adopted, at least in part, by An Post.

An Post has made much progress towards diversification with its enhanced arrangement with AIB and its agreement with Aviva for the transfer of Aviva Ireland's branch offices personal insurance business book to One Direct. More recently the opportunity to pay the local property tax via An Post outlets was secured. An Post has also been selected as the preferred bidder, following a competitive tender process, for the cash element of welfare payments which augurs well for the future of the network.

In the context of the public sector transformation agenda I will continue to engage with my colleague the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to consideration, as appropriate, of the post office network for transactional elements of the business of Government Departments and Agencies and have stressed to my Government colleagues that the network is ideally configured for over the counter transactions.

Overall, it is Government policy that An Post remains a strong and viable company, in a position to provide a high quality, nationwide postal service and maintain a nationwide customer focussed network of post offices.

National Fuel Scheme

43. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the progress since he took office in tackling the problem of fuel poverty.

[34718/13]

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

There are forty-eight actions identified in the Affordable Energy Strategy, aimed at making energy more affordable for low-income households. This includes the following five priority measures: a commitment to review the National Fuel Scheme in the context of examining the feasibility of aligning income supports with the energy efficiency and income of the home, the phased introduction of minimal thermal efficiency standards for rental accommodation, ensuring greater access to energy efficiency measures, the introduction of an area based approach and reforming the eligibility criteria for energy efficiency schemes.

Work is being progressed by a range of Departments and Agencies on the implementation of the actions contained in the strategy. The Better Energy Warmer Homes programme is a pivotal element to the implementation of the Affordable Energy Strategy. Exchequer funding has enabled the delivery of energy efficiency measures in 99,471 homes since 2000. Despite the current economic challenges, the Government is committed to continuing to deliver energy efficiency measures to vulnerable households. The Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme has been allocated Exchequer funding of €21 million for 2013, which is expected to result in upgrades in nearly 12,000 homes.

Reform of the eligibility criteria for the Warmer Homes Scheme to address households in extreme energy poverty, defined as those who spend over 20% of their disposable income on energy services, was undertaken in 2012. Prior to this, applicants were considered eligible for the Scheme if they met defined criteria such as eligibility for the National Fuel Scheme. International research demonstrates that the elderly and pre-school children are most at risk. Taking this on board the criteria were revised to include; Fuel Allowance recipients; Job Seeker Allowance recipients (for over six months and with children under 7 years of age) and; recipients of Family Income Support.

The Fuel Allowance is funded by the Department of Social Protection and is a matter in the first instance for the Minister for Social Protection.

An area-based approach to the mitigation of energy poverty was introduced in 2012 and Exchequer funding of over €4.1 million was disbursed via this new model. The project uptake was so successful that it was extended into 2013.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is currently undertaking a pilot programme of delivering energy efficiency upgrades to local authority owned homes, where the tenants are experiencing energy poverty. This is an innovative pilot allowing local authority tenants participate in the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme, for the first time. The expected number of homes to be addressed under the pilot is approximately 50 over the coming months, in the Longford and South Dublin County Council areas.

Broadband Services Speeds

44. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the way he will ensure that every home has access to 30Mbps broadband access; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35029/13]

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

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 30Mbps are available to all of our citizens and businesses, 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.

The Plan aims to deliver high speed broadband to all parts of Ireland through two principal means:

- by providing a policy and regulatory framework that assists in accelerating and incentivising commercial investment, and
- by providing a State-led investment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest.

Since the publication of the Plan, investments by the commercial sector are underway in both fixed line and wireless high speed broadband services, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas. ComReg has put in place a new regulatory regime for fixed line Next Generation Access and for service bundles, both of which are designed to incentivise the rollout of services by service providers. ComReg's multiband spectrum auction, completed in 2012, is also enabling the rollout of advanced mobile broadband services.

There is evidence that industry is investing beyond the targets to which they committed in the Plan with investments of up to €1bn underway. Some of the key developments in the short and medium term are as follows:

- Eircom launched its next generation broadband services on 16th May last, with speeds of up to 70Mbps, immediately available to over 300,000 premises. By the end of this year, Eircom aims to reach more than 600,000 homes and businesses. It has a target to pass 1.2m premises by June 2015.
- UPC is continuing with its investment in the cable network, which should see 750,000 homes able to access services at data speeds of up to 150 Mbps by 2015.
- Other fixed operators also continue to invest in Local Loop Unbundling (LLU). BT Ireland now supplies broadband access to both Vodafone and Sky Ireland, and along with other operators, is also investing in fixed infrastructure.
- Mobile wireless operators are making plans for the rollout of 4G services later this year. The operators are obliged, under the terms of the licences, to cover 70% of the population.
- ESB is currently considering the prospect of utilising its distribution network to roll out fibre broadband services.

In tandem with these commercial developments, intensive work is underway in my Department to progress a State-led investment to secure the countrywide introduction of next generation broadband access. The National Broadband Plan commits the Government to investing with the private sector to deliver high speed services to areas that are not commercially viable and where such services will not be provided by the market alone.

In order to progress the State-led investment, a full procurement process must be designed and EU State Aids approval must be obtained. My officials have commenced a comprehensive mapping exercise of the current and anticipated investment by the commercial sector to identify where the market is expected to succeed and fail in the delivery of high speed broadband services over the coming years.

The results of this mapping exercise will inform the level of Government intervention that may be required and the areas that need to be targeted in the State-led investment as envisaged in the National Broadband Plan.

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, I am committed to increasing the availability of next generation speeds significantly, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in a digitally enabled society.

Bioenergy Strategy Publication

45. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources regarding the progress of the national bioenergy strategy, the way his Department is integrating its efforts in preparing this strategy with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; if he will describe the level of consultations between the Departments and the issues being discussed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27976/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): My Department, along with the a number of other Departments and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), is currently finalising a Bioenergy Strategy, which will be published in the next few months. This will set out in detail the actions required to optimise the bioenergy sector's contribution to the 2020 renewable energy targets.

Policy options are being assessed by a cross departmental working group made up of officials from my Department, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and SEAI to assess the most appropriate and cost effective means of meeting our challenging targets in the renewable energy sectors and positioning Ireland to meet post 2020 challenges.

Public Service Broadcasting Household Charge

46. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the collection system he will introduce for the new broadcasting charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35027/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): As the Deputy may be aware, my Department recently carried out a Value for Money Review on the proposal to introduce a Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) Household Charge. The independently chaired Review Group considered a range of issues in relation to the proposal, including the various options for the collection of the charge. The Group submitted its final report to me recently and I am now examining the results of its detailed deliberations.

I am sure that the Deputy will appreciate that with the development of any such new system, there is a depth of complexities to be worked through in regard to how such a system could potentially be implemented and operated. For that reason, I am giving the detailed report and its recommendations my due consideration before making any final decisions in regard to the mechanics behind the introduction of this PSB Charge. I also intend to carry out a consultation process on the proposed charge, which would, inter alia, include consultation on the collection mechanism.

Trade Missions Issues

47. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 67 on what basis he mentioned a figure of 50,000 being employed by Irish companies in Africa at the recent AWEPA conference in The Royal Hospital Kilmainham which then became 13,000 in South Africa, over 15,000 in West Africa and if he will detail which companies are active in which African countries. [35583/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): The promotion of stronger bilateral trade and investment remains one of the objectives of the Africa Strategy. This recognises the demand in Africa for goods and services in many of the fastest growing economies in the world. Irish companies engaged in telecommunications and financial services are helping connect people and business as well as improving transparency and accountability.

New technologies are making a major impact on governance in many markets. Electronic systems eliminate the need for cash payments and related opportunities for rent seeking. In addition to the provision of services, Irish companies that invest in African markets can provide much needed employment. The creation of decent jobs for men and women is one of the most important ways to redistribute wealth and reduce poverty in a rapidly growing economy.

In terms of employment, I have used the figures of 13,000 jobs in South Africa and 15,000 in West Africa. These are the best estimates available based on the trade visits to both markets in 2012. As my Department does not retain information on Irish companies or the markets in which they work, these figures are most likely underestimates.

During 2013, my Department will host a number of events to further enhance economic relations with Africa. In November, I will lead an Enterprise Ireland Trade Mission to both South Africa and Nigeria with a view to further stimulating bilateral trade and investment.

Overseas Development Aid Oversight

48. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will explain the way the Government's commitment to the International Aid Transparency Initiative processes on the work of his Department; if his Department has entered into any commitments under this process; what this process entails for his Department; and what, if any, timeframes are involved. [35642/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): At the High Level Forum of Aid Effectiveness, which was held in Accra, Ghana in 2008, international donors, including Ireland, agreed to increase the availability of information that is made publicly available about programmes supported through Official Development Assistance. The intention was to improve the transparency and predictability of funds committed by international donors as a means of improving its quality. In order for aid to be transparent donors must provide information about the aid they give in a manner that is publicly available and in a way that people can easily understand. The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) was established to oversee the delivery of commitments made at the Accra meeting. It brings together donors, developing countries and civil society organizations with the aim of agreeing how to make aid information more accessible and comparable. Ireland has been a member of the International Aid Transparency Initiative since its inception in 2008.

During the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Busan, South Korea, in 2011,

Ireland reaffirmed its commitment to aid transparency. In December 2012, a detailed implementation schedule for the publication of aid data was published on the Irish Aid website. This schedule commits Ireland to publishing aid information in line with the International Aid Transparency Initiative guidelines by the end of 2015. Implementation of this commitment is currently underway.

Human Rights Issues

49. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he is satisfied that academic and medical freedom exists in Bahrain; the communications he has had with his counterpart in the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35650/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The overall human rights environment in Bahrain continues to be of serious concern. I have repeatedly called on the Bahraini Government to demonstrate its commitment to upholding human rights and to implement in full the recommendations of the Bahraini International Commission of Inquiry. The Commission has made specific recommendations which set out the way forward for Bahrain in terms of commitments in the areas of political dialogue, rule of law, human rights, and refraining from excessive violence. Full implementation of the recommendations in relation to human rights will contribute greatly to ensuring that medical and academic professionals can operate in an environment free of restriction, harassment or the threat of censure. I have ensured that Ireland's concerns on human rights issues in Bahrain have been conveyed regularly to the Bahraini authorities and I will continue to do so.

In June, the Secretary General of my Department had the opportunity for a brief meeting with the Bahrain Minister for Foreign Affairs while heading the Irish delegation attending the annual EU-GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) ministerial meeting in Manama. The Secretary General also met with senior officials in the Bahraini Ministry of Human Rights, during which he pointed to the damage caused to the image of Bahrain by recent troubles and made clear that the release of certain prisoners, including the Irish-trained medical professionals, would have a positive impact on international opinion. Drawing on Ireland's experience, the Secretary General urged the need for dialogue and reconciliation as well as full respect for human rights in efforts to address current political tensions within Bahrain. Officials in my Department also make clear our concerns to the Bahraini Ambassador in London as required; and Ireland's Ambassador in Riyadh, who is accredited to Bahrain, has raised human rights issues directly with the authorities there on every appropriate occasion, including most recently with the Foreign Minister while the Ambassador was in Bahrain over the St. Patrick's Day period.

US Surveillance in EU Institutions

50. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the EU's External Action Service has reported to the EU Foreign Affairs Council on the clarification sought from the United States concerning their use of surveillance in European Union institutions and member states; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35664/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The allegations that have been made of United States surveillance in European Union institutions and member States are, if true, of obvious concern to all EU member States, including Ireland. The European Union, through its External Action Service, has sought clarification on these al-

legations in both Washington and Brussels. These issues were also discussed at a meeting of the EU-US working group on data protection and privacy rights which took place in Brussels on 8 July. The EU was represented at the meeting by the Commission, the Presidency of the Council and the External Action Service. A further meeting of this group is scheduled in the coming weeks. The Commission is expected to report on the findings of the group to the European Parliament and to the Council in due course.

While Ireland is not one of the member States identified in the media reports to date, the Government's concerns have been conveyed bilaterally in contacts with the US Embassy in Dublin. We look forward to clarification being provided in response to the EU's request.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that this country values greatly its relationship with the United States, both bilaterally and in the context of the European Union, and that we look forward to the continuation of this close and cooperative relationship in the period ahead.

Northern Ireland Issues

51. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the most recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and with members of the Northern Ireland Executive on the implementation of outstanding provisions in the Good Friday Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35665/13]

63. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the work he has done since taking up office in 2011 to advance the adoption of an Irish Language Act in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35910/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 51 and 63 together.

The main outstanding elements of the Good Friday Agreement are the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and the Irish Language Act.

In ongoing contacts with the British government, I continue to stress the importance of implementation of all aspects of the Agreements.

I will also continue to urge all the parties in the Assembly to engage in constructive discussion with a view to reaching agreement on the substance of a Bill of Rights. A Bill of Rights drawn up by agreement between the main parties of the Assembly could set out precisely and formally the rights upon which a shared society for Northern Ireland can be based.

I am firmly of the view that an Irish Language Act should be introduced in Northern Ireland. All parties to the Good Friday Agreement recognised the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity in Northern Ireland. In the St Andrews Agreement, the British government committed to introducing an Irish Language Act and to working with the Northern Ireland Executive to enhance and protect the development of the Irish Language. The question of an Irish Language Act for Northern Ireland is a devolved matter and is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive. Last year the Northern Ireland Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure Ms. Carál Ní Chuilín MLA launched a public consultation process on strategies for the Irish language and Ulster Scots. A summary of the responses to the consultation process were published on 3 July 2013.

Officials in my Department maintain regular and ongoing contact with the Irish language

community in Northern Ireland including those involved in cross community Irish language activity. I will continue to press in my discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive the urgent need to address this issue and to legislate for an Irish Language Act. Officials in my Department will continue to monitor this matter in their ongoing contacts with the Northern Ireland Office.

Northern Ireland Issues

52. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the discussions he has had with members of the Northern Ireland Executive on the initiative launched in mid-May entitled *Together Building a United Community*; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35666/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I have previously welcomed the publication on 23 May 2013 by the NI Executive of a new strategy '*Together: Building A United Community*'. The publication of the strategy is an important acknowledgement of the ongoing blight of sectarianism across communities in Northern Ireland and recognition that building a shared society will require a comprehensive response across political, economic, civic and social life.

I welcome in particular the proposal to establish an All-Party Group, with an independent Chair from outside of the political parties, to consider and make recommendations on difficult matters including parades and protests; flags, symbols, emblems and related matters; and the past. The recent agreement by former US Special Envoy Richard Haass to Chair these all-party talks on contentious issues is an important development.

The Government will continue to support all efforts by the NI Executive and political leaders in Northern Ireland to promote reconciliation. The priority now, in my discussions with members of the Northern Ireland Executive, is to encourage and support them in implementing the Strategy and the work of the All-Party Group to its fullest extent, both in terms of promoting an ethos of respect and reconciliation and in implementing fully the individual practical proposals as set out in the Strategy.

I have discussed the Northern Ireland Executive initiative in my ongoing contacts with the Secretary of State, with the leader of the Alliance Party David Ford MLA and with the First and deputy First Minister and other Ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive.

In my discussions with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with the First and Deputy First Minister, and with other members of the Northern Ireland Executive including the newly formed NI21 party, I will continue to encourage all parties to seize the opportunity provided by the *new Together Building a United Community Strategy* and by the All-Party talks to accelerate the realisation of a cohesive and united community based on tolerance and respect in Northern Ireland.

Illegal Israeli Imports

53. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the progress at EU level in developing guidelines on place of origin labelling for products from illegal Israeli settlements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35667/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I re-

fer the Deputy to my reply to his Question No. 65 (30912/13) on 26 June, which included the following: “In all administrations, labelling of goods is a complex matter, involving numerous different Ministries, policy areas and objectives. At EU level, the EAS is now working through these complex issues with the European Commission to produce draft EU guidelines. This may take some time - the UK guidelines in this area were the result of a two year period of consultation. Since this work is ongoing, I cannot predict the details of what will eventually emerge.” I have nothing further to add to this at this point.

Official Engagements

54. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will detail each engagement he had on his most recent visit to the United States of America; if he spoke to members of the United States Senate and the other members of Congress in the House of Representatives regarding the future of J1 visas for Irish students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35680/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Immigration reform was a key feature of my programme in Washington DC and I met with a range of the most significant Congressional leaders on immigration issues from both sides of the US political divide and at senior official level in the White House. These included Congressman Paul Ryan, Congressman Bob Goodlatte, Leader Nancy Pelosi, Congressman Pete King, Congressman Richie Neal, Congressman Joe Crowley, Congressman Joe Kennedy, Congressman Mike Grimm, Congressman Tom Rooney, and I spoke with Congresswomen Zoe Lofgren by phone. I also met with the policy director and counsel to the Majority Whip Congressman Kevin McCarthy and with Speaker Boehner’s chief of Staff, Mike Sommers. In the Senate, I met with Senator John McCain, Senator Pat Leahy and Senator Dick Durbin. I also met with representatives of Irish-American community groups and others with whom we have worked closely. Summer J1 visa issues have been largely resolved to our satisfaction in the Bill passed by the Senate. Senator Pat Leahy, who I met during my visit, had been a key player in reaching a satisfactory solution on that issue.

Diplomatic Representation Issues

55. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to open an embassy in Croatia, in view of its recent accession to the European Union, if he will replace the existing honorary consul; his views that such an embassy would be able to manage the wider Irish interests in the Western Balkans, in view of the fact that numerous nations in the region are candidates for EU membership and will become EU member states in the years to come; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35687/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Ireland and Croatia enjoy excellent bilateral and diplomatic relations. This was underlined last month when President Higgins made the first State Visit during his term of office to that country. Subsequently I travelled to Zagreb on 30 June to participate in the celebrations to mark Croatia becoming the twenty-eighth member of the European Union. Croatia’s accession to the EU on 1 July can only strengthen the strong ties between our two countries further.

The Irish Embassy in Ljubljana is currently accredited to Croatia on a non-resident basis and there is an Honorary Consul of Ireland in Croatia. Diplomatic relations with countries of the Western Balkans are maintained by our embassies in neighbouring countries. This continues

to prove an effective means for managing relations in Croatia and the wider region. Our mission network is kept under constant review.

Diplomatic Representation Issues

56. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to appoint a new honorary consul in Lima, Peru, following the position becoming vacant on 1 August 2013; the medium to long-term plans he has for visa applications rather than applications being sent to the embassy of Ireland in Mexico City, Mexico; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35771/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): No decision has as yet been taken on the appointment of a new Irish Honorary Consul in Peru. In the interim, visa applicants from Peru will submit their applications directly to the Irish Embassy in Mexico. This situation will be monitored by the Embassy to ensure an acceptable level of service is provided to citizens of Peru.

EU Presidency Issues

57. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if a proposal was made at the General Affairs Council of the EU meeting on 22 April, which he chaired, by the Polish Minister attending the meeting, that Ireland should not be required to legalise abortion; the stand he took on the proposal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35774/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): No such proposal was made by Poland at the meeting referred to by the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

58. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of retired civil or public servants that have been retained by his Department since January 2013 on a short-term contract or on a consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35845/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The information requested by the Deputy, which relates to two short-duration consultancies connected with the Irish Aid programme, is provided in the following table.

Official	Duration of consultancy contract	Details
Retired official of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	01.02.13-28.02.13	To identify and develop five case studies from the Irish Aid programme, in cooperation with Dublin City Council, for World Alliance of Cities against Poverty (WACAP)
Retired official of IDA Ireland	01.05.13 – 30.06.13	To prepare and present Ireland's contribution to the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific – European Union (ACP-EU) Joint Parliamentary Workshop

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

59. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures and accompanying savings for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in his Department and-or non-commercial State sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35862/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Haddington Road Agreement measures applicable to Government Departments are set out in the collective agreement therein relating to the civil service. The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform has confirmed that the Agreement will facilitate an overall reduction of €1bn in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016.

In relation to my Department, appropriate reductions in its vote allocations for 2014 and beyond will be made in due course, in addition to that already made for 2013.

There are no State agencies under the aegis of my Department.

Official Engagements

60. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when he last met the chairman or chief executive of the North-South bodies InterTrade Ireland, Waterways Ireland, the Food Safety Promotion Body, Foras na Gaeilge, Foyle Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35906/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I do not have direct responsibility for any of the North South Implementation Bodies established under the British Irish Agreement. However, the Ministers who exercise that direct responsibility, together with the corresponding Ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive, meet with the Chairmen and Chief Executive Officers of the Bodies at meetings in sectoral format of the North South Ministerial Council which are held on a regular basis. In this jurisdiction the responsibility for the Bodies is exercised by five government departments: the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Waterways Ireland and the North/South Language Body which comprises Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster Scots Agency), the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (InterTrade Ireland), the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (the Foyle Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission - Loughs Agency); the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (the Special EU Programmes Body); and the Department of Health (the Food Safety Promotion Board). In addition, Tourism Ireland is the responsibility of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

North-South Implementation Bodies

61. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the actions he has taken to extend the remit of the North-South Implementation Bodies; and the consideration he has given to widening the number of areas of cross-Border co-operation and the consultations he has had with the Northern Ireland Executive regarding same. [35907/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The three terms of reference of the review of the existing North South bodies and of North South co-operation generally which is being undertaken in accordance with the St Andrews Agreement, are to examine the existing bodies in terms of efficiency and value for money, to look at the case

for additional North South bodies and areas of co-operation and at a replacement for the Irish Lights Agency. The review was a subject of discussion at the recent meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in plenary format which was held in Dublin Castle on 5 July 2013 and which was attended by members of the Government and of the Northern Ireland Executive including the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. It was noted that Term of Reference One of the Review is now largely complete; that senior officials from both administrations have met and initiated a work programme to take forward Terms of Reference Two and Three; including expanding on the areas of North South cooperation, and that they will conclude their work and present a report with proposals to the next NSMC Institutional meeting in the autumn.

Northern Ireland Issues

62. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has sought meetings with, and the details of any briefings he has had on the work of, the Parades Commission in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35908/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Parades Commission is an independent, quasi-judicial body established under the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. All organisations and individuals seeking to hold a parade in Northern Ireland must apply for permission to do so from the Commission. In most cases the parades are allowed without any restrictions, however in the absence of local agreement it is required to make determinations on contentious parades. Last year it dealt with over 4,000 parade related applications, of which it made determinations on 146 contentious parades. The Commission is fully independent in the discharge of its functions, and should be seen to be so. It would not be appropriate for me to seek to influence its decisions. However, my officials in the British-Irish Intergovernmental Secretariat in Belfast provide me with regular briefings on the Commission's determinations and activities which are in the public domain.

Question No. 63 answered with Question No. 51.

Northern Ireland Issues

64. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his response to the HM Inspector of Constabulary's criticism of the Northern Ireland Historical Enquiries Team and its failure to thoroughly investigate certain categories of crime; if he has made representations to the Northern Ireland Office on the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35911/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The tragedies of the past in Northern Ireland have left a deep and profoundly regrettable legacy of suffering. Dealing with the past presents a major challenge for we must never forget those who have died or been injured, and their families. In the context of the "Together: Building a United Community" initiative by the Northern Ireland Executive, the Northern Ireland Assembly will shortly establish an All Party Working Group under an Independent Chair to consider and make recommendations on issues that cause community divisions, including Dealing with the Past. The HET has an important role to play in ensuring that the families of all of the victims of violence in the past can pursue the truth of what happened to their loved ones, and it plays a significant part in the pursuit of justice. I am aware of the comprehensive Inspection Report

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by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary into the PSNI's Historical Enquiries Team. I believe it is essential that the HET operate to the highest standards of effectiveness and impartiality, so that the people of Northern Ireland - and in particular, the families of the victims whose cases are being reviewed - can have confidence in it. Consequently I welcome Chief Constable Baggott's acceptance of the Inspection Report's Recommendations and his commitment to work with the Policing Board on ensuring their delivery.

I am in regular close contact with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on issues of importance for Northern Ireland.

Property Taxation Administration

65. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance the way a person who inadvertently over valued their house for the local property tax may effect a change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35714/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) sets out how a residential property is to be valued for Local Property Tax (LPT) purposes. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that, as LPT is a self-assessed tax, it is a matter for the property owner to calculate the tax due based on his or her assessment of the market value of the property. For the purposes of LPT, values for properties under €1 million are organised into valuation bands, with a range of €50,000 in each band. As property owners were not required to provide a precise value for their property as at 1 May 2103, it is anticipated that, for the most part, overpayments of LPT should not happen.

Revenue is most concerned that people meet their obligations voluntarily and pay the correct amount of tax. However, if someone has genuinely overpaid their LPT, Section 26 of the 2012 Act (as amended) provides that a claim for a refund of the tax overpaid may be made to Revenue, where the overpayment was made due to an error or mistake made by the liable person, subject to certain conditions being satisfied. In this regard, I am advised that Revenue will issue detailed guidelines later in the year setting out the procedures to be followed by those who consider that they have either over or under valued their property for LPT purposes, or inadvertently paid on foot of the Revenue estimate without making their own assessment. However, in the meantime, if a person has such concerns regarding their LPT, they can write to LPT Branch, Government Buildings, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Co. Clare setting out their case and the matter will be considered.

I am advised by Revenue that any valuation amendments to Local Property Tax Returns must be in writing and must be supported by the appropriate evidence to explain or prove the need to decrease the value. Evidence could be in the form of recent sales or advertised house prices in the area, professional valuations or house price surveys for the area.

Credit Unions Issues

66. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the losses incurred by a credit union (details supplied) in County Waterford as a result of the liquidation of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation; if he will advise as to what route this institution should pursue; if he is aware of other institutions in similar circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35643/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Central Bank of

Ireland that certain tracker bonds sold to a number of credit unions which were liabilities of Irish Bank Resolution Corporation (IBRC) at the time of the liquidation have a structured deposit element which is covered by the Deposit Guarantee Scheme (DGS) for that element of the product. As a result the first €100,000 of any claim in such cases is covered under the DGS. The bond itself is not covered by the ELG scheme as it predates that scheme. Credit unions and others affected have been advised to deal with the Special Liquidator in relation to this matter. I am aware that officials from the Department, as well as the Special Liquidator, have met with credit union representative bodies on this matter and the credit unions affected have been advised to deal with the Special Liquidator.

Money Laundering

67. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Finance if he has given consideration to changing the proposed requirements around anti-money laundering identification for the purchase of prize bonds; if he will consider increasing the new limits to a limit of €100, rather than the current proposed figure of €25, for those who wish to purchase prize bonds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35645/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): European legislation has been adopted to protect the financial system and certain professions and activities from being misused for money laundering and financing of terrorism purposes. The anti-money-laundering obligations applicable in Ireland derive from the Third EU Money-Laundering Directive. The Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010 was enacted in July 2010 to transpose the Third Money Laundering Directive (2005/60/EC) and its Implementing Directive (2006/70/EC) into Irish Law. Part 4 of the Criminal Justice Act 2010 sets out the obligations of “designated persons” in relation to customer identification. One such obligation set out in the Act is the obligation to conduct customer due diligence, prior to the establishment of a business relationship. Customer due diligence refers to the identification of customers and that of any beneficial owners of financial products associated with the customer.

An Post and the Prize Bond Company are deemed to be a “*designated person*” under the Criminal Justice Act 2010 as they fall within the definition of a “*financial institution*”. In light of this, An Post and the Prize Bond Company are required to comply with the relevant provisions of the Act in relation to the sale of Prize Bonds to customers. This means, in practical terms, that customer due diligence must be conducted on all purchases of prize bonds, irrespective of value.

The extent to which any particular person or product may be exempted from the customer due diligence requirements of the Act is determined by reference to the Act having regard to the underlying Directives. The Central Bank of Ireland has no discretion to exempt certain firms from the requirement to comply with the Act. In light of the above, I am exploring with the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) and my colleague the Minister for Justice whether or not exemptions available under the Directives may be applied to small value purchases of prize bonds facilitated on behalf of the State by An Post and the Prize Bond Company.

Tax Compliance

68. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Finance if, in cases where some old age pensioners have inadvertently underpaid tax due to a failure of communication between the Department of Social Protection and the Revenue Commissioners, the normal interest and pen-

alties which arise in such circumstances are payable. [35648/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy will be aware that the Revenue Commissioners received information from the Department of Social Protection (DSP) in late 2011 in respect of individuals in receipt of pensions payments made by the DSP. Upon examining this information, it became clear that a large number of these pension recipients had not reported their pension income to the Revenue Commissioners even though they were advised to do so by DSP in the awards letter that the Department issues to all first-time pension recipients. The priority for the Commissioners, in the first instance, was to ensure that the tax record was correct for 2012 onwards and thereafter to examine in detail the highest risk cases. In the follow up projects, it was necessary to distinguish between those taxpayers who pay their tax through the PAYE system and who, as a matter of course, do not, and are not required to submit an annual tax return and self-assessed tax payers who complete an annual return of income where they are specifically invited to include payments from the DSP.

In relation to PAYE taxpayer, Revenue wrote to three separate tranches of PAYE taxpayers who had not returned details of their DSP pensions, that is, those with annual non-DSP income exceeding €50,000, those with non-DSP incomes of between €40,000 and €50,000 and those with non-DSP incomes of €30,000 to €40,000. In their correspondence, I am informed, Revenue gave the taxpayers the opportunity to complete a disclosure statement and pay the outstanding tax due within thirty days of the final liability being calculated without incurring interest or penalties. I am further informed that the vast majority of pension recipients contacted have met the necessary conditions, have settled their affairs and avoided having to pay any interest or penalties. This project is nearing conclusion.

The Commissioners also advise that a separate project commenced earlier this year to examine those cases in the self-assessment system who had not returned details of their DSP pension on their annual return. This category would include self-employed taxpayers, company directors, persons with reasonable amount of non-PAYE income etc. Revenue has pre-populated the tax returns of these taxpayers from tax year 2011 onwards with details of their DSP payments to ensure that they are tax compliant in relation to these payments in the future. In addition, they have written to the highest risk cases, providing them with an opportunity to advise Revenue of outstanding taxes on these payments in relevant prior years.

The charging of interest and penalties on tax settlements in relation to these taxpayers is governed by the “Code of Practice for Revenue Audit”, which can be viewed on the Revenue website at www.revenue.ie. For this project, the Commissioners decided that the lowest category of penalty - i.e. for an unprompted voluntary disclosure - would be appropriate for those cases who responded in a timely manner.

The Commissioners also advise that since early 2012 they receive a weekly file of data from the DSP with details of new, amended and ceased DSP pension payments which they update to the relevant pension recipient’s tax record. However, it is important to point out that the onus remains on any individual who receives a new source of income to report it to Revenue or to include it in their annual tax return, as appropriate.

Lastly, the Commissioners advise that if the Deputy has a query in relation to a particular taxpayer, he can contact the Revenue Commissioners with any such details.

Excise Duties Yield

69. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a breakdown

of excise returns by category and month from January 2011 to June 2013, inclusive, in tabular form. [35654/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the breakdown in excise returns by category and by month from January 2011 to June 2013 is as follows:

2011	Alcohol	Tobacco	Oils	Carbon	VRT	Other Excise
JAN	87.8	0.6	234.7	14.5	41.5	12.1
FEB	35.9	26.8	176.7	44.7	57.7	9.0
MAR	51.2	64.7	183.0	23.3	49.1	8.2
APR	67.9	96.1	180.2	32.2	45.9	9.5
MAY	67.5	65.4	177.5	19.4	33.5	5.5
JUN	65.6	102.9	177.9	26.9	36.1	4.8
JUL	70.8	113.7	174.3	22.1	31.4	12.5
AUG	72.0	109.7	185.6	20.5	19.5	6.1
SEP	70.2	78.3	174.0	22.2	36.4	9.0
OCT	64.7	90.0	174.7	22.9	14.6	10.8
NOV	75.3	110.7	181.3	24.3	12.2	7.8
DEC	100.8	267.2	109.9	25.3	10.4	4.6
TOTAL	829.5	1126.1	2129.6	298.2	388.4	100.0

2012	Alcohol	Tobacco	Oils	Carbon	VRT	Other Excise
JAN	87.8	1.0	223.8	16.8	47.7	8.5
FEB	35.6	52.8	166.7	41.3	62.9	4.1
MAR	50.6	55.8	176.7	24.5	56.1	4.0
APR	64.7	70.8	166.8	34.2	44.5	9.0
MAY	61.4	108.0	180.9	26.0	33.6	4.8
JUN	73.3	121.8	168.6	33.3	33.6	4.0
JUL	68.4	80.2	167.7	27.9	25.8	10.7
AUG	64.7	92.4	175.9	26.7	21.1	5.6
SEP	68.7	68.3	165.3	26.4	17.2	5.8
OCT	65.9	99.8	175.1	29.7	14.5	14.6
NOV	85.0	97.5	171.9	33.6	11.2	5.4
DEC	120.0	224.0	87.9	33.6	11.2	4.0
TOTAL	846.1	1072.3	2027.3	354.0	379.4	80.5

2013	Alcohol	Tobacco	Oils	Carbon	VRT	Other Excise
JAN	93.5	1.1	231.4	26.0	52.1	8.3
FEB	40.6	104.8	158.9	42.7	64.6	3.0
MAR	52.2	52.5	173.2	33.6	55.1	3.9
APR	77.2	72.0	170.5	37.6	47.5	9.8
MAY	65.8	93.6	175.2	29.4	40.0	3.7
JUN	86.9	93.1	161.0	39.2	27.0	4.4
TOTAL	416.2	417.1	1070.2	208.5	286.3	33.1

The Category Other Excise includes Licences, Betting and Travel Tax.

Please note that the receipts shown for 2013 are provisional and are subject to revision.

Tobacco Seizures

70. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an update on the number of tobacco seizures in each month since January 2011; the amount of cigarettes and tobacco seized in each month since January 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35655/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that combating the illegal tobacco trade is, and will continue to be, a very high priority for them. The Commissioners' "Strategy on Combating the Illicit Tobacco Trade (2011-2013)", which is published on the Revenue website (www.revenue.ie), includes a wide range of measures designed to target those engaged in the supply and sale of illicit tobacco products and very significant resources are being devoted to this issue in 2013. This multi-faceted strategy includes:

- the ongoing analysis of the nature and extent of the problem
- developing and sharing intelligence on a national, EU and international basis
- the ongoing review of operational policies by a high-level group within Revenue that is chaired by one of the Commissioners
- the development of analytics and detection technologies and
- the optimum deployment of resources at both point of importation and within the country to intercept and seize contraband products and to prosecute those involved.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the monthly seizures of cigarettes and tobacco in 2011 and 2012, and this year to 14th July are as detailed in the following tables.

2011

Month	Cigarette Seizures	Number of Cigarettes Seized	Tobacco Seizures	Quantity Seized (Kilograms)
January	789	10,939,140	111	472
February	822	8,091,205	134	133
March	1,155	10,794,099	132	210
April	777	5,435,572	73	121
May	1,133	7,848,277	128	321
June	831	20,834,846	133	205
July	752	11,029,341	109	2,724
August	934	3,087,755	172	2,497
September	997	14,093,544	165	2,840
October	847	2,674,637	118	714
November	867	2,380,390	95	283
December	684	11,882,143	131	638

2012

Month	Cigarette Seizures	Number of Cigarettes Seized	Tobacco Seizures	Quantity Seized (Kilograms)
January	654	1,625,944	116	621
February	731	2,139,561	93	336
March	723	1,870,649	105	306
April	652	43,068,330	95	137

Questions - Written Answers

Month	Cigarette Seizures	Number of Cigarettes Seized	Tobacco Seizures	Quantity Seized (Kilograms)
May	819	7,601,016	115	773
June	696	2,110,869	126	272
July	676	8,379,138	160	263
August	618	1,315,452	103	273
September	738	13,274,574	141	360
October	663	9,612,366	117	281
November	724	2,621,542	127	1,392
December	417	1,986,889	97	262

2013

Month	Cigarette Seizures	Number of Cigarettes Seized	Tobacco Seizures	Quantity Seized (Kilograms)
January	507	1,496,741	94	325
February	494	1,255,479	125	536
March	551	1,946,456	98	248
April	457	990,767	94	104
May	548	4,327,337	114	1,058
June	433	1,260,769	79	614
July (1st-14th inclusive)	161	10,856,480	25	51

Regulatory Impact Assessment Submissions

71. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Finance if he will be making a submission to the Department of Health's regulatory impact analysis on proposed legislation on plain packaging of tobacco products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35657/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners, who have responsibility for the collection of tobacco products tax, that Revenue will be represented on the Standardised/Plain Packaging High Level Implementation Group, which has been established by the Department of Health to oversee the introduction of plain packaging for tobacco products. Revenue will have the opportunity in this Group to set out its requirements in relation to accommodating the tobacco tax stamp under the new packaging regulations and to raise any other matters that might impact on their ability to deal with the illicit tobacco market. Revenue's view is that the introduction of plain or standardised packaging of itself is unlikely to affect significantly their work against the illicit trade in tobacco products.

Budget 2014 Issues

72. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider the introduction of a wealth tax in budget 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35672/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Budget 2014 will be announced in October of this year, some two months earlier than in previous years. While all taxes and potential taxation options are constantly reviewed, it is a long-standing practice of the Minister for Finance not to comment specifically, in advance of the Budget, on

any tax matters that might be the subject of Budget decisions.

A number of considerations would need to be taken into account, as regards the potential for imposition of a wealth tax, in the sense of an annual recurring tax on wealth. Firstly, to estimate the potential revenue from a wealth tax, one would need to identify the wealth held by individuals, which is not possible from the data available at present.

I am informed by the Central Statistics Office that the CSO institutional sector accounts do not give an indication of the number of households or persons classified by the categories of wealth they hold. These statistics are based on aggregate information collected from financial institutions and do not contain the demographic details which would enable such a breakdown of the statistics. So while the CSO's Institutional Sector Accounts show that households held c. €126 billion on deposit in 2010, this is not broken down by income or wealth categories.

However, I understand that, following discussions between the Department of Public Enterprise and Reform, the CSO and the Central Bank, the CSO has commenced a "Household Finance and Consumption Survey", which will collect information on household wealth. The first results of this survey will be available in 2014. The data to be collected by the CSO as part of its Household Finance and Consumption Survey is not being collected for the purposes of calculating the potential yield from a wealth tax but to collect general information on the financial situation and behaviour of households.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that they have no statistical basis for compiling estimates in relation to a potential wealth tax. Although an individual's assets and liabilities are declared in a limited number of specific circumstances - for example, after a death - Revenue states it is not in a position to link an individual's income to her/his financial assets.

Secondly, asset values increase and decrease over time and in the context of recent economic circumstances, they may have declined considerably in many cases. Thus, if the value of an asset or of an individual's wealth is measured at a particular time there is no guarantee that the asset value or the individual's wealth will remain at that level or increase from that point. This would make it difficult to predict the potential yield from a wealth tax and would have to be borne in mind in terms of its consistency as a source of revenue.

Finally, Capital Gains Tax (CGT) and Capital Acquisitions Tax (CAT) are, in effect, taxes on wealth, in that they are levied on an individual or company on the disposal of an asset (CGT) or the acquisition of an asset through gift or inheritance (CAT). However, they are not annual taxes on an individual's wealth. The rate of both these taxes is currently 33%, which I increased from 30% in Budget 2013. I also reduced the CAT group tax-free threshold for gifts and inheritances by 10%, following a number of reductions in recent years. The introduction of a wealth tax could have a negative impact on receipts from CGT and CAT.

In the context of taxes on wealth I will also refer to the introduction in Budget 2010 of the Domicile Levy. The levy is currently charged on an individual who is Irish-domiciled whose world-wide income exceeds €1m, whose Irish-located property is worth more than €5m, and whose liability to Irish income tax was less than €200,000. The levy applies for the tax year 2010 and subsequent years. It is payable on a self-assessment basis on or before 31 October in the year following the valuation date, which is 31 December of each year. A total of 11 taxpayers paid the levy in 2011 (for the 2010 tax year) with a total yield of €1.67 m, and a total of 10 persons paid the Levy in 2012 for tax year 2011 and these persons paid a total of €1.64 m. In Budget 2012 I expanded the application of the Domicile Levy by removing the citizenship condition. This will affect returns for 2012, which are due to be made in October 2013.

Tax Yield

73. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue that would be raised for the Exchequer if any of the following new rates were applied to the income earned in excess of €100,000: 42%, 43%, 44%, 45%, 46% and 47%. [35689/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): It is assumed that the Deputy is referring to the introduction of a third rate of income tax of either 42%, 43%, 44%, 45%, 46% or 47% to be applied on the portion of taxable incomes in excess of €100,000 per annum. In addition, it is assumed that the threshold for the proposed new income tax rates mentioned by the Deputy would not alter the existing standard rate band structure applying to single and widowed persons, to lone parents and married couples. On that basis, I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the estimated full year yield to the Exchequer, estimated by reference to 2013 incomes, of the introduction of the new rates would be of the order of €52 million, €104 million, €156 million, €208 million, €260 million and €312 million respectively. However, given the current band structures, major issues would need to be resolved as to how in practice such a new rate could be integrated into the current system and how this would affect the relative position of different types of income earners. These figures are estimates from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using latest actual data for the year 2010, adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends in the interim. They are, therefore, provisional and subject to revision. A married couple who has elected or has been deemed to have elected for joint assessment is counted as one tax unit.

Universal Social Charge Yield

74. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the additional Revenue that would be raised for the Exchequer if the universal social charge was increased on the portion of income over €100,000 for PAYE workers by 1%, 2%, 3%, 4%, 5% and 6%. [35690/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the full year yield, estimated by reference to 2013 incomes, from extending the additional universal social charge by either 1%, 2%, 3%, 4%, 5% or 6% to all PAYE income earners income in excess of €100,000 would be of the order of €24 million, €47 million, €71 million, €95 million, €118 million and €142 million respectively. The Universal Social Charge is an individualised charge and as such, the estimate of yield is based on individual incomes of more than €100,000. The estimated yield is based on confining the extension of the new Universal Social Charge rates to the portion of income which is in excess of €100,000, that is, the increase is not applied to the portion of total income earned up to €100,000. This estimate is derived from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using actual data for the year 2010 adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends in the interim. It is, therefore, provisional and likely to be revised.

Banking Sector Issues

75. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding the ongoing talks between EU officials and his Department on the future of Permanent TSB; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35830/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As I stated in response to a number of previous PQs a way forward for Permanent TSB was agreed with the Troika in April 2012

which envisaged it playing an important role in the future of Irish retail banking, being a more focused retail bank bringing an element of competition to the marketplace which has consolidated significantly since 2008. In this regard Permanent TSB submitted a Restructuring Plan to the European Commission in June 2012 and it is expected to be considered by EU officials before the end of this year. Given the passage of time since submission of the Restructuring Plan and changes in market circumstances (which include the ending of the Government's eligible liabilities guarantee scheme, changes in base interest rates and other factors), the Directorate General for Competition ("DG Comp") have requested updated financial forecasts from Permanent TSB. These forecasts are due to be submitted to DG Comp shortly. The request for updated financials is not unusual and the structure of the plan is broadly the same as that proposed in June 2012.

Banking Sector Issues

76. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the fees paid by Permanent TSB to a consultancy firm (details supplied) or any other consulting agencies since 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35831/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware, notwithstanding the fact that the State is a significant shareholder in Permanent TSB, that institution is run on a commercial basis and I do not have a role in the day to day commercial decisions taken by the board and management of Permanent TSB, including in respect of the employment of external consultants and advisors. Separately, I am informed by Permanent TSB that it cannot disclose the fees paid (either to the consultancy firm whose details were supplied or to any other consultant) as arrangements entered into with individual firms are commercially sensitive. Permanent TSB has informed me that fees paid to consultants are subject to appropriate governance, including board approval where applicable.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

77. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance the number of retired civil or public servants that have been retained by his Department since January 2013 on a short-term contract, or on a consultancy basis, where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35844/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In my Department no retired civil or public servant has been retained on a short term contract or a consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

78. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures and accompanying savings for the duration of the Haddington Road Agreement applicable in his Department and-or non-commercial State sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35861/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the Public Service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to my own Department, the savings arising under the Agreement have been incorporated in the Department's

Revised Estimate for 2013 and further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the vote allocations in the context of the overall Estimates process. The measures applying to my Department and the relevant public bodies in my Ministerial area are set out in the relevant sectoral collective agreement under the Haddington Road Agreement, in this case the collective agreement for the Civil Service and NCSSB's. In terms of my own Department, the relevant measures under this collective agreement, including, for example, the additional working hours and the pay reduction for those earning over €65,000, have been implemented from 1 July.

Banking Sector Issues

79. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 220 of 2 July 2013, if he stands over the statement made in his response when he said that the Central Bank of Ireland was not aware of the Anglo tapes in view of the fact that the former chairperson of Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Alan Dukes has stated that all board papers of the bank were made available to the Central Bank of Ireland and his Department so that they knew or had the information at all times regarding the tapes; in view of the fact that the Government has acknowledged that his Department was aware of the tapes, if he maintains the accuracy of the statement that the Central Bank of Ireland was unaware of the tapes; and his views on the fact that the bank is only now investigating a potential regulatory breach at Anglo Irish Bank. [35869/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I believe it is important to clarify that while the Department of Finance was aware that there were recordings of phone conversations in Anglo Irish Bank to the best of my knowledge the content of the specific tapes referred to was never raised with the Department. The Central Bank was also aware of phone recordings in the bank but I have been advised by the Central Bank that it was not aware of these tapes or the content contained therein. The Central Bank is carefully studying the various transcripts emerging. This is something that is viewed very seriously. The Central Bank will be liaising with the Gardaí in this regard and is also examining whether or not any breaches of regulatory requirements may have occurred arising from the information contained in the transcripts.

Ministerial Transport

80. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the method used to calculate the cost of ministerial transport in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [35913/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In response to the Deputy's Question as an from 1 May 2011 all Cabinet Ministers with the exception of the Taoiseach, the Tánaiste and the Minister for Justice and Equality now use their own cars on official business. Prior to this date transport for Ministers was provided via the Department of Justice and Equality. The annual estimated costs as per the Department of Justice and Equality for the provision of Ministerial transport was approximately €280,000 per annum. In relation to the use of my car for Ministerial travel, the total cost has been €272,461 for the period 01 May 2011 to date in 2013. This cost includes mileage (which is to cover car related expenses) of €41,906, the salaries paid to two civilian drivers inclusive of Employer PRSI contributions which amounted to €170,094 and travel and subsistence paid to the drivers of €60,461. This amount is significantly below estimated annual cost under the previous domestic Ministerial transport regime for each Minister.

EU Directives

81. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Questions No. 169 of 28 May 2013, and 72 on 11 July 2013, if he will detail the representations received by the Central Bank of Ireland from industry stakeholders and organisation regarding the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive regarding the expansion or watering down of the Directive; if he will provide a full list of the persons and organisations from whom these representations came; the number of meetings the Central Bank of Ireland have had with stakeholders and interested parties regarding MiFID; with whom they were held and the date on which they took place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35923/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As an independent body, the central bank does not provide me with detailed reports on their consultations with industry on any matter and I do not oversee these processes. However, I would draw to your attention that MiFID II is not yet agreed and therefore any consultations the Central Bank might have on matters placed within their discretion by MiFID II, when agreed, have not taken place. I understand from the Central Bank that it adopts a general policy of transparency in relation to consultations and, therefore, in due course it can be expected to publish responses received in relation to any matter arising from MiFID II on which it initiates a public consultation. In addition, senior representatives are accountable to committees of this house in relation to such matters.

Fuel Laundering

82. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Finance the reason the licence fee for the sale of agricultural diesel has increased to €250; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35938/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The laundering of marked diesel and the distribution and sale of laundered fuel poses a serious threat to tax yield and to legitimate businesses. As part of the strategy to combat these illegal activities, all traders who deal in, or deliver, marked diesel or marked kerosene have, since 1 October 2012, been required to hold a marked fuel trader's licence. This is an annual licence and it is subject to a payment of excise duty of €250. This is the same amount as has applied since 2001, to a licence for selling or delivering petrol or auto-diesel. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners, who have responsibility for Mineral Oil Tax and the control of mineral oils for taxation purposes, that the introduction of the marked fuel trader's license is a key component of their strategy in this area. A licence is subject to conditions set by Revenue, and it may be revoked for failure to keep to those conditions. In addition, new regulatory requirements have applied since 1 January this year for the keeping of mineral oils, including marked diesel and marked kerosene, at licensed premises or places, and for the proper documentation, reporting and recording of deliveries of mineral oil to and from those premises and places.

School Funding

83. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the projected costs in 2013-2014 for the Exchequer to run and maintain Kilkenny College based on enrolment figures for the academic year 2012-2013 and the cost to the Exchequer in respect of financial support offered to Kilkenny College in 2012-2013 while it was a fee charging school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35580/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information requested by the Deputy for the 2012/13 school year to date is outlined in the attached document. The precise capitation to be paid to the College in the 2013/14 school year will be a function later this year of the actual enrolment in the College and any decisions the Government may take in respect of the next budget. Budget 2012 provided for a further reduction in capitation and related grants of 1% in 2014. On that basis, an indicative estimate based on current rates, of the capitation to be paid to the college in 2013/14 is €409,000. The salary cost for teachers in any school is a function of the number of teachers permanent or part time, the particular point on the salary scale of each teacher, any individual allowances payable to the teachers. Substitution costs that arise over the course of the year also contribute to the overall pay costs. My officials will provide the Deputy with the projected salary costs for the school in question for the school year 2013/14 when they are in a position to compute same in the early Autumn, based on returns that will be received from the school when the new school year commences.

Sch No	Gross Teachers salaries	Gross SNA's salaries	Gross C.O's salaries
61570M	€2,433,449.00	€42,168.01	€37,809.47

Capitation paid in respect of Kilkenny College R.N. 61570M from Sept 2012 to 30 June 2013

Payment date	Description	Amount paid
18-Apr-2013	SSSF CARETAKER GRANT	€4,200.00
18-Apr-2013	CARETAKER GRANT	€7,000.00
18-Apr-2013	SCHOOL SERVICES SUPPORT FUND	€102,242.00
18-Apr-2013	CAPITATION GRANT	€155,652.00
24-Jun-2013	PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY GRANT	€1,261.00
	Total Paid to June 2013	€270,355.00

English Language Training Organisations

84. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when will Quality and Qualifications Ireland be in a position to inspect and approve language schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35595/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): ACELS (Accreditation and Co-ordination of English Language Services) is the body responsible for the development and management of an inspection/ recognition scheme for English Language Teaching organisations (ELTOs) within Ireland. The non-statutory functions of ACELS were previously part of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). The NQAI was merged, along with HETAC and FETAC, into Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in November 2012. In order to prepare for the amalgamation of these three agencies into QQI, and the reassignment of resources across the new organisation, it was necessary to suspend any new applications to ACELS from September 1st 2012. Since its establishment, QQI has published a number of green papers, including one on the development of the International Education Mark (IEM). The objective of the IEM, which is provided for in the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (Education and Training) Act, 2012, is to contribute, as part of a quality framework, to the promotion of Ireland as a destination for international students. It is intended that new ELTOs who wish to use the IEM will have to first prove compliance with a Code of Practice that encompasses areas such as arrangements for the protection of learners, the collection of fees from enrolled learners, and requirements relating to tax compliance of providers. There will also be a process of transition to the IEM for ELTOs that were previously recognised by ACELS. The deadline

for submissions on the IEM green paper is 13 September 2013. It was initially intended to suspend the acceptance of applications to ACELS pending the development and introduction of the IEM. However, QQI is currently reviewing this decision due to the interest that has been expressed in gaining ACELS recognition. Any changes in the current position will be notified to providers through the ACELS and QQI websites.

Teacher Recruitment

85. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will clarify that when he says the recruitment and appointment of teachers to fill teaching posts is a matter for the individual school authority, subject to procedures agreed under section 24(3) of the Education Act 1998 (as amended by the Education (Amendment) Act 2012) and that the deployment of teaching staff in the school, the range of subjects offered and ultimately the quality of teaching and learning are, in the first instance, a matter for the school management authorities he is confirming that a principal of a post-primary school and its board of management have the discretion, under the existing DES procedures, to give resource hours to a mainstream teacher instead of a resource teacher. [35603/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to confirm for the Deputy that the responsibility for day to day management of schools is at local school level. Responsibility for the recruitment and selection of school personnel rests with the Board of Management. If the Board of Management of a school decides to engage a person the Board must ensure that appropriate selection procedures have been followed and that the person is suitably qualified to undertake the duties concerned. In this regard, good practice involves the checking of recent employment records, qualifications, experience and names of referees. In relation to Garda vetting, all schools are also required to comply with the vetting arrangements as set out in my Department's Circular 0063/2010

Special Educational Needs Staffing

86. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current status of a special needs assistant application for a child (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35606/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (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 (SNAs) 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.

The NCSE allocates a quantum of SNA support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support each year. The deployment of SNAs within schools is a matter for the individual Principal/Board of Management. SNAs should be deployed by the school in a manner which best meets the care support requirements of the children enrolled in the school for whom SNA support has been allocated. It is a matter for schools to allocate support as required, and on the basis of individual need, which allows schools flexibility in how the SNA support is utilised. 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.

Details of the SNA allocations which have been made to schools by the NCSE for the 2013/2014 school year are now available on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie, which provides details of the SNA allocations for each school on a school by school and per county basis. Where schools have enrolled children who were not considered at the time that these allocations were made, or where schools are seeking a revision to the quantum of SNA support which has been allocated to them for the coming school year, they should contact the NCSE regarding this matter. In general a revision to SNA allocations will only be made in circumstances where schools have enrolled new pupils, or where schools can demonstrate that they do not have sufficient SNA posts to cater for the care needs of all of the qualifying children in their school. 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.

Research Funding

87. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has written to any of the research funding agencies under the aegis of his Department concerning the progress of any individual application for funding; and if he has guidelines in place for such circumstances. [35607/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Irish Research Council (IRC), which is funded by my Department, has a broad remit to support and enhance human capital development, in particular at postgraduate and early stage postdoctoral researcher levels, and encourage independent exploratory research. Selection is on the basis of excellence following assessment by expert independent panels, whose membership is primarily international. The awards are made by the Council and neither my Department or I have any role in any stage of the selection process. The IRC has in place a robust and transparent assessment protocol based on international best practice and does not enter into correspondence in relation to individual applications. A detailed description of the application process and criteria for the various schemes is published on their website – www.research.ie.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

88. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 163 of 7 May 2013 and correspondence to this Deputy, his views on the case of a person (details supplied) who has been denied free fees on the basis that the springboard foundation course they completed was itself a major award [35608/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Article 13(6) is the relevant article in the 2012 student grant scheme providing for second chance students. The intention of this article is to focus resources on second chance and mature students. The five years break in studies will ensure that the emphasis is, as intended, on facilitating these students to return to education. I understand from Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that the student referred to by the Deputy pursued an approved post leaving certificate course leading to a major education and training award and as a result is ineligible to be accessed as a second chance student. The student was issued with a decision by SUSI on 12th April, 2013. The student in question will be issued a letter clarifying the position with regard to her fees.

English Language Training Organisations

89. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action open to any schools seeking accreditation and consideration to be included on the list of recognised schools used by INIS until such a time as Quality and Qualification Ireland is in a position to inspect and approve language schools; if such schools with EDI approval can be treated on the same basis as QQI approved schools as an interim measure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35609/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Internationalisation Register is administered by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) on behalf of my Department and the Department of Justice and Equality. The criteria for inclusion of programmes in the Internationalisation Register were determined by these three bodies and are consistent with the immigration regime. Further information on the Internationalisation Register is available at www.intregister.ie. It is currently open to educational institutions, who wish to recruit non EEA students, to submit an application to QQI for inclusion in the next update of the Internationalisation register which will take place on 1st December 2013. The deadline for receipt of applications for this update is 1st November 2013.

The tuition hours required for English Language programmes to be included in the Internationalisation Register is 375 hours. Particular awards made by EDI do not meet this criteria on their own merit. Within the UK, ‘guided learning hours’ (GLH) are used as a measure of the time that a typical learner will require in direct guidance to complete their programme of learning successfully. The GLH are agreed between the relevant awarding body and its regulatory body. Where there is a difference of more than 10% between the recommended GLH and the number of hours contained in an application for inclusion in the Internationalisation Register, a rationale and support from the awarding body is required to indicate that the increased GLH is appropriate to the programme leading to the award in question. A general statement by an awarding body on the nature of GLH does not constitute a satisfactory rationale or endorsement of the proposed tuition hours.

Furthermore, each EDI programme leads to a discrete and separate award, which is included at a separate level on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in the UK, and as such is assessed independently on its own merits for inclusion in the Internationalisation Register. In contrast, ACELS-recognised schools offer a series of English-language courses which culminate in a final proficiency exam. The courses are not free-standing in the manner that EDI awards are, i.e. learners do not receive an award at any point prior to the taking of the final proficiency exam at the end of their period of study. These programmes meet the duration criteria for the Internationalisation Register on their own merit.

It is important for the satisfactory operation of the immigration regime in this country that only applications that satisfy the published criteria established by my Department, in conjunction with the Department of Justice and Equality and QQI, will be considered for inclusion in the International Register.

Departmental Contracts

90. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will list, in tabular form, the names of the companies, where they are headquartered, and value of contracts awarded to all entities involved in the construction of school building projects in Tramore, County Waterford in the past four years; the efforts that were made to provide employment for local trades people and-or companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35709/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Contracts for two major

school building projects in Tramore have been awarded in the last four years. The details of the tenders awarded are as follows:

1. Holy Cross Primary School, the contract for which was awarded to BAM Building Ltd, Kill, Co Kildare;
2. Ardscoil na Mara Post Primary School, one of eight schools in the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Schools Bundle;
- 3 Project, the contract for which was awarded to BAM Construction Ltd, Kill, Co Kildare.

In common with the rest of the Public Sector, capital works projects in schools are tendered under the standard Public Works Contracts as required by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Government Contracts Committee for Construction (GCCC). The guidelines require a competitive process to be carried out in an open, objective and transparent manner to achieve best value for money in public procurement. School building projects are tendered in compliance with these guidelines and requirements. Similar guidelines and requirements applied to the award of the PPP Schools Bundle 3 Project in November 2012.

While the current public works contract do not require contractors to use local labour or materials, it is the case that building projects by their nature generally contribute to economic activity in the locality in which they are carried out. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Government Construction Contracts Committee are currently considering the possibility of inclusion of social clauses in future public works contracts. My Department will implement any future changes to public works contracts in accordance with the guidelines given.

Regarding contracts awarded to all entities involved in the construction of the school, the situation is that in general all sub-contractors employed on school building projects are employed directly by the Main Contractor or indirectly by the Main Contractor through other sub-contractors. There is no contractual relationship between the Department or the Client with any domestic subcontractors or suppliers engaged on the projects and therefore the Department does not hold details of any contracts other than that with the main contractor.

School Accommodation

91. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide a full update on what efforts are being made to upgrade the accommodation at a school (details supplied) in County Waterford; if he has given due regard to the savings to his Department if a permanent building were put in place rather than the wasted expenditure incurred due to the current situation; when he expects this situation to be satisfactorily resolved and if he will provide an update on the matter. [35710/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that 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 future significant demographic demands nationally, particularly in those areas where it has been identified that most demographic growth will be concentrated, will be the main focus for capital investment over the duration of the 5 Year Plan. As the school referred to by Deputy is in an area of Co Waterford that has not been identified as an area of significant demographic growth, the project for the school concerned was not included in the 5 Year Plan.

The school building project referred to by the Deputy is at an early stage of Architectural

Planning. The school and its design team recently attended a Stage 2(a) Stakeholders meeting with the Planning & Building Unit of my Department. My Department recently conducted a survey of schools within the Tramore area to establish the demand for diversity and plurality in the area. In this regard, the Department is engaged in a process with the relevant school patrons regarding the arrangements to meet the outcome of the survey. My Department will be in further contact with the school regarding the status of its building project when this process has been advanced.

Student Grant Scheme Administration

92. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a final decision will issue on the Student Universal Support Ireland grant application by a person (details supplied) considering that correspondence to SUSI in this case has not been responded to; and if he will make a full and final reply on the matter. [35634/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that the applicant referred to by the Deputy was issued with a letter on 26th April 2013 advising her that her application had been cancelled due to incomplete documentation being received. SUSI have confirmed that this applicant has not appealed the decision. Where an individual applicant considers that she has been unjustly refused a student grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI, and remains of the view that SUSI has not interpreted the scheme correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the Student Grant Appeals Board. The relevant appeal form will be available on request from SUSI.

Student Grant Scheme Appeals

93. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a review of a student grant application for the academic year 2012-13 will be completed for a person (details supplied), considering that correspondence to SUSI on this case has not been responded to; and if he will make a full and final reply on the matter. [35635/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that the applicant referred to by the Deputy was issued with a decision on the 26th February 2013 awarding her a grant. This decision was reviewed on the basis of a change of circumstances and on 5th July 2013 a letter issued upholding the original award. Where an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI, and remains of the view that SUSI has not interpreted the scheme correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the Student Grant Appeals Board. The relevant appeal form will be available on request from SUSI.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

94. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a

matter (details supplied) regarding the refusal of a Student Universal Support Ireland grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35646/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have been informed by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that the application from the student in question is being reviewed and SUSI will contact the student directly in relation to the outcome shortly. If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI, and remains of the view that SUSI has not interpreted the scheme correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the Student Grant Appeals Board. The relevant appeal form will be available on request from SUSI.

Apprenticeship Programmes

95. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action he is taking to revive and enhance the apprentice system as a means of reducing youth unemployment and developing the economy; the targets set out regarding the feasibility of offering apprenticeships to each unemployed person; if he will introduce a more innovative, modern and enlarged system of apprenticeships in addition to the 26 listed trades and crafts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35658/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Government's 2012 Action Plan for Jobs contained a commitment to "initiate a review of the Apprenticeship training model, including costs, duration and demand with a view to providing an updated model of training that delivers the necessary skilled workforce to service the needs of a rapidly changing economy and ensures appropriate balance between supply and demand." This review was undertaken in two phases, the first of which was the preparation of a background issues paper, which is available on my Department's website, www.education.ie. The second phase of the review is currently under way. This stage of the review is being managed by an Apprenticeship Review Group comprised of persons with relevant experience and interest in apprenticeship. A public consultation process has recently been announced which is seeking submissions with regard to the apprenticeship system. The consultative phase of the Review will address three key themes: Consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the current model of Apprenticeship and what improvements can be made to its current structure, an examination of the alternative methods of work-based training in Ireland and consideration of the structural mechanisms, and criteria, under which collaboration with industry/employers can be pursued into the future, either through improved, alternative or complementary models of work-based training. Following the consultation process, the Review Group will recommend options recognising the broad spectrum of vocational training available, for the development of the apprentice formation system, and other work based education/training systems.

Schools Complaints Procedures

96. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will support a matter (details supplied). [35681/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As you will be aware, the Department has no role in the employment of staff in schools or schools' day to day management and a complaint about the child's school and its staff must be made to the school itself. In this

regard, the Department does not have the power to instruct schools to follow a particular course of direction with regard to individual complaint cases. While many schools use the complaints procedures that have been agreed between school management authorities and teacher unions, the Department has no role in relation to a school's implementation of these procedures. The Deputy will be aware that my officials recently wrote to the HSE on the matter. On foot of their reply, my officials have written to the person in question and to the school authorities. If a parent is dissatisfied in relation to a school's handling of his/her complaint, it is open to the parent to contact the office of the Ombudsman for Children which may investigate complaints relating to the administrative actions of a school recognised by the Department.

Teaching Qualifications

97. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if teaching experience in a montessori school in a member state of the European Union is recognised by the Teaching Council of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35685/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I take it that the Deputy is referring to persons seeking to be registered as teachers on the basis of qualifications and/or experience in the field of Montessori teaching. Such persons may be eligible to be registered in accordance with the Teaching Council Registration Regulations. Regulation Three (Montessori and Other Categories) stipulates that applicants must hold qualifications at Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications which are deemed suitable for teaching pupils with special education needs in mainstream primary schools and in recognised special schools where Irish is not a curriculum requirement or for teaching pupils with special education needs in post-primary schools.

In relation to the recognition of qualifications under the terms of EU Directive 2005/36/EC, this Directive deals with the mobility of professionals including teachers within the EU. It requires that professionals recognised in one EU state must be afforded similar status when migrating to other EU Member States. The Teaching Council grants registration on the basis of qualifications which include teacher-education qualifications. When applying to the Teaching Council applicants must demonstrate comparability with Irish requirements and where substantial differences exist, conditions may be applied to any registration granted. Relevant teaching experience may be taken into consideration where qualification shortfalls are identified or towards meeting post-qualification requirements (e.g. induction or probation). A copy of the Regulations may be accessed on the Council's website.

Teaching Qualifications

98. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reasons he is refusing to give any information in view of the fact that the review by the Information Commissioner is now complete regarding his Department's qualification - the secondary school teacher's drawing certificate - issued to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 6W who met the conditions for this particular certificate in 1972 and was awarded the certificate by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35686/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The person to whom the Deputy refers applied, under the Freedom of Information Acts, for access to records concerning the Secondary School Teacher's Drawing Certificate. The original decision was made on 14 February 2011 and a decision on internal review was made on 24 March 2011. Access to some

records was granted while access to others was refused and certain provisions of the Act were relied upon in that respect. The Department's internal review decision was appealed to the Office of the Information Commissioner. The Office of the Information Commissioner decided to affirm the decision of the Department on the 4th March 2013.

School Patronage

99. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider the patronage of Educate Together for the new second level school in Balbriggan, County Dublin, in view of the large number of Educate Together national schools in Balbriggan and the greater north County Dublin area. [35770/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The process and criteria to be applied in awarding patronage of all new post-primary schools were announced by me in June 2011 and details are available on the Department's website www.education.ie. The application process for patronage of the new post primary schools due to open in September 2015 and 2016 is currently under way. This includes applications for the proposed new post primary school for Balbriggan. The closing date for receipt of applications from prospective patrons was 12 July 2013. As part of the process, my Department will prepare a report on all applications received for consideration by the New Schools Establishment Group who will submit a report to me for final consideration and decision. I expect to be in a position to announce my decision later this year. An application has been received from the patron referred to by the Deputy for the Balbriggan area.

School Patronage

100. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a decision will be made on the patronage of the new school proposed for Knocknacarra, Galway; the names of the potential patrons who have applied for the patronage of this school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35776/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The application assessment process for the patronage of the new primary schools due to open in September 2014, including the new school proposed for Knocknacarra, Galway is currently under way. As part of this process, my Department will prepare a report for consideration by the New Schools Establishment Group who will submit a report to me for final consideration and decision. I expect to be in a position to announce my decision later this year. Three prospective patrons have applied for patronage of the new school in question. These are Lifeways Ireland Limited, City of Galway VEC (now part of Galway & Roscommon Education and Training Board) and Educate Together.

University Governance

101. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide, in tabular form, the statutory limitations on the statutory autonomy of publicly funded universities. [35816/13]

102. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 100 of 11 July 2013, if it is implicit in the answer that he has never

been of the opinion that there were reasonable grounds for contending that the functions of a university were being performed in a manner which prima facie constituted a breach of the laws, statutes, or ordinances applicable to the university and, in addition, that none of his ministerial predecessors were ever of that opinion. [35817/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 101 and 102 together.

The Universities Act 1997 sets out the legislative provisions for the governance of universities and defines the powers and functions of the universities' governing authorities, academic councils and chief officers. I would refer the Deputy to my answers to his previous questions on these matters: number 95 of 24 April; numbers 87 and 92 of 2nd May; number 250 of 14th May; number 355 of 21st May; number 144 of 18th June; number 132 of 27th June and numbers 98, 99, 100 and 101 of 11th July 2013.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

103. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by his Department since January 2013 on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35842/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department has not retained the services of any retired civil or public servants on a short term contract or on a consultancy basis since January 2013 where normal abatement rules do not apply.

School Textbooks Rental Scheme

104. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding schoolbooks; if he has considered the position; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35852/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Department of Education and Skills issued Guidelines for Developing Textbook Rental Schemes in Schools earlier this year. While the Guidelines outline a number of strategies to avoid the need for workbooks or to allow workbooks to be re-used from year to year, it is up to the board of management of each individual school to decide on its own school policy in relation to the use of workbooks in schools.

It should be noted that, according to my Inspectorate, the best teachers use a range of active learning approaches in the classroom rather than over-relying on textbooks and workbooks.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

105. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures and accompanying savings for the duration of the Haddington Road Agreement applicable in his Department and-or non-commercial State sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35859/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The collective agreements in the education sector are set out in Appendix 5 of the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2016 (the Haddington Road Agreement).

As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the Haddington Road Agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to the education sector, the savings arising under the Agreement have been incorporated in the Department's revised estimate for 2013 and further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the vote allocation in the context of the overall estimates process.

Institutes of Technology Issues

106. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the joint upgrading to university technological status in respect of an institution (details supplied); and if the upgrade status will be approved in 2013. [35924/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Three formal expressions of interest were received by the HEA from groups of institutes of technology in applying for designation as technological universities.

The three applications are from:

1. DIT, Institute of Technology Tallaght, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown;
2. Waterford Institute of Technology and Carlow Institute of Technology;
3. Cork Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology, Tralee.

A clear four stage process and criteria for designation were published last year. The three groups of institutes have now passed the first stage and can proceed to the second stage where detailed plans for merger and meeting the robust performance criteria have to be developed. In the third stage, evaluation of these plans by an international expert panel will take place followed by legal mergers and eventual designation for successful applicants.

The timeframe for this will depend on the capacity of the proposed institutions to meet those criteria.

Open Government Partnership

107. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will explain the way the Government's commitment to the Open Government process on the work of his Department; if his Department has entered into any commitments under this process; what this process entails for his Department; and what, if any, timeframes are involved. [35642/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I submitted a letter of intent for Ireland to participate in the Open Government Partnership on behalf of the Government in May. A stakeholder consultation process is now underway for the development of proposals for inclusion in Ireland's Open Government Partnership national action plan. The four core principles of the Open Government Partnership are: Transparency, Accountability, Citizen Participation and Technology and Innovation and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform will consult with citizens, civil society and other interests as well as with Government Departments, in developing proposals for a draft national action plan for approval

by Government containing concrete commitments that would align with these key principles. National action plans cover a two-year period. It is envisaged that Ireland will formally become an Open Government Partnership participating country early in 2014.

National Monuments

108. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his policy on charging entrance fees to national monuments and national historic properties. [35822/13]

109. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the current number of national monuments in State care; the number open to the public; and the number that charge visitors an entrance fee. [35823/13]

110. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the overall annual cost of managing, maintaining and staffing the total number of national monuments in State care in 2010, 2011 and 2012. [35824/13]

111. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total revenue generated from visitor entrance fees at national monuments in State care in 2010, 2011 and 2012. [35825/13]

112. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of persons who visited national heritage attractions, managed by the Office of Public Works, in 2010, 2011 and 2012. [35826/13]

113. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total revenue generated from visitor entrance fees at Office of Public Works managed heritage sites in 2010, 2011 and 2012. [35827/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): I propose to take Questions Nos. 108 to 113, inclusive, together.

The policy in regard to admission fees to National Monument and Heritage sites in State care which are managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) is reflective of a number of factors, including the need on an ongoing basis to defray some of the running costs, the Government's policy of supporting the wider tourism economy and, in some certain cases, the relative popularity of the site in visitor numbers terms.

Admission charges to State run Heritage sites, where they apply, are generally set quite low relative to other private sector comparators and in approximately 40% of OPW's attended (Guided) sites, there are no charges at all. This reflects the Government's wish to encourage interest in our heritage from both domestic and foreign visitors and to seek to minimise the costs to both the general user and the organised Tour Operator sector of experiencing some of the best heritage sites in the country.

This approach is also designed to support the wider tourism and hospitality industry by encouraging visitor footfall in parts of the country that might not otherwise be in a position to draw such visitors. In a small number of particular cases, admission fees are slightly higher, reflecting a need to control the level of visitors somewhat for conservation reasons and to ensure that the overall number is managed so as to remain consistent with the ability of fragile sites to cope sustainably with significant demand.

Notwithstanding this general policy, which has applied for some time, it is clear that in light

of economic pressures on the Exchequer currently, and in particular having regard to the costs involved in maintaining visitor facilities at many of these sites, circumstances may dictate a relatively greater emphasis on cost recovery in the future. However, no decisions have been taken at this time in relation to increasing admission charges at sites, in the interest of continuing to keep costs low to the domestic visitor and the foreign tourist alike.

There are a total of almost 1,000 individual National Monuments in State care at 768 locations around the country. These are managed and maintained by the OPW and include both sites which are in full State ownership and others which are privately-owned but where Guardianship arrangements exist and where the OPW provides maintenance services.

As a general policy, OPW facilitates visitor access to as many National Monument sites as possible. However, access is not always feasible because of a range of issues including physical location, risks associated with dangerous structures and restrictions imposed in some cases by landowners who may wish to limit access, either temporarily or more longer term, by reason of accident risk, livestock etc. OPW would estimate that approximately 10% of the National Monument sites in its care are not accessible at any given time for various reasons.

As part of its remit, the OPW also provides enhanced visitor access, together with Guide facilities in some cases, at 70 of the more prominent visitor locations nationally. These include many of the most iconic heritage sites in the country such as Kilmainham Gaol, the Rock of Cashel, Newgrange etc as well as a number of smaller, less well known properties. Year round access with full Guide services is provided at 24. The remainder (ie 46 no.) are open with Guide services on a seasonal basis on varying dates and for different lengths of seasons generally between March and October. Admission fees are currently charged at 41 out of the 70 guided sites.

The OPW is responsible for the physical care and maintenance of all National Monument sites in State using a direct labour force headquartered at 6 separate Works Depots spread nationally. Works undertaken at National Monument sites fall into 2 broad categories:

- Ongoing light maintenance and small works undertaken by OPW's own direct labour force using materials and supplies taken from general stock on hands:
- Significant larger conservation projects undertaken over a period of years which have supplies of materials specifically provided.

Financial records of expenditures in relation to the management of the National Monuments in State care, including ongoing maintenance works and other overheads such as vehicle fleet costs, consumables, caretaking and other inputs, are kept globally only at a Depot level and are not broken down by site location. The cost of maintenance of the portfolio in the years in question is therefore not available but is subsumed into the overall costs of the OPW National Monuments Service.

The cost of maintaining a Guide Service (ie wage costs for the permanent and seasonal Guide workforce at each of the Guided site locations) for the year 2012 this was €9.4m. The figures for 2011 and 2010 are not available within the time frame as they have to be collated from a number of sources, but will be provided directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

The revenue generated from visitor entrance fees and the respective numbers of visitors in the reference period was as follows:

-	2010	2011	2012
Admissions Income	€6.1m	€6.4m	€6.7m

-	2010	2011	2012
Visitor Numbers (Guided sites only)	3.3m	3.5m	3.8m

(For clarity, it should be noted that some or parts of certain sites are also freely accessible without entering the Visitor Centre facilities concerned (eg Glendalough Monastic Site, Mellifont Abbey) where an admission charge might apply and the actual footfall may therefore be considerably greater, while various events/exhibitions occur on sites from time to time which may also affect visitor numbers, so the overall tallies, though well sourced, must be qualified to some degree.)

Public Sector Pensions Legislation

114. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding pensions; if he can offer any positive news for the person concerned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35769/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The petitioner seeks “a provision in the new Bill [sic] that pension cuts made will be reversed as pay cuts will be.” In the first instance, the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2013 passed into law on the 5th of June, 2013. There is no provision in that Act that pay cuts will be reversed. However these latest pension reductions, representing as they do one of a series of legislated financial emergency measures affecting public service pay and pensions, fall to be reviewed annually by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, as provided for in section 12 of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2013. The next such review, with written report to be provided to the Houses of the Oireachtas, is due to take place no later than 30 June 2014.

It should be pointed out that the pay reductions introduced in 2010 involved reductions ranging between 5% and up to 20%, while the 1 July 2013 pay reductions (for salaries over €65,000) provided for incremental reductions in remuneration ranging between 5.5% and 10%. In addition serving staff had their pay reduced by the Pension related Deduction (PRD) of an average of some 7% in 2009, and by its nature this reduction was *not* reflected in public service pensions.

The Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR) was introduced on 1 January 2011 as a tiered reduction on public service pensions above €12,000 per annum; its effect was to reduce pensions, on average, by about 4%. From 1 January 2012, the PSPR rate on that part of a public service pension above €100,000 was increased from 12% to 20%. From 1 July 2013 the PSPR was increased and extended so that all public service pensions above €32,500 would be impacted by an additional reduction of between 2% and 5%. For most affected pensioners the impact on pension of the reduction of 1 July 2013 will be in the region of 2%.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

115. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the yearly saving to the Exchequer over the course of the Haddington Road agreement from the pay reduction for those earning over €65,000. [35777/13]

117. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform

the yearly saving to the Exchequer over the course of the Haddington Road agreement from the increment pauses. [35779/13]

118. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the yearly saving to the Exchequer over the course of the Haddington Road agreement from additional working hours across the public sector. [35780/13]

119. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a breakdown of the €175 million in projected savings over the course of the Haddington Road agreement from allowing management to maintain services against the backdrop of decreasing staff numbers, facilitate reductions in staff numbers and the associated annual pay bill cost. [35781/13]

120. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the yearly breakdown of the reduction in the costs of teaching supervision and substitution for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement. [35782/13]

121. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide in tabular form the specific Haddington Road agreement measures agreed at a sectoral level, to include the savings allocated to each measure. [35783/13]

122. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a yearly breakdown of the measures and accompanying savings for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement. [35784/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 115 and 117 to 122, inclusive, together.

As I have stated previously in the House, the provisions set out in the Haddington Road Agreement will deliver the targeted savings of €300 million in 2013 and €1 billion by 2016. The savings arising under the Agreement in 2013 have been incorporated in the various votes in the context of the revised estimates which I published last April and further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the vote allocations in the context of the overall estimates process. In addition to the obvious cost benefits, the Agreement provides us with the scope to progress the reform agenda and to deliver unprecedented increases in productivity across the Public Service.

The proposed Agreement is comprised of a number of central measures, which required legislative changes, such as pay, increments and pensions, and a series of sectoral measures such as reductions in overtime rates and non-core payments, increases in working hours across the Public Service and revisions to supervision and substitution payments. The overall savings target of €1 billion is comprised of the following main elements, as set out in the table.

-	2013	Full Year
Savings arising from pay reduction	€102m	€210m
Savings arising from other central measures	€35m	€130m
Savings arising from productivity measures	€50m	€430m
Sector specific measures	€118m	€230m
Total	€305m	€1,000m

Of the €1 billion target, the pay reduction to those earning over €65,000 will deliver approximately €210m. Other central measures, including pension reductions and increment pauses will deliver in the order of €130m, bringing the total amount of savings from central measures

to over €340m.

The Agreement will deliver an unprecedented increase in productivity across the Public Service, through the provision of almost 15 million additional working hours and a range of other efficiency and reform measures. The application of the additional hours will vary by sector depending on local patterns in the demand for services, the scale of on-going reductions in staff numbers and the extent of overtime and agency payments. The additional hours will:

- Reduce the requirement for paid overtime hours and agency costs, thereby leading to direct cash savings;

- Allow management to maintain services against the backdrop of decreasing staff numbers and will also facilitate reductions in staff numbers and the associated annual paybill cost over the course of the Agreement; and

- Facilitate the reduction in the costs of supervision and substitution in schools for the duration of the Agreement, which will yield savings of €125m.

These additional hours will facilitate the delivery of an estimated €430m in set out in the following table.

-	2013	Full Year
Reduced requirement for Overtime and Agency working	€50m	€130m
Elimination of supervision and substitution allowance	€0	€125m
Facilitating headcount reduction	€0	€175m
Total	€50m	€430m

There have been numerous specific measures agreed at the sectoral level. These measures will help to deliver the greatest return for each sector both in terms of cost savings and efficiency gains and ensuring that each sector is making a fair contribution to the overall savings target. These measures will include, for example, changes to overtime rates and non-core payments. In total, these sector specific measures and Agreements will yield savings of almost €230m.

In addition to the various productivity measures, the Agreement provides for further long-term and sustainable workplace reforms in a number of areas. The Agreement will ensure that performance management systems will be put in place in areas where no system currently exists. In addition, in areas where performance management is currently in place, these systems will be strengthened and managers will be held accountable for the performance and development of their staff. The Agreement provides for more effective arrangements to support redeployment on a cross-sectoral and geographical basis. This will enhance management's flexibility for the deployment of staff to areas of most need to ensure continued service delivery.

The Public Service will continue to be to the fore in pioneering flexible working arrangements which can contribute to the efficient and effective business performance as well as enabling staff to balance work/life requirements. However, the multitude of work sharing patterns currently in place can impact on the capacity of organisations to deliver services. The Agreement will allow for the streamlining of these patterns and will ensure a minimum attendance of 50% for all future approved arrangements. Significant progress has been made in restructuring the Public Service in recent years, particularly under the Public Service Agreement. The Agreement will allow for the streamlining of the Public Service to make it a leaner and more efficient organisation. All sectors will be required to bring forward proposals on ways to reduce management numbers and to rationalise grades.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

116. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the yearly saving to the Exchequer over the course of the Haddington Road agreement from pension reductions. [35778/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Haddington Road Agreement (HRA) does not contain any pension reduction measure. In drawing up the HRA, the Labour Relations Commission expressly recognised that Government plans for certain public service pension reductions did not form part of the proposals which comprise the HRA. The relevant paragraph in the HRA, headed “Public Service Pensions”, reads as follows:

Separately to this Agreement, the Parties note that the Government intends to align the reductions in public service pensions in payment with the reductions applied to serving staff. The Parties note that this measure will apply to pensions in payment greater than €32,500 only.

Reductions in those public service pensions valued in excess of €32,500 duly took effect on 1 July 2013, on foot of provisions in the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2013. It is estimated that the saving arising specifically from these pension reductions will amount to a full-year total of €24 million in 2014.

Questions Nos. 117 to 122, inclusive, answered with Question No. 115.

Semi-State Bodies Dividends

123. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his attention has been drawn to the fact that members of the ESB group of unions have initiated a legal challenge against the ESB and the Government regarding the €78.4 million dividend the company is due to pay to the State which the union members allege is unlawful as the payment is based on wrongly prepared accounts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35832/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): A representative from my department attended the AGM of the company at which the Chairman of the board outlined that it had received professional advice that, having taken appropriate legal advice in the matter, the board were satisfied that it would be in order to proceed with the AGM and the payment of the dividend.

The dividend payment, €74.5m of which was due to the Exchequer, was received on the 27th June 2013.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

124. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by his Department since January 2013 on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35849/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): There have been no retired Civil or Public Servants retained by my Department since January 2013 on a short term contract or on a consultancy basis.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

125. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures and accompanying savings for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in his Department and-or non-commercial State sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35866/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As I have stated, the Haddington Road agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the Public Service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to my own Department, the savings arising under the Agreement have been incorporated in the Department's Revised Estimate for 2013 and further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the vote allocations in the context of the overall Estimates process.

The measures applying to my Department and agencies under the aegis of my Department are set out in the relevant sectoral collective agreement under the Haddington Road Agreement, in this case the collective agreement for the Civil Service and NCSSB's. In terms of my own Department, the relevant measures under this collective agreement, including, for example, the additional working hours and the pay reduction for those earning over €65,000, have been implemented from 1 July.

Ministerial Transport

126. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the method used to calculate the cost of ministerial transport in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [35914/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question, since the formation of my Department, the new method of calculating annual costs of ministerial transport is being used. In relation to the use of my car for ministerial travel under this scheme, the total cost in 2012 amounted to €100,974.20. This cost includes mileage (which is to cover car related expenses), the salaries paid to civilian drivers, travel and subsistence paid to the drivers and Employer PRSI contributions in respect of the two drivers. This amount is significantly below the €280,000 average annual cost under the previous domestic ministerial transport regime for each Minister.

IDA Site Visits

127. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of investors and their itineraries that have visited Kildare South constituency in each of the past five years; the results of each visit; the areas visited; the concept of each visit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35628/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am informed by IDA Ireland that in the period 2009 to date in 2013 there have been 7 IDA sponsored site visits by potential investors to County Kildare. Details of the number of site visits in each of those years are set out in the attached tabular statement. Site visits are tracked on a county basis only.

Consequent upon these visits, some further due diligence is on-going by some of the companies, while others have chosen other locations for their investments, both nationally and internationally. Some announcements for the region are pending.

County Kildare forms part of IDA's East Region along with Counties Dublin, Wicklow and Meath. The county has an enviable reputation as a location with a strong track record for attracting leading, world class manufacturing companies such as Intel, Pfizer, Braun, Hewlett Packard and Proctor & Gamble. At present there are 26 IDA supported companies in County Kildare employing over 10,000 people in full and part-time employment.

Table showing the number of IDA sponsored site visits to County Kildare over the period 2009 to date in 2013

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	To date 2013
Kildare	1	2	3	1	0

IDA Portfolio

128. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding the number of factory units in the ownership of his Department or its agencies in Kildare south; the number occupied; the number unoccupied; the cost to the Department of the unoccupied premises for security, electricity, maintenance and so on for past five years; the number of itineraries that visited the units or the number of inquiries made in regard to each unit for each of the past five years; the total capital cost of the vacant premises; if any return has been obtained by the Department since construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35630/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am informed by IDA Ireland that the Agency entered into a 35 year lease commencing in 1983 on 6 units in Newbridge, Co Kildare. One unit is currently occupied and the other five are available for marketing.

The annual cost of security and electricity equates to approximately €12,000 per annum.

I understand that Unit 6 is currently occupied by Industrial Control & Automation and that IDA is currently in negotiation with a third party in respect of Unit 5. There have been no other site visits to the units in last 5 years.

IDA pays rent on the Private Finance buildings and, consequently, no capital costs are associated with these units.

Regulatory Impact Assessment Submissions

129. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if his Department will be making a submission to the Department of Health's Regulatory Impact Analysis on proposed legislation on plain packaging of tobacco products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35656/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): This matter is being considered and will ultimately be decided upon in a whole-of-Government context taking account of the full range of public policy considerations that arise. These considerations are likely to include health and other societal aspects, legal issues and economic impacts, including trading implications and public healthcare costs. In this regard the Minister for Health, Dr James Reilly, T.D., who is leading on this matter, has asked for a Regulatory Impact Assessment to be prepared. This Assessment will draw together the views of a range of stakeholders and interested parties as well as identifying costs and benefits of various policy options. My Depart-

ment will participate in this process as appropriate. A High Level Implementation Group is being established by the Minister for Health to oversee project planning. The Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation will be participating in that Group and the enterprise /trade aspects of any proposals will be of particular interest to my Department. In this regard, I am aware that many of those in the tobacco industry are making their views known directly to the Department of Health or have done so already in the context of that Department's public consultation processes on the EU proposal for a Directive on Tobacco Products.

Fuel Sales

130. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reason that the fee for the calibration of petrol and diesel dispensing pumps has been increased from €25 per pump to €100 per pump; if he is willing to retain the lower fee for small retailers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35775/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Measuring equipment used for trade, including Liquid Fuel Dispensers for petrol and diesel, is subject to control by the NSAI Legal Metrology Service in accordance with the Metrology Acts 1980 to 1998. The regime of control includes approval of new designs of measuring equipment, verification of instruments upon installation and following repair or recalibration, and inspection over the life of the instruments.

Fees are charged for the verification of measuring instruments used for trade purposes under Section 4 of the Metrology Act 1996. The current fee schedule came into effect in November 2004 and the fees have remained unchanged since then. The charges specified in the schedule for Liquid Fuel Dispensers are €100 for the first meter and €25 per additional meter incorporated in the same housing. These charges apply to all operators of liquid fuel dispensers.

In keeping with the strategy of outsourcing verification services, five third party authorised verifiers for Liquid Fuel Dispensers were appointed in 2012 under Section 12 of the Metrology Act 1996. Authorised verifiers are precluded from charging verification fees that are in excess of the equivalent fees stated in the NSAI Legal Metrology fee schedule.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

131. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by his Department since January 2013 on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35847/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): There have been no retired civil or public servants retained by my Department since January 2013, on either a short term contract or on a consultancy basis, where normal abatement rules do not apply.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

132. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures and accompanying savings for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in his Department and/or non-commercial State sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35864/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The measures applying for the duration of the Haddington Road Agreement to my Department and agencies under the aegis of my Department, are set out under Appendix 4, Collective Agreement for Civil Service and non-commercial State sponsored bodies of the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2016.

As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the Haddington Road Agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to my Department, the savings arising under the Haddington Road Agreement have been incorporated in the Department's revised estimate for 2013 and further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the vote allocation in the context of the overall estimates process.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

133. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a domiciliary care allowance appeal will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35568/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received from the person concerned on the 6th September 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 5th October 2012 refusing the allowance. The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against this decision and she was informed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 30th May 2013 that the appeal had not been allowed.

The decision/appeal process for this application is now complete. If the person concerned has additional information which was not available to the deciding and appeals officers when they made their decisions, it is open to her to re-apply for the allowance.

Questions Nos. 134 and 135 withdrawn.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

136. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal for invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35571/13]

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 8th July 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these have been received from the Department, the case in question 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 appeal 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 in relation to social welfare entitlements.

Services for People with Disabilities

137. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons with disabilities for whom the Employ Ability Service has catered for in the past two years; if she will list the supports and subsidies that service delivers for employees with disabilities and their employers; and the grants available for adapting workplace equipment and the cost of any wage subsidies granted in the same period. [35604/13]

138. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection if there was a review of the Employ Ability Service and its supports since it came under the remit of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35605/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 137 and 138 together.

The number of active participants being catered for through the supported employment programme provided under the Employ Ability Service at end 2011 was 2,903 and at end-2012 the equivalent number was 2,762. There has not been a formal review of the Employ Ability Service since it was transferred from FAS into the Department. The Employ Ability Service continues to represent a key element of the activation supports provided by the Department to enable and support people with disabilities to engage in the open labour market.

The aim of the service is to facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into paid employment in the open labour market; to provide support to assist with this integration process; and to help meet the labour requirements of employers. It does so by providing a job-coaching service with clients, including undertaking an Employment Needs Assessment with the jobseeker; identifying the type of employment the job seeker wishes to pursue; developing an Individual Employment Plan; match the participant with suitable employment opportunities; providing any necessary support and coaching in the workplace.

The Employ Ability Service will also work with employers to encourage them to avail of a range of other supports targeted at employers to encourage greater recruitment and retention of people with disabilities. These include in particular the Wage Subsidy Scheme, the Workplace Adaptation Grant and the Employee Retentions Grants Scheme as well as the Job Interview Interpreter Grant and the Personal Reader Grant.

The Wage Subsidy Scheme offers a financial subsidy to employers in the private sector to encourage them to employ people with disabilities. At end June 2013, there were some 1,246 beneficiaries of the scheme. Expenditure on the scheme amounted to some €10.065 m. in 2011 and €10.566m. in 2012.

The Workplace Adaptation Grant scheme is designed to encourage the retention of an employee with a disability by providing funding, up to a current limit of €6,350, towards the additional costs of adapting workplace equipment or the provision of equipment arising from the individual's disability. Applications in excess of this sum can be considered on an individual basis up to a maximum of €9,523 if specialist training for assistive technology is required.

The Employee Retention Grant Scheme provides financial assistance to private sector employers to encourage them to retain employees who acquire an illness, condition or impairment which impacts on their ability to carry out their job. It does so by providing funding to either identify accommodation and/or training to enable the staff member to remain in his/her current position, or to re-train the staff member so that he/she can take up a different position within the organisation. Maximum grants of up to €15,000 are available under this scheme.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

139. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the steps a person has to take to be included in a community employment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35629/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A person interested in participating on a Community Employment Scheme should contact their local DSP Employment Services/Intreo Office which is the sole access and referral point for entry onto Community Employment. An Employment Services Officer will then ensure the referral of eligible and suitable clients to Community Employment schemes. The criteria for participating on the Community Employment Programme are based on age and length of time in receipt of various qualifying social welfare payments. The qualifying social welfare payments include:

- Jobseekers Benefit;
- Jobseekers Allowance;
- One Parent Family Payment;
- Widows/Widowers Contributory Pension;
- Widows/Widowers Non-Contributory Pension;
- Deserted Wife's Benefit; and
- Farm Assist.

The Community Employment Programme has two options:

- Part-Time Integration Option (PTI);
- Part-Time Job Option (PTJ).

In general, the Part-time Integration Option is for people of 25 years or over who are receiving social welfare payments for 1 year or more, and people of 18 years or over in receipt of disability-related payments. The Part-time Job Option is for people who are 35 years or over and in receipt of social welfare payments for 3 years or longer. Specific groups such as travellers and refugees aged 18 or over are eligible for both options. In addition, certain eligibility requirements are waived for participants referred for drugs rehabilitation training.

Eligibility to participate on the Community Employment Programme is linked to those in receipt of an Irish social welfare payment. Those persons not meeting the criteria under the Part-time Integration or Part-time Job Options, or who are signing for credits, or are receiving social welfare benefits from a different country, are not eligible to participate on Community Employment.

In addition to the above criteria it is important to note that time spent on Tús, Rural Social Scheme, Springboard, JobBridge or Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) will not count towards the qualifying period for eligibility to CE. The only exceptions to this rule are if the BTEA was being received for second-level education purposes. Tús participants who have completed 52 weeks on that programme can progress onto CE for a maximum of one year where it is considered appropriate within the context of an agreed progression plan mediated by Intreo/DSP Employment Services.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

140. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection if compensation paid by the State to child victims of abuse is assessed as means for jobseeker's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35659/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Social welfare legislation provides for the disregard of certain compensation awards when assessing the means of a person for social assistance purpose, including jobseeker's allowance. The compensation awards disregarded include awards made by the Residential Institutions Redress Board.

Invalidity Pension Applications

141. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she can explain the way, when under the medical protocols on the Department's website, under the prognosis for fibromyalgia, it states: "Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition. Although symptoms may vary in intensity, the condition is unlikely to completely resolve", a decision can be made to refuse invalidity pension on medical grounds to a person who submitted correspondence from a consultant stating he or she suffers from profound fibromyalgia; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35661/13]

142. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection the basis on which a person who has submitted correspondence from a consultant stating that he or she suffers from profound fibromyalgia has been refused invalidity pension on medical grounds; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35673/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 141 and 142 together.

Medical Assessors are all fully qualified medical practitioners with several years of experience in a variety of medical fields. The majority of Medical Assessors have additional post-graduate specialist qualifications. All are registered with the Irish Medical Council (IMC).

They are employed by the DSP to provide independent, impartial medical opinions regarding the medical eligibility of customers to the DSP's various illness-related schemes, for the guidance of the Deciding Officers in the scheme areas.

Their opinions are based on international evidence-based medical guidelines and protocols and informed by clinical experience and clinical judgement, recognising the bio-psycho-social model of disability.

Various relevant factors are considered in performing their assessments, including those involving a diagnosis of fibromyalgia, including:

1. The customer's impairment i.e. the illness or accident. What symptoms they currently have. What investigations, treatments (medical or surgical), they have received and what the prognosis of the condition is.

2. The customer's account as to how they consider themselves to be adversely affected by their condition with special emphasis on how it affects their ability to cope with the Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and work related activities. Consideration is also given to any restriction in social participation. This information is gained directly from the customer in an in-person assessment or via a questionnaire issued to the customer for a desk assessment.

3. All additional medical evidence is considered e.g. medical reports completed by the customer's GP, any specialist reports, results of investigations, X-rays, CT and MRI scans, and blood tests etc.

4. Any co-morbidity which might exist, in addition to their primary condition, is also taken into consideration.

5. The customer's vocational and educational experience is also taken into consideration.

Question No. 143 withdrawn.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

144. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a determination will be made in an appeal for a carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35806/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that there is no record of any appeal by the person concerned having been received by that office. 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 in relation to social welfare entitlements.

Pension Provisions

145. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection when she expects a report back from the Pensions Board following the requirement of pension schemes to submit funding proposals by 30 June 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35835/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The process of submitting a funding proposal requires that trustees arrange for an actuary to carry out a valuation of the DB pension scheme's liabilities and assets at regular intervals and submit an actuarial valuation certificate to the Pensions Board outlining the funding position of the scheme. The date of each scheme valuation must be not later than 3 years after the last date of the previous valuation for that scheme.

If the actuary certifies that the scheme has insufficient assets to satisfy the Funding Standard, the schemes trustees must ensure that a funding proposal is forwarded to The Pensions Board with the actuarial funding certificate. The funding proposal must outline measures which ensure that the scheme could reasonably be expected to satisfy the Funding Standard by 2023 (in line with changes made in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act, 2012). Following approval of the funding proposals, schemes report to the Pensions Board on their compliance with the funding proposal on an annual basis.

The suspension of the Funding Standard in 2008 meant that trustees were not required to submit funding proposals, however some schemes continued to comply during this time. Therefore, not all schemes had to submit funding proposals by the 30th June deadline, depending on the last date of valuation, and some schemes may already have funding proposals in place and approved by the Pensions Board to deal with their deficits. With the reinstatement of the Funding Standard, approximately 300 schemes were due to send in funding proposals by the 30th June 2013. 212 of these schemes did not submit funding proposals.

The Pensions Board has, by now, formally written to the schemes that have not submitted funding proposals to ascertain their particular circumstances. The Board will decide what steps to take scheme by scheme on a measured basis and taking account of the individual scheme circumstances.

The reason for the delay in trustees responding will become clearer as the Pensions Board engages with schemes individually. The Funding Standard had been suspended since 2008 with the date extended on a number of occasions, and trustees need to adjust to the fact that the regulatory structure has been reinstated. A number of schemes have already confirmed to the Board that submission of their funding standard is imminent. There also appeared to be an unfounded expectation that the date would be extended again and this contributed to the number that missed the deadline.

Following engagement by the Pensions Board and once pension schemes have submitted their funding proposals, it will then be possible within the coming months for the Board to provide a more accurate indication of the level of under-funding in DB pension schemes. It will also allow for the impact of the many measures already introduced to assist DB schemes to be assessed, including the potential benefits to schemes of the use of sovereign annuities/bonds.

Pension Provisions

146. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to enforce the minimum funding standard on the ESB's defined benefit pension scheme. [35836/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Pensions legislation provides for the supervision and regulation of defined benefit occupational pension schemes and, in that context, requires schemes to meet the commitments they have made to their members. This method by which this is regulated is set out in the Funding Standard, the operation of which is supervised by the Pensions Board.

Section 52 of the 1990 Pensions Act provides that, by way of Regulation, certain defined benefit pension schemes may be exempt from the requirement to comply with the Funding Standard on the basis that "some or all of the benefits under specified schemes or categories of schemes are, or may be, paid in whole or in part out of moneys provided from the Central Fund or moneys provided by the Oireachtas".

EU Directive 2003/41/EC on the activities and supervision of institutions for occupational retirement provision (the IORPS Directive) provides that a Member State may choose to exempt a funded defined benefit pension scheme from the application of a national funding standard only if the scheme is "made under statute, pursuant to legislation, and is guaranteed by a public authority". Essentially, in order to exclude a scheme from the requirements of the Funding Standard, the payment of scheme benefits must be guaranteed by the State.

The State does not guarantee or accept any liability for the funded schemes of the commercial State companies.

In this regard, a case has been made by the ESB Pensions Governance Forum to the relevant Government departments seeking exclusion from the requirements of the Funding Standard. This case is being examined at present.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

147. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by her Department since January 2013 on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35850/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department has not retained any retired civil or public servants on short term contracts without applying the normal abatement rules. Following an open competition, the Pensions Board, which is under the aegis of my Department, in November 2011 and January 2012, employed two people on 3 year temporary contracts who were previously employed by An Garda Síochána and who are in receipt of Garda pensions. Abatement of pension does not apply in respect of retired members of An Garda Síochána who subsequently take up public sector employment.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

148. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures and accompanying savings for the duration of the Haddington Road Agreement applicable in her Department and/or non-commercial State sponsored bodies under the aegis of her Department. [35867/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The measures applying to my Department and State sponsored bodies under the aegis of my Department are set out in the relevant sectoral collective agreement under Haddington Road. The Department aims to achieve maximum benefits from the provisions agreed in the Haddington Road Agreement. In this regard, a subcommittee of the Management Board has been established with the aim of identifying areas for savings and efficiencies and realising the full potential of the provisions in the agreement.

Strategic areas under consideration by the subcommittee include the following: maximising the availability of additional hours through increased productivity, reducing recourse to overtime, reducing staff numbers in sections and business areas as appropriate, and redeployment. The committee will also consider the potential arising from banked hours, streamlining work-sharing arrangements and possible extension of the current flexitime core hours. The subcommittee will be examining the potential to make savings of this nature in consultation with management of respective business areas.

As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the Haddington Road Agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to the Department, the savings arising under HRA have been incorporated in the Department's revised estimate for 2013 and further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the vote allocation in the context of the overall estimates process.

Departmental Bodies Board Remuneration

149. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 138 and 139 of 7 March 2013 that the only specific cost saving he can actually quantify resulting from his stated intention to abolish the statutorily independent boards of the National Library and Museum are the fees paid to board members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35584/13]

150. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht fur-

ther to Parliamentary Question Nos. 138 and 139 of 7 March 2013, if he has evaluated the cost to the National Museum and National Library of the loss of expertise contained on their boards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35585/13]

151. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 138 and 139 of 7 March 2013, in which he stated (details supplied), if the considerable administrative costs of his proposals in relation to his intended abolition of the independent boards of the National Museum and National Gallery have ever been weighted in any cost benefit analysis; if he will now make that analysis available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35586/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 149 to 151, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Public Service Reform Plan published by the Government on 17th November 2011 outlined a series of rationalisation measures, some of which related to a number of the bodies funded from my Department's Vote Group. The Deputy will of course also be aware that Public Service Reform Plan is not solely focussed on monetary savings but also on creating efficiencies and streamlining services and structures. In this context, my Department developed a comprehensive and practical approach to the implementation of the various Government Decisions in this area, which was endorsed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

As part of that process, the Government has decided that the boards of the National Museum and National Library will be discontinued and, as board fees totalling over €80,000 were paid out to members of these boards in 2012, direct recurring annual savings of that order will be made as a result. In addition, the current provision by my Department of shared corporate support services to the National Archives will be extended to the National Museum and National library. This will lead to significant savings on administration, as it will facilitate greater sharing of staff and expertise, as well as freeing up staff of the institutions for frontline and core services. Savings of approximately €200,000 are expected to be achieved in staff costs, with a further €350,000 in savings to be achieved through additional shared services.

In relation to the Deputy's query as to whether the administrative costs of the proposals in relation to the intended abolition of the independent boards of the National Museum and National Gallery have ever been weighted in any cost benefit analysis, I trust the Deputy is referring to the National Library in his question rather than the National Gallery and must advise the Deputy again that the decision taken by Government in relation to the National Library and National Museum is not solely focussed on monetary savings but also on creating efficiencies and streamlining services and structures. I should also say that while no formal cost benefit analysis was undertaken in relation to this matter, a full review and consideration of the issues arising in the context of the discontinuation of the boards of the National Museum and National Library was undertaken.

Departmental Bodies Expenditure

152. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 144, 145, 146, 147 and 148 of 7 March 2013, which projects named were funded specifically under subhead A.6, the proportion of the total expenditure under subhead A.6 these amount to for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35587/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The following projects named in my reply to the Parliamentary Questions referred to above were funded from the A.6. Subhead of my Department's vote in 2012:

The Hunt Museum, Archbishop Marsh's Library, National Print Museum, James Joyce Centre, National Maritime Museum, Science Gallery, Cork Butter Museum, Irish Museum's Association, Regional Museums Programme, Mobility of Collections, Culture Night 2012, Cooperation with Northern Ireland and Irish Manuscripts Commission.

However, as I stated in my reply of 7 March 2013 the audit of 2012 expenditure by my Department has yet to be completed by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. As such I cannot advise at this point on the proportion of the total expenditure under subhead A.6 that these amount to for 2012.

Departmental Reports

153. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 6 of 30 May 2013, the timeline line for the tender or other process that originated the review currently being conducted by Bonnar Keenlyside; the terms of reference for same; if the report will be published in full; the current likely date for completion; the likely date for publication; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35588/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): After a tendering process conducted by my Department in 2012, Bonnar Keenlyside was awarded the contract referred to. The study is to encompass, inter alia, an assessment of the longitudinal impacts of the event. Such impact studies, by their nature, look at the impacts over time of events and the shorter end of such a span of analysis would focus on the 2-3 years post event.

I understand that the consultant is endeavouring to draw the study to a close and I expect to be in receipt thereof in the autumn. I will make a decision on publication of the study when I have considered its findings. I will directly furnish the Deputy with the terms of reference.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Relocation Options

154. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of bog relocations that have been completed; the number where alternative locations have been sourced that will meet the demand for relocation; the number where alternatives have yet to be sourced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35697/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Arrangements for the relocation of turf cutters to non-designated bogs have been made as regards a group from Clara Bog special area of conservation in County Offaly and a group from Carrownagappul Bog and Curraghlehanagh Bog special areas of conservation in County Galway. The group from Clara Bog commenced turf cutting at the relocation site in Killeranny, County Offaly, in June 2012, where 23 qualifying turf cutters have now been accommodated. Turf cutting for the 2013 season took place on this site in April last.

Progress has been made with a view to the relocation of turf cutters from Ballynafagh Bog special area of conservation in County Kildare to Timahoe North, County Kildare, which is in the ownership of Bord na Móna. Final agreement has not yet been reached. My Department envisages that qualifying turf cutters from Ballynafagh Bog will be able to commence cutting in

the relocation site during the 2014 turf cutting season provided that final agreement is reached with them.

Progress has also been made with a view to the relocation of a small group of turf cutters from Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough special area of conservation in County Roscommon to Togher, County Roscommon, which is in the ownership of Bord na Móna. My Department envisages that this group of qualifying turf cutters will be able to commence cutting in the relocation site during the 2014 turf cutting season provided that final agreement is reached with them.

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

Relocation is a very complex process, in terms of investigating suitable sites for turf quality and quantity, the infrastructure/drainage works required, establishing the number who can be accommodated on the site, the cost and feasibility of land purchase or lease, and possible planning and Environmental Impact Assessment requirements. In that regard, Bord na Móna has assessed in the region of 50 potential relocation sites at the request of my Department. Bord na Móna is proceeding to negotiate with landowners in relation to the purchase or long term lease of sites.

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

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Issues

155. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will review the content and conditions of contracts issued to turf cutters under the cessation scheme; the number of contracts issued and the numbers returned to date; the number under each compensation relocation category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35698/13]

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 interim legal agreement is required in the case of relocation sites because, for the major-

ity 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.

In the region of 1,210 legal agreements have been issued and my Department is continuing to issue agreements to qualifying applicants. Applicants have been requested to return the completed legal agreements within four months of the date of issue. A significant number of completed legal agreements have been returned to my Department. However, the figures that the Deputy has requested are not readily available.

Animal Welfare Bodies

156. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the assistance he will provide to the Irish Seal Sanctuary, whose future will be in jeopardy if it does not have a site or fresh financial prospects by 1 November 2013. [35700/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): My responsibilities under the Wildlife Acts relate principally to the conservation of habitats and populations of protected species, rather than the rehabilitation of individual animals.

My Department does not have funding available to it to assist this particular project.

Departmental Agencies Staff Recruitment

157. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his plans to seek a relaxation of the public service embargo on recruitment for the post of head of genealogy and chief herald at the National Library of Ireland; if consideration has been given to the self-funding nature of the post; his plans to amend legislation that requires such a post is filled from within the staffing of the library; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35701/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I can assure the Deputy that I am fully aware of all the issues surrounding the filling of the post of Chief Herald at the National Library. As part of the Government Reform Plan, I will shortly be bringing a proposal to Government on the legislation required to implement the required reforms at the National Library and National Museum. I am considering the most appropriate action for the post of Chief Herald in the context of that legislation.

Architectural Heritage

158. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will confirm if Kiltoghert Creamery, Carrick-on-Shannon, County Leitrim which was established in 1901 is a protected building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35639/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Part IV of the Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended, provides for the protection of architectural heritage and gives local planning authorities primary responsibility to identify and protect architectural heritage by including structures on the Record of Protected Structures. The making of an addition to, or a deletion from, the Record of Protected Structures is a reserved function of the relevant planning authorities.

Kiltoghert Creamery, Carrick-on-Shannon is not included on the Record of Protected Structures for County Leitrim and I refer the Deputy to Leitrim County Council as the appropriate body for further information in relation to this structure.

Heritage Council Funding

159. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding available to develop buildings of historical interest as a specialist museum and interpretive centre in rural areas. [35641/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): While there is no capital scheme targeted, per se, at this area, my Department operates an annual grant scheme targeted at regional museums, libraries and galleries. I announced a series of awards under that scheme for 2013 recently. Details of the scheme and the announcement of the awards can be found on www.ahg.gov.ie/cultures/schemes.

Special Areas of Conservation Appeals

160. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 348 of 30 April 2013, when the special area of conservation appeal will take place; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35788/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The appellant in question is one of a number for this Special Area of Conservation who opted for a Stage 2 formal hearing of their case before the Designated Areas Appeals Advisory Board. All of the outstanding objections on this site have now been processed through Stage 1 of the appeals process, and the Board is now in a position to commence the formal appeals process in relation to all Stage 2 appeals. In this context, I understand that the Board has recently written to the person concerned, along with all of the other remaining appellants on this Special Area of Conservation, outlining the procedures of the Board, and requesting the submission of detailed scientific reports in support of the appeals. The Board will also require detailed scientific reports from the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department. Scheduling of formal appeal hearings cannot be done until all of the required reports, etc., are received by the Board.

World Heritage Sites

161. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the current status of the tentative list of seven candidate sites submitted to UNESCO for potential World Heritage Site status in March 2010. [35828/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): UNESCO sets out a formal process for State signatories to the World Heritage Convention for the purpose of nominating properties on their territory for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List. A particular criterion is for a site to be considered to be of outstanding universal value, defined by UNESCO as meaning of “cultural and or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.”

The nomination process is initiated by the relevant State authorities drawing up a Tentative List of what they consider to be the most important heritage sites within their national boundaries. Following a public consultation process and consideration by an expert advisory group, a new Tentative List for Ireland was approved and submitted to UNESCO in March 2010 containing the following sites: the Burren; Céide Fields and North West Mayo Boglands; the Monastic City of Clonmacnoise and its Cultural Landscape; the Historic City of Dublin; early Medieval Monastic Sites (Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Glendalough, Inis Cealtra, Kells and Monasterboice); the Royal Sites of Ireland (Cashel, Dún Ailinne, Hill of Uisneach, Rathcroghan Complex, Tara Complex and potentially Navan Fort in Armagh); western Stone Forts (Aran Islands - 7 forts, Cahercommaun, The Burren, Caherconree, Staigue, Benagh and Dingle Peninsula.

The nomination of a property to the World Heritage List is a significant undertaking that requires the development of comprehensive nomination documentation, including a management plan for the property. Following submission of a nomination to UNESCO, it is evaluated by three advisory bodies: the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS); the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). Once the site has been evaluated, the intergovernmental World Heritage Committee makes the final decision regarding the site’s inclusion on the World Heritage List.

I believe that there are significant economic and cultural benefits to be gained from having additional Irish sites added to UNESCO’s World Heritage list. I also share UNESCO’s view that the nomination process must be driven at a local level and enjoy strong support amongst the communities within the potential world heritage areas. Against that background, in order to further progress the nomination process for the sites on the current Tentative List, I have arranged a seminar in the Autumn for local authorities and relevant local/community groups from areas with sites on the Tentative List.

The objective of the seminar will be to guide and equip participants, in particular the local authorities, to produce the detailed material needed by my Department to support the preparation and submission of substantive applications to UNESCO for World Heritage inscription. The seminar will assemble relevant experts, local authorities and other groups and provide a forum where all elements of applying for and retaining World Heritage status will be explored and explained. My Department will provide all assistance possible to local authorities and communities wishing to progress a site from the Tentative List towards nomination. I expect that, following the Autumn seminar, there will be a substantive basis for advancing one or more sites from the current Tentative List with a view to inscription on the World Heritage list.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

162. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by his Department, since January 2013, on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35838/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I wish to advise the Deputy that no retired civil or public servants have been retained in my Department since January 2013 on either a short term contract or on a consultancy basis where abatement rules do not apply.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

163. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures, and accompanying savings, for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in his Department and-or non-commercial State sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35855/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The measures applying to my Department and agencies under the aegis of my Department are set out in the sectoral collective agreement under Haddington Road in respect of the Civil Service and Non-Commercial Semi-State Boards.

As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Haddington Road Agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to my Department, the savings arising under HRA have been incorporated in the Departments revised estimate for 2013 and further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the vote allocation in the context of the overall estimates process.

Industrial Development

164. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the measures being taken to support the creative industries particularly in the north west to increase their export potential and grow employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33519/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): In general, the creative industries are considered to encompass advertising, design, fashion, R&D, architecture, crafts, ICT, software, the audiovisual industry, publishing, music and games. The Minister with primary responsibility for the development of these areas is my colleague, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

The creative industries are frequently coupled with the cultural industries and collectively described as the “cultural and creative industries” or CCIs. The CCIs encompass the list above as well as the arts, film, culture and cultural heritage.

In my area of responsibility, funding is generally directed to support the cultural element of the CCIs. It is delivered directly from my Department to many of the national cultural institutions – the National Gallery, the National Museum, the National Archives, the National Concert Hall, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Crawford Gallery, the Chester Beatty Library and to other bodies through the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board. Details of allocations are available in the Annual Estimates Volume and through the websites of the Arts Council and the

Irish Film Board www.artscouncil.ie and www.irishfilmboard.ie., respectively.

There are two EU programmes operating in these areas - the Media Programme and the Culture Programme. The Media Programme is the EU support programme for the European audiovisual industry (details available at www.mediadeskireland.ie). The Culture Programme is the EU support programme for organisations working in the field of culture (details available at www.ccp.ie).

A new framework programme for the sector - the Creative Europe Programme - will run from 2014-2020. The new programme will amalgamate the current Culture and MEDIA programmes under a common framework and will also create an entirely new facility to improve access to finance. The recent Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union finalised all the details of this new programme and it is expected to be passed into operation shortly.

Departmental Expenditure

165. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will set out, in tabular form, the expenditure by his Department under subheads A6 and A7 in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35936/13]

166. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will set out the following information, the name of the specific scheme if any under which each grant of or expenditure of money was made; the separate criteria of each such scheme in each instance; if he will provide this Deputy with a copy of the criteria of each scheme under which grants were made and moneys disbursed; if the criteria of any scheme relevant to expenditure by his Department under sub-head A.6 and A.7 in 2012 are on his Departments website and if in each case will he provide the Uniform Resource Locator address of the specific page on his website where they are available; if he will explain in relation to each scheme under which grants were made and money disbursed under sub-head A.6 and A.7 in 2012, the composition of the body of officials or other persons as well as their qualifications, who either took the funding decision or advised him on the relevant funding decision; if any persons from outside his Department was involved in the funding decisions or advised him on the relevant funding decision that were involved; the criteria by which the persons concerns were chosen and if there was any advertisement inviting persons to put themselves forward for selection to be included in such decision making processes; the appeals mechanism if any in relation to funding decisions under any scheme in operation for the grant and disbursement of moneys from his Department under sub-head A.6 and A.7 in 2012; the criteria for any such appeal; if he will make a copy of same available to this Deputy; if he will state if they are available on his departmental website and if he provide the Uniform Resource Locator address of the specific page on his website where they are available; the composition of the body of persons involved in adjudicating appeals against funding decision(s) or advising him regarding same from persons or organisations who unsuccessfully applied under advertised schemes for funds available from sub-head A.6 and A.7 in 2012; if any persons from outside his Department were involved in adjudicating appeals the funding decisions or advised him on the relevant funding decision were involved; the criteria by which the persons concerned were chosen; if there was any advertisement inviting persons to put themselves forward for selection to be included in such decision making processes; if he will answer separately each part of this question; if there is any reason why he either cannot or will not to provide a separate and distinct answer in relation to that part of the question explaining and setting out the reason that part of this question cannot or will not be answered separately; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35937/13]

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

take Questions Nos. 165 and 166 together.

As the Deputy is aware, my Department, which was established in June 2011, administers and delivers a wide range of programmes and measures, descriptions of which are all available on its website at <http://www.ahg.gov.ie/>.

In view of the wide range of my Department's schemes and programmes, and the large volumes of payments and grants made on an ongoing basis, it is not possible to compile and collate the information sought by the Deputy in the time available.

However, if the Deputy has specific queries relating to a particular programme or grant, I would be glad to seek to provide him with relevant information in that regard. Similarly, if the Deputy would like specific information in relation to a particular scheme or project, I would be glad to arrange to have any such request from him examined. In the meantime, I have asked my officials to aggregate the information sought.

Fisheries Protection

167. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will acknowledge that the Irish inshore fishermen have suffered from restrictions imposed by regulations on the eel fishery industry; his views on whether the social, cultural and historic effects were not taken into consideration at the time of the ban; if he will further acknowledge that the EU Directive responsible for the imposed regulations was in fact initially intended to allow for a 40% escapement of adult silver eels to the sea to spawn and not intended to result in a total ban on eel fishing which was imposed here at the time; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the European Parliament's fisheries Committee has recently rejected a ban proposed by a Green Party activist calling for a complete ban on eel fishing similar to that currently imposed here; if his further attention has been drawn to the fact that the committee subsequently decided to place greater emphasis on using scientific evidence to address declining stocks and that it was agreed that any changes must involve consultations with fishing communities; if he will review the UK's policy to increase silver eel populations to 40% of historic pre 1980's levels with a view to potentially adopting this practice here; his views on whether the original proposals were far too restrictive and commit to considering re-opening the eel fishery here following on from the undertakings given at the time when it was closed to review the position; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35649/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): I can inform the Deputy that this is a European wide shared eel stock where the sexually maturing eels leave European shores to spawn in the Saragossa Sea and the new generation return as glass eels to the European coastline. The International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES) indicated that the European Eel stock is at an all-time historic low and continues to decline. The returning juvenile eels are at between 1-10% of the levels pre-1980.

The eel has a long life cycle - 18 years on average - and the legacy of poor recruitment still has to work through the system and the generations with further declines likely in the medium term. Consequently adequate stock recovery is a longer term goal.

The factors identified as being likely contributors to declining stocks include fisheries, turbine mortality, loss of habitat and also contaminants of eel and introduced parasites. The parasite (*Anguillicola*) which infects the swim bladder was introduced into Europe in the late 1970s from Asia and was introduced into Ireland in the 1980s. I am advised that it is highly probable

that the parasite will hinder recovery. Management measures will focus on reducing any further spread of the parasite and any stocking which may be considered should avoid as much as possible waters that contain the parasite.

Factors in the ocean may also be influencing the number and quality of spawners reaching the Sargasso Sea to breed and the numbers of glass eel subsequently returning to the coast of Europe.

The EC Regulation (Council Regulation 1100/2007) for the recovery of the European eel stock required Member States to establish Eel Management Plans (EMPs) for implementation in 2009. The objective of each EMP is to reduce anthropogenic mortalities so as to permit with high probability the escapement to the sea of at least 40 % of the silver eel biomass relative to the best estimate of escapement that would have existed if no anthropogenic influences had impacted the stock. The EMPs are required to be prepared with the purpose of achieving this objective.

Under the EC Regulation, Ireland is required to monitor the eel stock, evaluate current silver eel escapement and post-evaluate implemented management actions aimed at reducing eel mortality and increasing silver eel escapement. The Irish EMP, submitted to the EU in January 2009 and accepted by the EU in June 2009, outlined the main management actions aimed at reducing eel mortality and increasing silver eel escapement to the sea. The EMP included two cross-border agreements, with the Neagh Bann IRBD rivers flowing into Carlingford Lough from the Republic of Ireland and into Dundalk Bay being reported in a plan for the Eastern RBD (the Eastern Eel Management Unit) and one transboundary eel management plan in respect of the North Western IRBD and prepared by the then Northern Regional Fisheries Board, the Loughs Agency and Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL).

The four main management actions in the Irish Eel Management Plan were as follows; cessation of the commercial eel fishery and closure of the market mitigation of the impact of hydropower, including a comprehensive trap and transport plan to be funded by the ESB ensure upstream migration of juvenile eel at barriers, and improvement of water quality. The Irish EMP also outlined a national monitoring programme for sampling catch and surveys of local eel stocks. Appropriate scientific assessment monitors the implementation of the plans.

Given the implications of the scientific advice, the consideration of practical management implications and the conservation and recovery imperative (contingent upon commensurate actions across Europe), the precautionary approach was adopted in accordance with the recommendations of the National Eel Working Group and the eel fishery was ceased.

In 2012, a review of the management of Eel in Ireland was undertaken as required by the EU regulation, including full scientific evaluation and a public consultation conducted by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI). As part of this consultation many issues were raised and considered, full details of the outputs of the public consultation are available via the IFI website. The review of scientific and management advice and inputs from the public consultation resulted in a decision to continue with the cessation of the commercial eel fishery and closure of the market for the period from 2012 to 2015. Ireland's eel management plan will be reviewed again in 2015.

In relation to the EU Parliament, I understand that Swedish Green MEP Isabella Lovin proposed amendments to the EU regulation. However, as there is a scheduled review of all Member States Management plans being undertaken by the EU Commission in collaboration with the ICES/EIFAAC Eel Working Group, the Parliament concluded that any changes should be based on the results of this review. This review will take into account the management actions proposed by Member States and the actions that were undertaking during the years 2009 to 2011. It is expected that a response from the Eel Working Group and the EU Commission

will be available in 2014.

The UK Management plan contains a combination of stocking glass eels, reduced fishing seasons, reducing the effects of barriers by installing eel passes and the introduction of screenings at installations. The review by the EU Commission will evaluate the UK management plans. Advice from the ICES Eel Working Group 2012 report recommends an EU-wide approach to assessing stocking and determining the net benefit to the stock. Stocking is not included as a management action in Ireland's eel management plan and surplus elver recruits were not identified in the 2009-2011 period to facilitate a stocking programme and it is not envisaged to purchase foreign glass eel during the next three years.

Broadband Services Provision

168. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which he has identified the existence of particular black spots throughout the country in relation to the availability of broadband services; when he expects such issues to be address in full with particular reference to meeting the needs of the business, domestic and commercial sectors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35548/13]

169. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when the full scale of anticipated modern high speed broadband services are likely to become available in all regions throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35549/13]

170. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which it is expected that the quality and extent of broadband services here is likely to achieve world class standards, with particular reference to the availability of such services throughout the industrial, educational, domestic and medical services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35550/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):
I propose to take Questions Nos. 168 to 170, inclusive, together.

The Digital Agenda for Europe set out specific targets for the achievement of high speed broadband services across all Member States. Ireland'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 30Mbps are available to all of our citizens and businesses 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.

The Plan aims to deliver high speed broadband to all parts of Ireland through two principal means:

(a) by providing a policy and regulatory framework that assists in accelerating and incentivising commercial investment, and

(b) by providing a State-led investment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest.

The National Broadband Plan envisages that industry will be the key driver of investment with State intervention only where there is market failure. Since the publication of the Plan, investments by the commercial sector are underway in both fixed line and wireless high speed broadband services. There is evidence that industry is investing beyond the targets to which

they committed in the Plan with investments of up to €1bn underway.

In order to progress the State-led investment, a full procurement process must be designed and EU State Aids approval must be obtained. My Department recently launched a formal mapping exercise, the results of which will inform the level of Government interaction that may be required and the areas that need to be targeted in the State-led investment so as to deliver on the targets envisaged in the National Broadband Plan. It will also form a critical input to the EU State Aids application in respect of any State-led intervention and is a necessary prerequisite for State Aids approval.

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.

Implementation of the National Broadband Plan will be complemented by the National Digital Strategy, the first phase of which I launched on 11 July last. It focuses on digital engagement, which will be crucial if we are to achieve the optimal economic and social use of the Internet by business, government and individuals.

The Government remains firmly committed to increasing the availability countrywide of quality next generation broadband services and to ensuring that citizens, businesses and all parts of society are motivated, empowered and have the requisite connectivity to interact effectively in a digital environment.

Mobile Telephony Services Provision

171. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which directly or through the Regulator, efforts are being made to ensure an improved quality of mobile phone services throughout all regions in the country with particular reference to eliminating black spots or areas that have consistently experienced poor or inadequate services in this regard; the extent to which reports are being sought from the service providers with a view to addressing apparent deficiencies by region or county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35551/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The provision of telecommunications services in Ireland generally occurs within a competitive liberalised market. The provision of mobile telecommunications networks within that market is also subject to a requirement to secure the necessary wireless telegraphy licence to access the required radio spectrum.

The terms and conditions of the required wireless telegraphy licences and the associated monitoring of compliance are matters for the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg), which is responsible for regulating both the postal and telecommunications markets. ComReg, which is accountable to Committees of the Oireachtas in accordance with s34 of the Communications Regulation Act 2002, is independent in the exercise of these functions.

I am confident that with the continued significant investment being made by the mobile operators, including the imminent roll-out of 4G services, the overall quality of telephone and broadband services will continue to improve. I am aware also that in addition to its 4G rollout plans at least one mobile operator has announced plans to upgrade its network, particularly in rural areas, providing enhanced voice and broadband services.

Bullying of Children

172. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which he, directly or in unison with his EU colleagues, can address the issue of cyberbullying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35552/13]

180. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent if any to which communications technology can be utilised to prevent unwarranted, unwelcomed and uninvited electronic communication resulting in stalking or bullying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35560/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):
I propose to take Questions Nos. 172 and 180 together.

As the Deputies will be aware, Social Media are online platforms that allow people create, share and exchange information, and to comment amongst themselves in virtual communities and networks. To date, these media have not been subject to a formal regulatory regime akin to that used to 'regulate' traditional radio and television broadcast media, either in Ireland or in other jurisdictions. There is a range of reasons for this, not least the rapidly evolving nature of the technologies involved, the sensitivities around regulating media and the multi-jurisdictional nature of the Internet.

It is important to acknowledge the economic and social benefits that the widespread use of social media have brought to people, communities and to business. However, some of the issues that have arisen as a consequence of this bear consideration. These challenges include dealing with harassment and bullying online, as well as issues around defamation, data protection and even copyright.

There has been a very considerable amount of discussion on these matters in the recent past at EU and Council of Europe level, in which my Department has been involved. Indeed this matter is also the subject of a fundamental debate at EU and national level at present, a fact reflected by the recent decision of the Joint Oireachtas Committee to examine the issue.

As Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, I have policy responsibility for providing a supportive legislative and regulatory environment to facilitate the development of high quality communications infrastructure and services. However, I should highlight that I do not have sole responsibility for addressing how that infrastructure is used. Responsibility, in the context of abuse over the Internet in particular, also sits with the Minister for Justice and Equality, and the executive agency of his Department, the Office for Internet Safety.

My Department has developed a website called www.makeITsecure.ie to promote best practice in relation to many issues arising from the use of the Internet. This campaign, which was developed with industry, does provide some information in relation to use of ICT by children. The Department has also engaged in a number of EU initiatives on this subject, including Council Conclusions on the protection of children in the digital world in 2011, and continues to play an important role in discussions in the Council of Europe.

While my Department does not lead on the specific issue of cyber bullying, it is available to assist in any initiative taken forward by the other Departments and continues to engage across all Departments in issues relating to the use of the Internet and ICT generally.

My Department also monitors international developments with a view to ensuring that domestic policy within its remit reflects best practice and that the regulatory framework is amended as necessary. In that regard, I look forward to the deliberations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications.

I am continuing to work with colleagues across Government, industry and the EU, to iden-

tify practical measures that can be implemented to address the challenge of cyber bullying.

Tax Yield

173. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which oil, gas or other mineral discoveries have been made in each of the past ten years to date; if any particularly promising discoveries or locations have been identified; the expected contribution of any such discoveries towards economic recovery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35553/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): There have been four commercial natural gas discoveries since exploration began offshore Ireland in the early 1970s, namely the Kinsale, Ballycotton and Seven Heads (Kinsale area), producing gas fields off the coast of Cork and the Corrib gas field off the coast of Mayo. There have been no commercial discoveries of oil to date.

Despite the low level of commercial discoveries to date, working petroleum systems are known to exist in many of Ireland's offshore basins, as demonstrated by a number of non-commercial discoveries as well as other oil and gas indicators such as hydrocarbon shows in wells. In relation to the Barryroe oil discovery, results of tests carried out on the Barryroe appraisal well are encouraging, however further appraisal work will be required to determine if the discovery could be declared commercial and lead to a petroleum production project.

With regard to non-petroleum minerals, while no new commercially viable deposits of minerals have been discovered in recent years, there have been some encouraging results, particularly in Counties Limerick and Clare. However, it is too early to determine whether these results will lead to identification of commercially viable deposits or to estimate the economic benefits that might accrue.

Energy Resources

174. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which imported oil, gas or other energy sources are likely to be replaced by existing, or anticipated, on or offshore discoveries or indications and their anticipated impact on this economy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35554/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): Ireland currently imports approximately 95% of its natural gas needs and 100% of its oil requirements. Successful development of our indigenous resources would contribute to significantly reducing dependence on imported supply.

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

In respect of the Corrib Development, It is estimated that construction of the onshore section of the pipeline, which began last year, including the construction of a 5km tunnel, will take in the region of three years. First gas cannot therefore reasonably be anticipated before end 2014.

In its first four to five years of production, the Corrib Gas Field Development is expected to provide 60% to 65% of Ireland's natural gas needs.

Despite the low level of commercial discoveries to date, working petroleum systems are known to exist in many of Ireland's offshore basins, as demonstrated by a number of non-commercial discoveries as well as other oil and gas indicators such as hydrocarbon shows in wells.

It is important then that the State provides right environment to encourage private industry to take the risk associated with investing in exploration. We do this in a number of ways, including:

- offering attractive and innovative licensing opportunities, such as the 2011 Atlantic Margin licensing round;
- providing a fit-for-purpose, transparent and robust regulatory regime;
- deepening knowledge of our offshore petroleum potential, in particular through data acquisition and supporting key research projects and
- actively promoting the opportunity to invest in exploration in the Irish offshore, in particular to companies not currently active here.

Postal Services

175. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which An Post continues to play a prominent role in the provision of existing, established or anticipated services throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35555/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Operational matters and the role of developing commercial strategies for the post office network are a matter for the management and Board of An Post and one in which I have no statutory function. As shareholder, however, I have a strong concern in relation to the ongoing commercial position of the Company and I regularly liaise with the Company in this regard.

An Post has many strengths and has the largest retail presence in the country. I have been supportive of its attempts to diversify its income streams and to win a wider range of commercial contracts offering higher margins. An Post has made much progress towards diversification with its enhanced arrangement with AIB and its agreement with Aviva for the transfer of Aviva Ireland's branch offices personal insurance business to One Direct. More recently the opportunity to pay the local property tax via An Post outlets was secured. An Post has also been selected as the preferred bidder, following a competitive tender process, for the cash element of welfare payments which augurs well for the future of the network. I understand An Post will pitch strongly for the social welfare ePayment business when it is put out to tender. Having invested in the computerisation of all post offices, An Post is well positioned to become the front office provider of choice for Government and financial services sector.

In the context of the public sector transformation agenda I will continue to engage with my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to consideration, as appropriate, of the post office network for transactional elements of the business of Government Departments and Agencies and have stressed to my Government colleagues that the network is ideally configured for over the counter transactions. Overall, it is Government policy that An Post remains a strong and viable company, in a position to provide a high quality, nationwide postal service and maintain a nationwide customer focussed network of post offices.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

176. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which he expects EU fossil fuel reduction targets to be met in the short and medium term, having particular regard to experience over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35556/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): There are no explicit EU fossil fuel reduction targets. However, there are a number of obligations on Ireland that will lead to a reduction in our reliance on fossil fuels. Under the Renewable Energy Directive, Ireland is required to increase renewable energy to 16% in 2020, with a minimum target of 10% in the transport sector. Energy is consumed across the transport, heating and electricity sectors. At end 2011, we had reached 6.4% of overall energy consumption from renewable sources, a twofold increase from 3.1% in 2006. Our intention is to reach our overall target through 40% renewable electricity, 10% renewable transport and 12% renewable heating, which together amount to 16% of all energy consumption.

This increase in the use of renewables in Ireland will mean less fossil fuel used. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland estimates in its “Energy in Ireland” report, published in November 2012, that there was approximately €300 million in avoided national gas imports from the use of renewable energy in the generation of electricity in 2011. In 2012, 128 million litres of biofuels were used in Ireland, almost five times as much as were used in 2007, and by 2020, it is expected that around 500 million litres of biofuel will replace imported fossil fuels.

Reducing our energy usage will also help to reduce the amount of fossil fuels we consume. The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) contains 97 actions, each of which will play a part in securing a more sustainable energy future for Ireland. The Plan reaffirms Ireland’s commitment to a 20% energy savings target in 2020 under our EU obligations. The actions outlined in the Plan are projected to realise 34,060 GWh of energy savings in 2020, which is equivalent to a 21.1% saving on the baseline period and, should all the measures in the Plan meet their potential by 2020, it is estimated that a reduction of €2.36 billion in energy expenditure could be realised.

Wind Energy Generation

177. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his expectations in regard to the development of the wind energy sector; the extent to which national grid requirements are likely to be met through wind energy, including potential back up in respect of both targets for the internal or export markets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35557/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive set Ireland a binding target where at least 16% of our energy requirements should come from renewable sources by 2020. In order to meet our overall 16% requirement, Ireland is committed to meeting 40% of electricity demand from renewable sources. Though these targets are challenging, I am confident that they can be met. My Department’s Strategy for Renewable Energy 2012 to 2020 sets out the key strategic goals for the various renewable energy sectors in the context of Ireland’s EU obligations.

In addition, under the Directive, Ireland was required to set out in a National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP) the trajectory towards meeting its legally binding targets. The NREAP and the First Progress Report on the NREAP, which are available on my Department’s

website, show the sectoral and technology breakdown that we anticipate in the achievement of our target.

To date, wind energy has been the largest driver of growth in renewable electricity, contributing most towards the achievement of the 2020 target. In 2012 15.5% of Ireland's electricity demand was met by wind generation. By the end of quarter one 2013 1,763 MW (megawatts) of wind generation capacity was connected to the grid.

The primary support mechanisms for renewable electricity are the Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff (REFIT) schemes. Under REFIT 2 a total of 4,000 MW can be supported. In order to ensure the necessary incentives are in place to encourage the level of investment required to maintain the rate of build of onshore wind necessary to meet our national target for renewable electricity, earlier this year I decided to amend the terms of REFIT 2 to extend the closing date for applications to 31 December 2015, with projects required to be built by the end of December 2017. Support under REFIT 2 cannot exceed 15 years and will not extend beyond the end of December 2032.

It is estimated that between 3,500 and 4,000 MW of renewable generation capacity will be required to allow Ireland meet its 40% renewable electricity target. Currently, just over 2,000 MW of renewable generation is connected to the grid in Ireland. Under the Gate 3 grid connection process, grid connection offers have now issued to just under 4,000 MW of renewable generation, the bulk of which is wind. Under Gate 3 rules, generators must accept an offer within 50 business days of its receipt. I understand that Gate 3 acceptances are scheduled to complete in October this year.

Expert advice suggests that Ireland has the capability to achieve our national targets for renewable electricity from onshore renewable generation alone. However, the opportunity for Ireland to harness our excellent and abundance renewable energy resources and realise their export potential for investment, job creation and economic growth has also been identified and is being pursued with the UK government. It should be noted that electricity exported from Ireland would not require back up on the Irish grid, as only generation in excess of that required to meet national demand levels and security of supply standards would be exported.

With regard to the question of conventional generation required to support intermittent renewable energy such as wind, I refer the Deputy to the All Island Electricity Capacity Statement 2013 to 2022 published by EirGrid and the Northern Ireland Transmission System Operator, SONI, earlier this year. The Capacity Statement examines the expected electricity demand, and level of generation capacity forecast to be available, over the following 10 year period to establish the outlook for generation adequacy in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Based on analysis of factors such as increasing levels of renewables and changes in the conventional generation portfolio, the statement forecasts that Ireland's generation adequacy outlook is positive for each of the next 10 years.

Energy Prices

178. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which electricity prices here, in respect of both a domestic and industrial consumer, compare favourably or otherwise with those applicable in other EU member states within and outside the eurozone; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35558/13]

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

Responsibility for the regulation of the retail electricity market is a matter for the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER), which is an independent statutory body. Prices in the electricity retail market are fully deregulated. Customers can therefore avail of competitive offerings from electricity suppliers. Prices are set by suppliers and are commercial and operational matters for them. I have no statutory function in the setting of electricity prices.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has a lead role in developing and maintaining comprehensive national and sectoral statistics for energy production, transformation and end use. Since 2008, comparable data on electricity and gas prices for domestic and industrial consumers in respect of six month periods (or semester) is collected and published by Eurostat using the methodology for the EU Gas and Electricity Price Transparency Directives. SEAI then analyses the data published by Eurostat for each semester and publishes reports twice a year entitled "Electricity And Gas Prices in Ireland". These reports present detailed information on and analysis of Ireland's comparative electricity and gas prices and trends in these prices over time, for both EU 27 and Eurozone Member States. These reports are publicly available at the following link and contain all the information the Deputy is requesting for all semesters up to the first half of 2012:

http://www.seai.ie/Publications/Statistics_Publications/EPSSU_Publications/Electricity_and_Gas_Prices/

While the Eurostat data is publicly available up to the second half of 2012 the SEAI report for that period with its analysis as described above is not yet published.

Electricity and gas costs in Ireland are influenced by various drivers, including global gas and oil prices, the cost of capital, exchange rate fluctuations, the small size of the Irish market, geographical location and low population density. Global gas and oil prices are by far the most significant factor. Prices have risen sharply since the start of 2011, driven by events in the Middle East, north Africa and Japan and the significant growth in demand from China and India.

At a national level, the competitive energy market in place helps to put downward pressure on prices. In addition, we must focus on all possible additional actions to mitigate costs for business and domestic customers, including rigorous regulatory scrutiny of the network costs component of retail prices.

I am committed to working with enterprise and with the energy sector to ensure that the costs of energy are as competitive as possible. In this context, promotion of energy efficiency measures is an area within our control where action can be taken to reduce energy costs.

Energy efficiency represents a significant opportunity for both businesses and households to reduce their energy costs. There are energy efficiency measures in place to assist both business and domestic energy consumers, with significant funding allocated to them. The Energy Efficiency Fund, which I announced in February, will commence funding specific measures in the near future. It will assist energy efficiency projects in the public and commercial sectors.

Hydraulic Fracturing Policy

179. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which he and his Department intend to monitor development and progress of mining or other exploration techniques such as hydraulic fracturing or fracking; the extent to which the procedure is practised globally and with what effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35559/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): There are various methodologies currently being used with respect to minerals and petroleum exploration both onshore and offshore Ireland that will continue to be used into the future.

Exploration for “unconventional gas” or “shale gas” is a live issue in a number of EU Member States. Exploration is on-going in a number of Member States while others have taken a more precautionary approach. France, for example, has banned the use of the technology known as hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking”, while exploration using the technique is proceeding in Poland. The UK recently allowed further exploration for unconventional gas.

There is a considerable body of recent and on-going research in this area in both the USA and Europe. The European Commission commissioned three recent reports in the matter:

1. Unconventional Gas: Potential Energy Market Impacts in the EU
2. Climate Impact of Potential Shale Gas Production in the EU
3. Report on the identification of potential risks for the environment and human health arising from Unconventional Gas operations in Europe.

The Commission has indicated that later this year it intends to commence a study on Environmental, Climate and Energy Assessment Framework to enable safe and secure unconventional hydrocarbon extraction to be undertaken.

The global economic perspective to the unconventional oil and gas phenomenon has however, to be acknowledged, including the US boom in unconventional fossil fuels. 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 appropriate that we consider the impacts that unconventional oil and gas production will have on security of supply, energy prices and competitiveness.

Question No. 180 answered with Question No. 172.

Consultancy Contracts Expenditure

181. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the companies that received payments from his Department for consultation on natural resources; the purpose for which they received payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35692/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): My Department administers a very diverse and complex brief. This reality necessarily requires my Department to procure specialist external professional advice and it is imperative to have recourse to a certain amount of external professional services in the area of natural resources.

In procuring these specialised services, my Department always seeks to ensure value for money and that these professional services contribute to informed, robust and evidence based policy making. Furthermore, in relation to the competitive tendering for contracts my Department adheres to the relevant EU Regulations and Department of Finance Guidelines on the procurement of goods and services

The majority of natural resources consultancies in 2012 related to the Corrib gas project. In

looking at the expenditure incurred, I would like to remind the Deputy that costs relating to the oversight of compliance with the Corrib gas consent conditions are recouped from the developer. My Department's 2012 Appropriation Account shows that, by end 2012, €255,000 was recouped as appropriation-in-aid.

Details of companies involved in providing consultancy services to my Department are set out in tabular form below. As requested by the Deputy's office, the information relates to 2012.

Natural Resources Consultancies - 2012

Company	Service Description	Amount (€)
Indecon	Consultancy on Economic Value of Exploration and Mining to the Economy	35,793
David Fox Associates	Petroleum Engineering Support	178,186
Morgan Geophysics	Geophysicist Consultancy	86,706
Keane Offshore Integrity Ltd	Corrib Verification Process	83,746
Environ uk ltd	Monitoring of Corrib Gas Consent Conditions	201,992
Eamonn O' Duibhir	Consent Conditions Monitoring Committee	1,253
Patrick Barrett	Consent Conditions Monitoring Committee	544
Monica Muller	Consent Conditions Monitoring Committee	721
Mr Michael O'hEalaithé	Consent Conditions Monitoring Committee	758
Mr Kieran Moran	Consent Conditions Monitoring Committee	1,013
Patrick Connell	Consent Conditions Monitoring Committee	627
Total		591,339

Semi-State Bodies Dividends

182. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his attention has been drawn to the fact that members of the ESB group of unions have initiated a legal challenge against the ESB and Government regarding the €78.4 million dividend the company is due to pay to the State, which the union members allege is unlawful as the payment is based on wrongly prepared accounts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35833/13]

183. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the ESB 2012 annual accounts state the company's defined benefit pension scheme is to be a defined contribution scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35834/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 182 and 183 together.

My attention has been drawn to the legal challenge regarding ESB's payment of dividend. A representative from my Department attended the AGM of the company, on my behalf. At the AGM the Board Chairman advised the meeting that the accounts were compliant with all statutory and accounting rules. The dividend payment, €74.5m of which was due to the Exchequer, was received on the 27th June 2013.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

184. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by his

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Department, since January 2013, on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35840/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Retired public sector workers are engaged from time to time by my Department in areas where specific expertise is required for a short fixed period, and these persons provide a level of knowledge, experience and background compatible with such requirements. In general the abatement principle, which ensures that the fee paid plus pension does not exceed the rate of pay the pensioner would receive if he/she had continued service in their former post, applies to payments as appropriate.

I can also confirm that there were two retired public servants who were engaged in specific projects during the period since January 2013, under the aegis of my Department; one as Chairman of a VFM Review Group at a cost of €1,200 and the other as a Process Auditor for the procurement of a National Postcode System at a cost of €9,840.

In addition to the above, one retired public servant sits on the Audit Committee for the Department on a *pro bono* basis.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

185. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures, and accompanying savings, for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in his Department and-or non-commercial State sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35857/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The measures applying to my Department and agencies under the aegis of my Department, are set out in the relevant sectoral elements under the Haddington Road agreement, in this case the civil service and NCSSBs element.

As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Haddington Road Agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1bn in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to my Department, the savings arising under agreement have been incorporated in the Department's and Agencies' revised estimates for 2013 and further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the vote allocation in the context of the overall estimates process.

More generally, the Department and its Agencies will proactively implement the measures set out in the agreement.

RTE Expenditure

186. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on whether the Government's support through RTE of two national public orchestras, the RTE Symphony and RTE Concert orchestras, is an essential element of the country's national arts and cultural infrastructure that should be protected in any review of RTE expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35901/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): As the Deputy is aware, RTÉ is an independent national public service broadcaster whose remit and obligations are set out in Section 114 of the Broadcasting Act 2009. The company's man-

date in regard to the area referred to by the Deputy is set out in subsection (1)(c) of that section and states that one of the principle objects of Raidió Teilifís Éireann is “to establish and maintain orchestras, choirs and other cultural performing groups in connection with the services of Raidió Teilifís Éireann.”

It is clear to me that any review of expenditure in RTÉ would have to take cognisance of the statutory obligations of RTÉ in terms of the services that it is required to provide, including its obligations in relation to orchestral music, choirs and performing groups.

Non-Principal Private Residence Charge Administration

187. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he could explain why there are no waivers on fines for the NPPR, and if he is aware that many persons are suffering from high rates and cannot cope with the councils. [35647/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009, as amended, broadened the revenue base of local authorities by introducing a charge on non-principal private residences. The Charge is set at €200 and liability for it falls, in the main, on owners of rental, holiday and vacant properties.

Under the Act, it is a function of a local authority to collect Non-Principal Private Residence Charges, and late payment fees due to it and all Charges and late payment fees imposed and payable to a local authority are under the care and management of the local authority concerned.

I have issued guidelines to local authorities in relation to the operation of the “care and management” provisions of the legislation in instances in which genuine hardship in having to discharge a liability in a single payment can be demonstrated. In such cases, local authorities may enter into payment arrangements for the discharge of outstanding liabilities in instalments over a specified period.

This year will be the final year of the operation of the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge. Since its introduction in 2009, the Charge has been an important source of revenue for local authorities and has funded the provision of vital local services.

Non-Principal Private Residence Charge Administration

188. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the local property tax. [35683/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I understand that this question concerns the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge. The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009, as amended, broadened the revenue base of local authorities by introducing a charge on non-principal private residences. The Charge is set at €200 and liability for it falls, in the main, on owners of rental, holiday and vacant properties.

Section 6 of the 2009 Act, as amended, provides that the owner of a liable property who fails to pay the Charge, in addition to his or her being liable to pay the Charge, is liable to pay to the relevant local authority a €20 late payment fee in respect of each month or part of a month in which the Charge, any late payment fee, or any part of such Charge or fee, remains unpaid.

Under the Act, it is a function of a local authority to collect Non-Principal Private Residence Charges and late payment fees due to it and all Charges and late payment fees imposed and payable to a local authority are under the care and management of the local authority concerned. I have issued guidelines to local authorities in relation to the operation of the “care and management” provisions of the legislation in instances in which genuine hardship in having to discharge a liability in a single payment can be demonstrated.

This year will be the final year of the operation of the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge. Since its introduction in 2009, the Charge has been an important source of revenue for local authorities and has funded the provision of vital local services.

Septic Tank Inspections

189. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding the inspection of septic tanks where a person is registered under the scheme and if they are inspected by their local authority; if the grant is available under the scheme allowing for a person to connect to the mains where this is available in their area. [35576/13]

195. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the grant assistance available for the installation and maintenance of septic tanks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35807/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 189 and 195 together.

I refer to the reply to Questions 175 and 176 of 3 July 2013 which sets out the position in relation to the grants scheme for remediation of domestic waste water treatment systems. Full details, including eligibility criteria, are set down in the Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (Financial Assistance) Regulations 2013, a copy of which is available in the Oireachtas library.

Where an inspection reveals a problem with a treatment system, issues such as the nature of the problem and the extent of the risk to human health or the environment will inform selection of the most appropriate, pragmatic and cost-effective remediation works, including the possibility of connection to a nearby public sewer.

Foreshore Licences Applications

190. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if an official from his Department will visit a sports facility (details supplied) in County Kerry to review its application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35582/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): As indicated in the replies to Questions Nos. 489 of 22 May 2012 and 196 of 20 December 2012, this matter continues to be the subject of court proceedings and it is not appropriate for me to comment further. The position is unchanged.

Homeless Persons Data

191. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of persons reported as homeless to local authorities in the first and second quarters of 2013; the way this figure compares with previous quarterly statistics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35712/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Traditionally it has been difficult to quantify the number of homeless persons on an on-going basis; this is in part a consequence of the volatility within this cohort of housing need. However, during the course of 2013 the Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS), which commenced operation in Dublin in 2011, is being extended nationally. When PASS is fully implemented nationally it will provide good quality, timely, data which will allow housing authorities to report in relation to the on-going extent and the dynamics of homelessness as it is addressed.

In advance of the full implementation of PASS the most complete set of data available in relation to homelessness nationally is the Central Statistics Office’s special Census report, Homeless Persons in Ireland, which was published on 6 September 2012. This report indicated that a total of 65 individuals were sleeping rough on Census night, 10 April 2011, while identifying a further 3,743 people as housed in accommodation defined as emergency, transitional or long-term. Of the total of 3,808 individuals included in the report, almost 60% were in long-term or transitional housing arrangements.

Local Government Elections

192. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a person who was elected to a local authority, as a member of a registered political party, subsequently resigns from the said party but later goes on to resign from the local authority, if the vacancy should be filled by either co-option by the party under whose banner he or she was elected, or through a nomination of the member who has resigned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35677/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Section 19(3) of the Local Government Act 2001 prescribes that a casual vacancy on a local authority is to be filled by the co-option of a person to fill the vacancy, subject to such person being nominated by the same registered political party who nominated for election or co-option the member who caused the casual vacancy, or where the person causing the casual vacancy was a non-party candidate at his or her election to the local authority, the vacancy is to be filled by the co-option by the local authority of a person to fill the vacancy in accordance with such requirements and procedures as may be set out in its standing orders, except in circumstances where paragraphs (c) or (d) or (e) of section 19 (1) of the Act apply.

Paragraph (c) of section 19(1) of the Act relates to Article 25 (procedures after nomination), Article 28 (death of a candidate) and Article 124 (person elected for more than one local electoral area) of the Local Elections Regulations 1995, paragraph (d) relates to circumstances prescribed in regulations made under section 27 of the Local Government Act 2001, under which regulations have not been made; and paragraph (e) relates to section 15 (1) of the Local Elections (Petitions and Disqualifications) Act 1974, dealing with an order of the court relating to a petition declaring that a person was not duly elected as a member of a local authority or was not qualified for membership of a local authority or that the whole or part of a local election was void.

Local Government Elections

193. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 182 of 26 June 2013, if a person is permitted under current electoral law to run for a position on a County or City Council in two or more local electoral areas of the same local authority during the 2014 Local Elections; if a person who is elected to the same local authority for two or more local electoral areas, the way a vacancy should be filled for the area they choose not to represent [35678/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The position regarding standing for election in more than one electoral area of the same local authority is set out in the reply to Question Number 182 of 26 June 2013. Article 124 (2) of the Local Elections Regulations 1995 provides that where a person, who has been elected as a member of the same local authority for two or more electoral areas, chooses, or is deemed to have chosen, to represent a particular local electoral area, the person shall be deemed not to have been elected for any other local electoral area of the said local authority. The consequential vacancy or vacancies in the membership of the local authority are to be regarded as casual vacancies occurring on the day on which the newly-elected members come into office, and are to be filled in accordance with the provisions of section 19 of the Local Government Act 2001.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Status

194. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he intends to approve the Donegal Bay wastewater group B contract to go to construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35786/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Donegal Group B Sewerage Scheme (Bundoran, Convoy, Glencolmcille and Killybegs) is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2013 as a scheme to start during the lifetime of the Programme. I have recently approved Donegal County Council's tender documents for the scheme, which will allow the council to advertise for tenders for the contract.

Question No. 195 answered with Question No. 189.

Waste Management Issues

196. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government about the regulations and control systems that are in place to ensure Ireland complies with current, and proposed European Commission legislation, on national inspections of waste shipments; if he will detail the location from which waste shipments leave here; the frequency at which they depart Irish shores; and the location of their first port of call and ultimate destination in each case. [35829/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The legislative framework for the import and export of waste in the European Union is set out in Regulation (EC) No. 1013/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council. Under the Waste Management (Shipments of Waste) Regulations 2007, Dublin City Council was designated as the National Competent Authority for all waste exports and imports and the National Transfrontier Waste Shipment Office (NTFSO) was established under the auspices of Dublin

City Council. The primary aim of the Regulations is to prevent the illegal shipment of waste abroad, and to assist businesses engaged in legitimate waste export activities.

In 2008, Dublin City Council was also designated as the competent authority for the Waste Management (Registration of Brokers and Dealers) Regulations 2008. The purpose of the Regulations is to provide for a registration system of waste brokers and dealers who arrange for the shipment of waste to and from Ireland and also the passage of waste through the State.

The NTFSO's dedicated enforcement team bases its enforcement activities on an annual risk-based Recommended minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections Plan. The team ensures that enforcement of the Regulations is consistent and proportional, while facilitating exports of waste for re-use in Europe and Asia. The enforcement team has developed working links with An Garda Síochána, Revenue's Customs Service, the EU Network for the Implementation of Environmental Law (IMPEL), and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

Statistics and information on shipments of waste to and from Ireland, including ports used, are not kept by my Department. Such information is available from the NTFSO, which compiles an annual register for movement of both Amber and Green list waste. Amber list waste refers to hazardous waste. All Amber listed waste destined for recovery, and all shipments of Amber-listed waste destined for disposal, are subject to prior notification and consent procedures in accordance with Articles 3 and 4 of EU Regulation 1013/2006. Green Listed waste refers to shipments of non-hazardous waste for recovery within and from the EU.

The latest registers compiled by the NTFSO deal with 2012. Information can also be obtained on historical shipments from the National Waste Reports published annually by the EPA and which are available on its website at www.epa.ie.

With regard to proposed EU amendments to the EU legislation, these will be examined in due course by my Department in accordance with normal negotiating procedures in such matters.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

197. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to set out the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by his Department, since January 2013, on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35843/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): No retired civil or public servants have been retained in my Department since January 2013 on short term contracts or on a consultancy basis where normal abatement principles did not apply.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

198. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures, and accompanying savings, for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in his Department and non-commercial state-sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35860/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Ho-

gan): The measures applying to my Department and agencies under the aegis of my Department are set out in the Haddington Road Agreement.

As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA) will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to my Department, the savings arising under HRA have been incorporated in the Department's revised estimate for 2013 and appropriate provision in this regard will be incorporated in the vote allocations for 2014 and 2015 in the context of the overall estimates processes for these years.

Irish Water Establishment

199. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on whether the work of Irish Water should be entirely transparent and accountable and if he will extend the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act to the organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35903/13]

200. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the employee share ownership scheme in Bord Gáis Éireann will be extended to the newly established Irish Water; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35904/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): I propose to take Questions Nos. 199 and 200 together.

The Water Services Act 2013 provides for the establishment of Irish Water as a subsidiary of Bord Gáis Éireann, conforming to the conditions contained in the Act and registered under the Companies Acts. The Act provides that Irish Water will be required to submit an annual report on the performance of its functions each year to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. Irish Water will also be required to submit its annual accounts to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government each year.

The 2013 Act also provides that the annual report and accounts will be laid before each House of the Oireachtas. The extension of the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act to include Irish Water is a matter for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The Water Services Act 2013 also sets out the share structure of Irish Water and provides for the allocation of shares to Bord Gáis Éireann, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Minister for Finance. The employee share ownership scheme in Bord Gáis will not be extended to Irish Water.

Consultancy Contracts Expenditure

201. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide details of all consultancy spend, within his Department and Irish Water, in respect of the establishment of Irish Water; the transfer of responsibilities from local authorities to the new organisation; the implementation of new work practices within the new organisation; the roll-out of a national metering programme; the employment of consultants in a part-time capacity and all other consultancy spend; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35905/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Gov-

ernment (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): The Water Sector Reform Implementation Strategy, which is published on my Department's website, is focused on ensuring that appropriate policy and legal frameworks are put in place for Irish Water and the water sector. A key objective is to rationalise the cost of the current service delivery and ensure more efficient operation of water services by moving from 34 water services authorities to a single body; following enactment of comprehensive legislation later this year, Irish Water will, therefore, become the water services authority from 1 January 2014.

Just under €180,000 has been spent to date by my Department on consultancy support which relates to work undertaken by PriceWaterhouseCoopers on the independent assessment of the establishment of a State owned national water utility and assistance in developing the implementation strategy. The implementation strategy is being rolled out under a range of work-streams and is based on ensuring that the available skills within the sector are deployed in creating the new utility and the roll-out of the domestic metering programme. In addition to utilising expertise within the Bord Gáis Group, staff have been seconded from the Department and local authorities to assist in the Irish Water Programme in Bord Gáis. Bord Gáis have also engaged in a process of direct recruitment of external service providers for various aspects of the programme including company establishment, customer service and billing and the water metering programme. This expenditure is an operational matter for Irish Water/Bord Gáis and is not being funded from the Exchequer.

The costs involved are critical to developing the capacity to deliver cost savings and efficiencies in the delivery of water services. It will be a matter for the Commission for Energy Regulation in due course to satisfy itself in relation to the appropriateness of costs incurred in the operation of Irish Water as part of the process of setting the tariffs for both the domestic and non-domestic sectors in the future. It is envisaged that the Commission will engage in public consultation as part of this process.

Planning Issues

202. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will examine documents (details supplied) regarding the requirement for subsequent consent currently under review by An Bord Pleanála; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35925/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As Minister, I am precluded, under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, from involvement in relation to any individual planning application or appeal with which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is or may be concerned.

Naturalisation Applications

203. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35564/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that the application has entered the final stage of processing and I intend to grant citizenship. A letter has issued to the person referred to by the Deputy asking him to submit the prescribed fee and other documents. Upon receipt of the fee and documentation, the case will be finalised.

The person concerned will be invited in due course to attend a citizenship ceremony, at which he will make a declaration of fidelity to the Irish Nation and loyalty to the State and receive his certificate of naturalisation.

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.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

204. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the fact that for a second time the Garda vetting unit has sent incorrect information on a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary to a potential employer; if he will investigate how it occurred again; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35566/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Garda Vetting disclosures are made to registered organisations following the signed authorisation of a vetting subject permitting the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) to disclose to the registered organisation "details of all prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed, and/or convictions which may be recorded in respect of them in the State or elsewhere"; or alternatively that there are "no prosecutions or convictions recorded in respect of them".

An Garda Síochána are not aware of any basis for the assertion contained in the Deputy's question.

Coroners Service

205. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the results of a post mortem of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry have been finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35581/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that the post mortem results have been finalised and are available from the Kerry North Coroner's Office.

Garda Civilian Staff Recruitment

206. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he expects to move forward with hiring civilians to undertake administrative work in An Garda Síochána in order to free up gardaí to detect and prevent crime; if the hiring of civilians will commence or has already commenced in any specific districts or divisions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35703/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The number of civilian staff in the Garda Síochána has increased in recent years to just over 2,000 whole time equivalent staff. Recruitment is carried out through the Public Appointments Service and the Commissioner is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources throughout the organisation.

These staff continue to provide vital services in a wide range of areas, such as human resources, training & development, IT and telecommunications, finance and procurement, internal audit, research and analysis, accommodation and fleet management, scene-of-crime support and medical services. In doing so, they release highly trained Gardaí from administrative tasks to operational policing.

Civilian staff have also been appointed to the senior management positions of Executive Director of Finance, Executive Director of IT and Head of Legal Affairs. The new Chief Administration Officer has also recently been appointed and a new Director of Communications is expected to take up that position in the near future. I have also received sanction from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for the recruitment of two forensic Accountants in the Garda Síochána.

We will continue to maximise the number of civilian support staff in An Garda Síochána consistent with overall policy on numbers in the public service and taking into account the scope for the appropriate redeployment of staff from elsewhere in the public service as part of the reform process under the Haddington Road Agreement.

Proposed Legislation

207. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has prepared comprehensive legislation to tackle the issue of white collar criminality; if he will share these proposals with Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35704/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Programme for Government contains a commitment to enact a new consolidated and reformed anti-corruption law to punish white collar crime and end the impunity from consequences for corporate behaviour that threatens the economy and a commitment that rogue bankers and all those that misappropriate or embezzle funds are properly pursued for their crimes and that the full rigours of the law will apply to them.

These commitments are being addressed in a multifaceted approach through various legislative measures.

The Criminal Justice Act 2011 is an important step in delivering on the Government's commitment to tackle white collar crime. Its main purpose is to facilitate the more effective investigation of white collar crime and to reduce associated delays. The Act provides for new procedures to facilitate Garda access to essential information and documentation to assist in current and future investigations of white collar crime. The Act is targeted at specified serious and complex offences ("relevant offences") attracting a penalty of at least 5 years imprisonment, including offences in the areas of banking and finance, company law, money laundering, fraud and corruption. The Act will provide vital assistance to the Gardaí in the completion of current investigations as well as providing assistance to them in investigations undertaken in the future.

The General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Corruption) Bill was published in 2012 and referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality for its consideration. The Bill is currently being drafted by Parliamentary Counsel. The Bill will replace the seven enactments making up the Prevention of Corruption Acts of 1889 to 2010. The Bill will replace and update existing offences relating to giving or receiving bribes. It will also introduce new offences in relation to corrupt influence peddling.

The recommendations of the Mahon Tribunal have been taken into account in provisions to be contained in the Bill such as a new offence of making payments knowingly or recklessly to

a third party who intends to use them as bribes.

Stiff penalties of up to 10 years imprisonment and unlimited fines are envisaged for persons convicted on indictment. In addition the Courts are to be given new powers to remove public officials from office and to exclude them from holding office for up to 10 years.

In addition, the current Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which is scheduled to be enacted before the summer recess, provides a number of measures to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial process. The Criminal Procedure Bill which is currently being developed aims to improve the efficiency of the criminal trial process. The establishment of a new Court of Appeal will, if approved by referendum in the autumn, further enhance the efficiency of the criminal justice system. While these latter measures are not aimed any one area of the criminal law, they will enhance the efficient operation of the courts overall and will have consequential benefits for the prosecution of criminal offences, including while collar crime offences.

Naturalisation Applications

208. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will examine a naturalisation application in respect of a person (details supplied); if he will expedite the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35653/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person referred to by the Deputy has not made an application for naturalisation.

The immigration status of the person concerned remains essentially the same as set out in my reply to the Deputy's question of Tuesday 11th June 2013 (PQ No. 731 of 11th June, 2013).

In February, 2013, the person concerned made an application for permission to remain in the State on the basis of his marriage to an Irish national. Such applications are dealt with in chronological order and I am advised that INIS are currently processing applications received in January 2013.

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.

Peace Commissioners

209. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is considering reforming the role of peace commissioners here in view of the fact that the current legislation governing their role is old, namely, the Courts of Justice Act 1924; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that although peace commissioners continue to have powers to issue warrants, under a small number of statutes, several decisions by the courts regarding the issuing of summonses and warrants were subject to a number of legal challenges in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and decisions of the superior courts raised serious doubts about the constitutional competence of peace commissioners to exercise such powers, thus limiting the role of peace commissioner and transferring their more onerous tasks to the courts; his views on completely

overhauling the handbook and guidance manual explaining their role and duties to ensure information is updated in line with current legislation, and in view of the fact that the current handbook given to new peace commissioners is out of line with current documents that require the signature of a peace commissioner; the contents of the review that was initiated in early 2008 on the status and functions of peace commissioners; if any recommendations in the review were ever acted upon; the discussions that have been held in his Department on the future of this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35688/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Office of Peace Commissioner is an honorary appointment under section 88 of the Courts of Justice Act, 1924 for which there is no remuneration or compensation by way of fees or expenses for services. An application for appointment may be submitted by a person who is interested in obtaining an appointment, or a third party may submit a nomination in respect of a person considered suitable for appointment. Nominations are generally received from public representatives. A local Garda Superintendent can also request an appointment in a particular area in the public interest.

Peace Commissioners, on appointment, are issued with a guidance manual explaining their role and duties. While I believe more work needs to be done, this manual is updated from time to time to take account of changes in legislation.

As regards the review referred to by the Deputy, I am informed that this was an internal paper by an intern staff member in the Department but that no firm proposals subsequently emerged. While I have no immediate plans to amend the legislation relating to Peace Commissioners, I do intend keeping the matter under review.

National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan Issues

210. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the publication of an implementation plan for the national disability strategy in view of the national disability strategy implementation group's most recent meeting on 20 June 2013. [35753/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy will be aware my Department has been engaged in a wide ranging consultation process with Government Departments and with the Disability Stakeholders Group in the preparation of the National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan.

Following significant consultation and consideration the Plan was agreed by the National Disability Strategy Implementation Group at their meeting of 20 June 2013. It is my intention to bring the Plan to Government imminently. The Plan will then be published to the websites of all relevant Government Departments including my own and that of the National Disability Authority. Accessible versions of the Implementation Plan and hard copies of the document will be made available on request.

Asylum Support Services

211. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on a statement made by the outgoing Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, that Ireland's treatment of asylum seekers may be in breach of not just our Constitution but also international human rights' conventions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35754/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I assume the question refers to a recently published article by the Ombudsman on asylum seekers.

The Ombudsman says in her article that her examination of a specific case, involving the HSE and the Department of Social Protection around the issue of a social welfare entitlement to a family which had been in Direct Provision, led her to comment on the asylum accommodation system more generally. It should be noted that the Ombudsman Act, 1980 does not provide for the investigation by the Ombudsman of any action taken by or on behalf of a person in the administration of the law relating to, inter alia, asylum. Notwithstanding that, I should add that the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department has administrative arrangements in place with the Office of the Ombudsman to assist and provide information and help resolve any matters brought to its attention.

The Ombudsman is, of course, perfectly entitled to the personal opinions expressed in the article but I do not share many of them. In particular, I do not accept the attempted correlation between the residents of direct provision accommodation centres and past residents of industrial schools or Magdalene laundries. It is to be expected that asylum seekers, if given a choice in the jurisdiction or elsewhere, would prefer to have independent accommodation, a right to welfare and work and so on, instead of being restricted to the system of direct provision to meet their needs. For the avoidance of any misunderstanding, it should be noted that all EU Member States operate systems for dealing with asylum seekers which in one form or another greatly restrict their access to welfare, work or independent housing. In reality, the system in this State is at least on a par and often significantly better than that in operation in many other Member States. In the circumstances, it is grossly misleading to characterise our treatment of asylum seekers as being akin to that meted out to subjects of abuse who had no protection of the law or relevant State bodies.

I have recounted in responses to many Dáil Questions how the rights of residents of accommodation centres are protected both within the Direct Provision system and, of course, by the laws of our country. The Ombudsman's article, rightly, places great emphasis on the rights of children in the Direct Provision system. Again, I have explained before how children are protected in a number of ways - primarily through the Reception and Integration Agency's (RIA) Child Protection policy; its House Rules; its requirement that all centre staff are Garda vetted; and through the coordination role of a dedicated Child and Family Services unit in RIA. Children in Direct Provision centres, of course, enjoy the same educational and health entitlements as Irish citizen children.

Sight must not be lost of the fact that applicants for refugee status, who otherwise would have no permission to be in the State, have their protection claims dealt with in accordance with a prescribed legal framework and exclusively on their merits having regard to their subjective and objective elements. They have full recourse to the judicial review process in the courts and to the general protection of the State.

I accept that the direct provision system is not ideal and many residents spend too long there. But it is a system which facilitates the State providing a roof over the heads of those seeking protection or the right to remain in the State on humanitarian grounds or other reasons. It allows the State to do it in a manner that facilitates resources being used economically in circumstances where the State is in financial difficulty. It is acknowledged that the Direct Provision system provides value for money. A key finding in the 2010 Value for Money Report on the Direct Provision system was that if we were operating a system which facilitated asylum seekers in living independent lives in individual housing with social welfare support and payments, aside from the asylum 'pull factor' it would likely create, the cost to the exchequer would be double what is currently paid under the direct provision system.

In her article, the Ombudsman does not say that the direct provision system is in breach of international conventions. Rather, she references a number of reports critical of the direct provision system which argue that it is. She acknowledges that, ultimately, such judgements are matters for a court. Over the years, the direct provision system has been open to scrutiny by many international bodies. Centres have been visited by various UN bodies, including the UNHCR, and by the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner. I appeared before the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva in connection with its scrutiny of Ireland under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Process In October, 2011. No recommendation was made in relation to the Direct Provision system in the Committee's subsequent UPR report on Ireland.

There is no question but that the asylum system is slow, fragmented and is in need of reform and I am determined to see this reform through. For me, the length of time spent in the Direct Provision system, rather than the quality of provision within the system itself, is the real issue and I am committed to remedying that. Work on the details of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2010 is ongoing at my Department pursuant to current Government policy which is committed, under the Programme for National Recovery, to "introduce comprehensive reforms of the immigration, residency and asylum systems", which will include a statutory appeals system and set out rights and obligations in a transparent way.

As I have outlined previously to the Joint Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence, several hundred amendments to the Bill are anticipated, the majority of a technical nature. I also expressed the considered view that instead of engaging in an extremely cumbersome process of tabling hundreds of amendments to the 2010 Bill, it would be much more efficient to publish a new and enhanced text. Such an approach can incorporate the many anticipated amendments while addressing key outstanding issues, several of which have been of concern to Members. This proposition was broadly welcomed by the Joint Committee and work on the Bill continues, therefore, on that basis while also taking account of any intervening matters of relevance such as decisions by the Courts.

It remains my objective under this new approach, and subject to having to deal with the competing legislative demands of our EU/IMF/ECB Programme commitments, to be in a position to bring a revised Bill to Government for approval and publication before the end of the year.

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

Court Accommodation Refurbishment

212. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to upgrade the family law court at Dolphin House which is in dire condition and not fit for purpose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35755/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of accommodation for court sittings.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and have been informed by the Courts Service that the District Family Law Office in Dolphin House is the busiest family law office in the country, accounting for a very significant percentage of barring and safety orders issued nationally. The opening of the Criminal Courts of Justice provided an opportunity to re-organise the work of the District, Civil and Family Law courts and free up additional accommodation in Dolphin House for family law and child care business and court users.

The Service has stated that the courthouse was refurbished at a cost of €3.74 million and re-opened on the 14 February 2008. The refurbishment provided for extended accommodation and improved facilities comprising five enlarged courtrooms with adjoining Judges' Chambers, additional consultation rooms, separate areas for family law applications/enquiries and payments, a legal practitioners' room, an Office for the Legal Aid Board and the Family Mediation Service which has a permanent presence on site, a new waiting area, universal access, three interview rooms, upgraded ventilation system, baby changing room, and a light refreshment machine.

Anti-Racism Measures

213. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the figures released by the Immigrant Council of Ireland stating that 50 serious incidents have been reported to it in ten weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35756/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am aware of the information released by the Immigrant Council of Ireland on 1 July 2013 regarding the total number of racist incidents reported to it over a ten week period in response to its recent awareness raising campaign on social media and public transport. I understand that these were preliminary figures only and that a more detailed analysis of the figures will be produced.

I would urge victims of racism to report it to the relevant statutory body where appropriate. For example, our equality legislation outlaws discrimination on the basis of race in employment and non-employment areas. The Equality Tribunal is responsible for dealing with complaints under this legislation. Similarly, anyone who is the victim of racist crime should report it to An Garda Síochána. The Garda Racial, Intercultural and Diversity Office places great emphasis on the importance of reporting any suspected racist crime to the local Gardaí. It works with a network of Ethnic Liaison Officers at local level and gives advice on the services available to victims of hate crime. My Department's Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration also undertakes important work to promote positive attitudes in our society and positive integration, as well as providing information.

I have previously indicated that I think we should start a reflection - a national dialogue - in Ireland about what we need to do to ensure the evils of racism, prejudice and intolerance do not spread and detrimentally affect the lives of those who live here and I am actively considering next steps in this regard.

Sexual Offences

214. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to address the issue of counselling notes from children who have been sexually assaulted being made available in criminal prosecutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35757/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): It is my intention that this issue will be addressed in the forthcoming Sexual Offences Bill, which is at an advanced stage of preparation in my Department.

Northern Ireland Issues

215. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on whether the Nally report into the Omagh bombing was unsatisfactory; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35758/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will be aware that the Nally Group was established by the then Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 2002 to examine certain issues raised in a report submitted by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. The Nally Group which comprised a former Secretary to the Government, a former Secretary of the Department of Justice, and a former Director of Public Prosecutions reported in 2003 and a redacted version of that report was published subsequently. I have no grounds for believing that the Group did not discharge their function fully and satisfactorily.

Northern Ireland Issues

216. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to open a new investigation into the Omagh bombing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35759/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy will be aware, the investigation of criminal offences is a matter for the Garda Síochána. In this context, the Garda investigation file into the terrorist atrocity at Omagh remains open and the Garda authorities remain ready to follow up any new leads or information that may come to light which would allow the investigation to be progressed further. I met with the Omagh Support and Self Help Group last year and received a copy of a document which they have compiled on events surrounding the bombing. I am currently in the process of finalising a detailed and, of necessity, lengthy consideration of the issues raised. I hope to conclude this process soon and once a conclusion has been reached I will communicate directly with the Omagh Group.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

217. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the serious difficulties for community employment schemes, and potential participants, arising from delays in the Garda vetting unit in processing requests. [35760/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the current average processing time for applications is approximately 14 weeks from date of receipt. However, seasonal fluctuations and the necessity to seek additional information on particular applications can result in this processing time being exceeded on occasion. All organisations registered for Garda Vetting are aware of the processing time-frames for the receipt of Garda vetting and have been advised to factor this into their recruitment and selection process. I remain in ongoing contact with the Garda Commissioner as to how best the service can continue to be delivered and improved upon, while at all times protecting the integrity of

the process. Clearly, the protection of children and vulnerable adults is the primary objective of the Garda Central Vetting Unit and this must remain the case.

The possibility of introducing an e-vetting system has been assessed and the Garda authorities are now in the process of developing a system which will enable vetting applications to be submitted electronically through a secure web service. In addition, the system will facilitate the checking and monitoring of applications. The relevant work is being pursued on a priority basis and it will be completed as quickly as possible. With further assignments of staff this month, staffing at the Unit will be of the order of 140 (whole time equivalent) staff, which represents an increase in staff assigned to the Unit of almost 50% since March this year. As staff become fully trained on the vetting process I expect there will be a positive effect on vetting times. My Department is also examining the scope for the redeployment of additional personnel from within the public service to the Unit.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

218. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of errors that have been acknowledged by the Garda vetting unit in the years 2009 to 2012, inclusive, and to date in 2013. [35761/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The information sought by the Deputy is not readily available and could only be obtained with the expenditure of an inordinate amount of staff time and resources which in the circumstances could not be justified.

Ministerial Meetings

219. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission and the Garda Commissioner to meet him to discuss GSOC's publicly aired serious concerns. [35763/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The meeting referred to by the Deputy with the Garda Commissioner and the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, the objective of which is to ensure that any outstanding issues have been resolved, will take place shortly.

Residential Institutions Issues

220. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on the Bethany Home this month as committed to on 25 June 2013. [35789/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I met with members of the Bethany Survivors Group together with Minister for State Kathleen Lynch on Tuesday 16 April. The Group raised the question of their inclusion within the Residential Institutions Redress scheme or a similar type scheme designed for children who had been in the Bethany Home. They also raised the question of access to personal records, a memorial and an apology. Many of the issues raised fall outside the remit of my Department. However, I informed the group that I would consider the matter in consultation with my cabinet colleagues and revert back to them. That consultation is ongoing and I hope to be in a position to respond shortly.

Extradition Arrangements

221. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the State's obligations regarding requests for the issuing of extradition warrants, and provisional arrest warrants, from other States. [35810/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Extradition arrangements between the Member States of the European Union (EU) are governed by the provisions of the European Arrest Warrant Act 2003, as amended, and, insofar as arrangements between Ireland and other states are concerned, by the Extradition Act 1965, as amended. Section 27 of the Extradition Act deals with provisional arrest.

Traveller Community Issues

222. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality in the context that the National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy is a living document, the way he will ensure that the strategy will be progressed in response to the European Commission's recent assessment and in line with the common basic principles on roma inclusion to immediately initiate dialogue with traveller organisations. [35811/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): My Department is currently collating reports on progress achieved in relation to Traveller actions which are in the National Traveller/Roma Integration Strategy with a view to updating the strategy. It should be noted that Traveller representatives are active participants on National Committees dealing with policy and, in this way, are involved in the development of policy.

In relation to Roma specifically, my Department has been conducting an exercise, since April, to gather available information from Government Departments and other public bodies who interact directly with Roma in Ireland on projects that are in progress, focusing on the four key integration areas: access to education, employment, housing and healthcare, with a view to identifying Roma specific issues and updating the National Traveller/Roma Integration Strategy. Officials of my Department would be happy to engage with Traveller organisations in this context in the Autumn when this initial research is complete.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

223. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by his Department, since January 2013, on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35848/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): No retired civil or public servants were retained by my Department since January 2013 on a short term contract or consultancy basis where normal pension abatements rules have not been applied.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

224. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures, and accompanying savings, for

the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in his Department and-or non-commercial State sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35865/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The measures applying to the Justice Sector are set out in the Haddington Road Agreement in respect of An Garda Síochána and the Prison Service. As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the Agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to the Justice Sector, the savings arising have been incorporated in the revised estimates for 2013 and details for further years will be incorporated in the vote allocations in the context of the overall estimates process.

Overseas Missions

225. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Defence his views on the triple lock system for Ireland's Defence Forces taking part in large missions abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31466/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The statutory authority for the despatch of contingents of the Permanent Defence Force for service overseas as part of an International Force is set out in Section 2 of the Defence (Amendment)(No. 2) Act, 1960 as amended by the Defence (Amendment) Act, 2006. This provision is commonly referred to as the "triple lock". However, personnel may be deployed for training, for humanitarian operations and for other such reasons under the authority of the Government in accordance with the provisions of the Defence (Amendment) Act, 2006, which formalised arrangements in this regard. Ireland's policy in regard to the "triple lock" was most recently underpinned by the adoption by the people of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. Ireland's act of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty was reinforced by the associated national declaration which states "that the participation of contingents of the Irish Defence Forces in overseas operations, including those carried out under the European common security and defence policy requires (a) the authorisation of the operation by the Security Council or the General Assembly of the United Nations, (b) the agreement of the Irish Government, and (c) the approval of Dáil Éireann, in accordance with Irish law."

The White Paper on Defence, which was published in 2000, has provided the policy framework for Defence for the past thirteen years. In the period since its publication there have been significant changes in the defence and security environment and the defence policy framework has continued to evolve. In this context, the Government decided that there is a requirement to prepare a new White Paper on Defence. This will provide the policy framework for Defence for the next decade.

A Green Paper on Defence was published yesterday. It will initiate a broad public consultative process, which will provide for members of the public and interest groups to input their views as part of the process of developing the new White Paper on Defence. In this context the Green Paper will engender discussion on all relevant matters including the triple lock. The Green Paper states "The approval procedures that govern the despatch of contingents of the Permanent Defence Force on overseas peace support operations, commonly known as the "triple lock", comprise three requirements namely:

- the authorisation of the operation by the Security Council or General Assembly of the United Nations;
- a formal Government decision; and
- the approval of Dáil Éireann (There is no requirement for Dáil approval where, the in-

ternational United Nations Force is unarmed, where the size of the Permanent Defence Force contingent does and will not exceed twelve members, or if the contingent is intended to replace in whole or in part or reinforce a contingent of the PDF serving outside of the State already serving as part of an International United Nations Force).

The legislative basis for the participation by the Permanent Defence Force in overseas peace support operations as part of an “International United Nations Force” was originally provided for by the Defence (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1960. The legal provisions were updated in 1993 to permit participation in Chapter VII of the UN Charter. UN mandated operations mounted under this Chapter are commonly known as “peace enforcement” operations), missions and again in 2006 to take account of developments in peace support including the UN’s increased reliance on regional organisations, such as the EU, NATO and the African Union (AU). The requirements of the “triple lock” were formally set out in Ireland’s national declaration associated with the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty.

The requirement for a UN resolution as part of the “triple lock” reflects the central importance of the UN in granting legitimacy to peace support and crisis management missions. At the same time, it also constitutes a self imposed, legal constraint on the State’s sovereignty in making decisions about the use of its armed forces. This could prevent the State from participating in a peace support operation. In 2003, the EU led peace support mission EUFOR Concordia in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was welcomed in UN resolution 1371 in terms that did not conform to the requirements of the Defence Acts at that time. Accordingly, Ireland could not participate in the mission.

The benefits of a formal legislative requirement for UN authorisation must be weighed against the possibility that this constraint may lead to an inability to act on occasions where there is a pressing moral or security imperative and overwhelming international support to do so, but where UN sanction is not forthcoming, in circumstances where a veto is exercised by a permanent member of the Security Council acting in its own national interests. It is acknowledged that there is substantial public support for the triple lock mechanism and that, in practical terms, due to the size of our Defence Forces, the State only has a limited capacity to contribute to UN Missions. In real terms Ireland has, in the context of its size, punched above its weight and made a valuable, disproportionate contribution and, save for the example of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, has not been excluded from peace keeping engagements by the triple lock. On balance, the advantages of retaining the mechanism can be seen as outweighing the disadvantages. Having said that, it is an issue worthy of discussion in advance of the adoption of a new White Paper.

Green Paper on Defence

226. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Defence his views on the Green Paper on Defence. [31467/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Ireland’s first White Paper on Defence was published in 2000. In the intervening period there have been significant changes in the defence and security environment with the emergence of new and complex security challenges. In this context, the Government decided that there is a requirement to prepare a new White Paper on Defence. In order to ensure appropriate engagement in the formulation of the new White Paper on Defence, I initiated the preparation of a Green Paper on Defence. Following Government approval, I was very pleased to publish the Green Paper on Defence yesterday (Tuesday 16 July 2013).

The purpose of the Green Paper is to inform and encourage members of the public and other interested parties to consider and submit their views. The Green Paper provides a comprehensive overview of our current defence policy framework and sets out an assessment of the defence and security environment. It does not aim to be prescriptive rather it seeks to encourage active consideration of defence matters and to elicit views as to how we should address domestic, regional and global defence and security challenges in the coming years. In this context there are a range of issues that must be considered including: future capacity requirements, if changes in the roles assigned to the Defence Forces are required and how we should prioritise scarce resources. To assist in this regard, the Green Paper sets out a number of focused policy questions for consideration and to guide submissions. The Green Paper also sets out how members of the public and other interested parties can submit their views and I am confident that this will better inform the development of the new White Paper on Defence.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

227. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Defence the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by his Department, since January 2013, on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35841/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): No retired civil or public servants have been retained by my Department since January 2013 on a short term contract or on a consultancy basis.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

228. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures, and accompanying savings, for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in his Department and-or non-commercial State sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35858/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The measures applying to the Defence Forces are as set out in the Defence Sector Collective Agreement, Appendix 2 of the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013 – 2016 - The Haddington Road Agreement. The projected savings of €9.8m per annum to be achieved by 2015 are as follows:

-	Projected Saving in 2013 (Half Year)	Projected Saving in 2014	Projected Saving in 2015	Projected Saving to 01 July 2016 (Half Year)
Incorporation of duties attracting Technical Group 1 pay into standard duties for new enlisted personnel	€23,580	€47,160	€94,320	€70,740
Flat rating SDA and related payments at standard weekday rate	€875,000	€1,750,000	€1,750,000	€875,000
10% Reduction in certain Defence Force Allowances	€1,795,000	€3,590,000	€3,590,000	€1,795,000
Elimination of Border Duty Allowance for Officers	€61,000	€122,000	€122,000	€61,000

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-	Projected Saving in 2013 (Half Year)	Projected Saving in 2014	Projected Saving in 2015	Projected Saving to 01 July 2016 (Half Year)
Voluntary buyout of Border Duty Allowance for enlisted personnel.	€500,000	€1,000,000	€2,000,000	€1,250,000
Elimination of Special Instructors Allowance for Officers.	€133,500	€267,000	€267,000	€267,000
Implementation of additional incremental points in pay scales for new enlisted personnel post 01 July 2013	€0	€613,967	€1,642,095	€1,465,917
10% Reduction in rate for paid training of RDF members	€175,000	€350,000	€350,000	€175,000
Total	€3,563,080 (Half Year)	€7,740,127	€9,815,415	€5,959,657 (Half Year)

These savings are in addition to centrally agreed pay adjustments in respect of increments and related measures. The Deputy is requested to note that the savings set out in the table are projections and actual savings under some of the measures are difficult to accurately determine.

As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Haddington Road Agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to my Department, the savings arising under The Haddington Road Agreement have been incorporated in the Departments revised estimate for 2013, and further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the vote allocation in the context of the overall estimates process.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

229. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cavan will receive his or her REP scheme, single payment, disadvantaged area scheme payment and grassland sheep payment for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35712/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The processing of the 2012 Single Payment Scheme application for the person named has recently been finalised by my Department with payment due to issue shortly in respect of Single Payment Scheme, Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and REPS. Payments under the 2012 Grassland Sheep Scheme are in respect of breeding ewes as declared on the December 2011 sheep census, as the person named declared no breeding ewes on their census, therefore, no payment is due to the applicant under this scheme.

Single Payment Scheme Applications

230. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when single farm payment 2012 will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35565/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The herd-number in question was transferred to the person named from her late husband on 13 February 2012. While the person named submitted a Single Payment Scheme application under the 2012 scheme year, she did not submit an application to transfer the Single Payment entitlements from her late husband. Following contact made by officials from my Department, a late Transfer of Entitlements application was submitted on 22 April 2013 and was accepted on force majeure grounds. Additional documentation was subsequently requested from the applicant. The requested documentation was submitted, which enabled my Department to complete the transfer of payment entitlements. Payment under the 2012 Single Payment Scheme will now issue shortly to the person named.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

231. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will expedite a disadvantaged area scheme appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35594/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, the holdings of eligible applicants were required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of six consecutive months, in addition to maintaining an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. As the holding concerned has not satisfied the minimum stocking density requirements of the Scheme, no payment was made in respect of the 2012 Scheme. The person named sought a review of this decision. As the outcome of the review was to uphold the original decision, the person named has been advised of her right of appeal to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office.

Food Exports

232. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the progress that has been made in the export of beef, lamb, pig meat and dairy products since the Government came into office; the number of new jobs that have been created during this period; the targets that have been set for the next two years; the new markets that have been identified; the number of new jobs he hopes to create in this area during the next 24 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35631/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Food Harvest 2020 sets a target of €12 billion in total food and drink exports by 2020. The value of exports is of course a function of supply and demand and other factors, but despite difficult economic conditions in the market place, Irish agrifood exports are continuing to perform strongly. The interim export target for 2015 is €10 billion and the fact that the value of agrifood and drink exports exceeded €9 billion for the first time ever in 2012 marks good progress so far.

Since March 2011 when I took office as Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine there has been significant progress in meeting the targets in each sector. The details of the exports achieved since 2011 are set out in the following table:

Irish Meat and Dairy exports 2010-2012

Value: €m

Category	2011	2012
Dairy	2,715	2,620
Beef	1,860	1,900
Pigmeat	421	507
Sheepmeat	197	212
Grand Total	5,194	5,239

Source: CSO

In 2012, the value of Irish beef exports showed an increase of €40 million over the 2011 figure, reflecting improved returns from export markets. Over the same period the value of sheepmeat exports increased by approximately €15 million, with modest growth recorded in exports to our main markets in France and the United Kingdom and higher growth was recorded on exports to emerging markets in Northern Europe (including Scandinavia).

Exports of Irish pigmeat are estimated to have increased by 12,000 tonnes (carcass weight equivalent) in 2012, as compared with 2011. The value of Irish pigmeat exports increased by an estimated €86 million.

Mixed trends were evident in key export destinations for dairy products during 2012. Exports to the United Kingdom performed strongly and increased by more than 5% to €960 million or 36% of total trade. The strongest performing categories were cheese, infant food and spreads. While demand from other EU markets weakened somewhat because of economic conditions, this was partially counterbalanced by an increase in the value of exports to international markets which are estimated to have reached more than €1 billion for the first time in 2012. These international markets provide dramatic growth potential into the future.

In so far as exports to third country markets have been concerned, I have been very active in developing relationships in new and expanding markets in order to raise the profile of Ireland and build the kind of confidence in Irish production and control systems that provide a platform for long-term trading relationships in the future. Since my appointment I have lead trade and political missions to China, the US and Algeria, and my Department continues to engage on market access issues with many other third countries. Ireland already has access for dairy products to markets worldwide and exports such products to over eighty countries, but I am working to increase the profile of the sector in potential growth markets.

In addition, since my appointment, there have been a number of notable successes in reaching agreement with authorities in Singapore, Egypt, Iran and the GCC Countries which allow for the export of Irish beef, with Singapore, South Africa, UAE, Canada and the Russian Federation-Customs Union for the export of Irish sheepmeat and with Australia and Serbia for the export of Irish pork. There is strong demand for meat globally and I remain focused on enabling Irish exporters to take advantage of the opportunities that arise.

Regarding employment, the function of Government is of course to create the economic conditions which will facilitate and encourage job creation. In relation to the agri food sector, the work being done with industry and the various Government Departments and State agencies to implement actions necessary to deliver on the vision outlined in Food Harvest 2020, together with the Government macroeconomic policy, is helping to make Ireland a more competitive place to do business and create the conditions necessary for job creation. The Forfás Annual Employment Survey indicates that since 2009, a total of 3,339 net new direct jobs were created in the food manufacturing sector and of course this kind of development will create spin off opportunities in the sub-supply, transport, sales and other areas.

As regards the future, in 2012 food client investments, supported by Enterprise Ireland,

committed to more than 1,500 new jobs being created within three years. In 2013 to date Enterprise Ireland investments in food companies have resulted in new jobs commitments in excess of 500 and it is hoped that this level of new jobs commitments can be sustained over the coming years to contribute to the Government's overall job creation targets. Of course investment in the agrifood sector has a larger economic multiplier than that in other manufacturing industry because many of the inputs are indigenous.

I am confident that Ireland is taking the steps necessary to avail of the opportunities presented by expanding global demand for food and am committed to ensuring that the contribution of the agrifood sector to the economy, exports and employment is maximised.

Common Agricultural Policy Reform

233. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine with reference to the recent changes to the Common Agricultural Policy, if horticulture as a sector of agriculture under the Act have admittance to the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35632/13]

234. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will indicate when the horticultural industry can avail of the Common Agricultural Policy scheme; when applications will be open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35633/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 233 and 234 together.

One of the main features of the CAP reform package, on which political agreement was reached last month, is the flexibility provided to Member States to take individual decisions in regard to implementation of the common policy. In that regard, the general rule for allocation of payment entitlements under the new regime is that the farmer must apply for such allocation in 2015 and must have submitted an admissible aid application in respect of 2013. Traditionally the horticulture sector would not have been in receipt of direct payments and would be ruled out by the 2013 tie-back rule. However, the package agreed provides an option to allocate payment entitlements to the horticulture sector even if the farmers in question did not submit an admissible aid application in 2013.

This is one of many options in the reform package on which we will have to take a decision whether to apply the provision in Ireland. I will shortly engage in a consultation process with stakeholders to examine the various options available before taking a final decision on this and all of the other options open to us.

Aquaculture Licences Applications

235. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on a proposal made by him (details supplied) on the introduction of large scale off-shore salmon farms off the west coast; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35637/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application by Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) for an aquaculture licence for the cultivation of finfish near Inis Oirr in Galway Bay was received by my Department last year. The application and its accompanying Environmental Impact Statement are being considered under the provisions of the

1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act and the 1933 Foreshore Act.

A determination in respect of the application will be made as soon as possible following completion of the necessary assessment process. This assessment process will take full account of all national and EU legislative requirements and will reflect the full engineering, scientific, environmental, legal and public policy aspects of the application.

As the application is under active consideration as part of the statutory process it would not be appropriate for me to comment further at this time.

European Council Meetings

236. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide an update on the conclusions of the first Agriculture and Fisheries Council Agri-Fish during the Lithuanian EU Presidency that took place on 15 July 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35691/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I attended the first meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council under the Lithuanian presidency which took place on 15 July 2013.

At the commencement of the meeting, Lithuania announced its priorities for the upcoming six months. In agriculture, these include finalisation of the legal texts of the CAP reform package, completion of negotiations on transitional arrangements and examination of new proposals from the Commission on fruit and vegetables and on promotion measures for agricultural products. As to fisheries, the Presidency will prioritise achieving inter-institutional agreement on the European Maritime and Fisheries fund and on agreeing the annual TACs and quotas for fisheries for 2014. As regards the sanitary and phyto-sanitary areas, the Presidency will seek substantial progress on discussions on the 5-part package with particular emphasis on concluding the negotiations on the expenditure element of the package.

The meeting continued with a report on the current state of play in the CAP reform negotiations, notably regarding the European Parliament's position on the MFF aspects of the agreement. The Presidency made it clear that it has no intention of going beyond the mandate given by the Council in June.

Moving to fisheries, the Presidency secured a Council position on the proposed Regulation on the European Maritime and Fisheries fund and held a first discussion on the fishing opportunities for 2014.

A number of items were raised under other business, most notable being a request sponsored by Ireland, UK, France and Spain for strong and decisive action to be taken against Iceland and the Faroe Islands in relation to unsustainable fishing practices in the north east Atlantic. Other items raised included:

- A request by Cyprus for assistance in respect of an outbreak of Newcastle disease;
- A request from Hungary, with support from a number of Member States, for concerted action to be taken to avoid food waste;
- Information from the Commission concerning follow-up to the mislabelling of beef issue and actions being taken to address food fraud;
- A request from Netherlands for action to be taken at EU level in respect of the insecticide

Fipronil; and

- A request, also from the Netherlands, for a study on labelling of meat from animals slaughtered without stunning.

Proposed Legislation

237. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will consider a proposal (details supplied) regarding the Control of Dogs (Amendment) Bill 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35768/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is currently examining submissions received in respect of the dog microchipping initiative that I announced in the course of the passage of the Animal Health and Welfare Act through the Oireachtas earlier this summer. As part of this process, my Department will be glad to examine the draft Bill that you have kindly forwarded. However, it should be noted that the issue of dog licensing is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government.

Common Agricultural Policy Reform

238. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money that would be available for redistribution, under the single farm payment scheme Common Agricultural Policy reform, if the maximum payment for the single farm payment was set at €400 per hectare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35772/13]

239. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money that would be available for redistribution, under the single farm payment scheme Common Agricultural Policy reform, if the maximum payment for the single farm payment was set at €450 per hectare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35773/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 238 and 239 together.

The CAP reform agreement on 26 June provided two options for Member States in relation to the internal convergence of direct payments: either a flat rate per hectare payment (the Commission's proposal) or partial convergence (Irish model). Under partial convergence, farmers with payments below 90% of the national average payment per hectare will have their payments raised by at least one third of the difference between their current payment and 90% of the national average by 2019, with a minimum payment of 60% of the national average per hectare by 2019. This is financed by reductions to payments above the national average payment per hectare. Member States have flexibility as to how payment reductions are applied to those above the average, provided this is done on the basis of objective and non-discriminative criteria to be determined by Member States. Member States may also apply an optional maximum 30% loss on convergence in 2019 when compared with the unit value established in 2015.

Table 1 below shows the effects of partial convergence with a minimum payment of 60% of national average, resulting in a transfer of €103m from convergence. However, the following caveats should be noted in relation to this table:

- a) This analysis is based on 2010 SPS payments, and looks at the effect of convergence alone, rather than taking account of other adjustments to payments. It represents the position when

the reform is fully implemented in 2019, without taking these other adjustments into account. This approach has been adopted to isolate the impact of various convergence options so that they can be assessed without being conflated with other necessary adjustments which are explained below.

- b) Total 2010 payments of €1,250m, on which the table is based, have already been reduced to €1,230m in 2012 (due to an increase in the rate of modulation). Payments made in October 2013 will be further adjusted to respect the ceiling for 2014 agreed as part of the MFF negotiations (€1,217m). The ceiling for the following years is set as follows:

Budget/ Financial Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Direct payments €m	1,217	1,215	1,213	1,212	1,211	1,211	1,211

The ceiling cuts arising from the MFF will therefore be in place by the end of this year, in advance of the other changes arising from CAP reform.

- c) The following adjustments will also need to be made to the total ceiling before convergence is calculated:

- Young farmer scheme - up to 2% of national ceiling
- National reserve - up to 3% of basic payment ceiling
- Crisis reserve - 1% of national ceiling (repaid if unused).

Note that funds for young farmers and the national reserve will directly benefit Irish farmers, specifically young farmers and new entrants. The crisis reserve will apply to the EU as a whole, with Irish farmers as likely to benefit as those in other Member States.

- d) If a Member State opts to implement additional schemes such as the Redistributive Payment or Voluntary Coupled support, these amounts would also be deducted from the national ceiling before the convergence calculation is applied, i.e. convergence is calculated on the basic payment scheme with consequential impact on the greening payment.

- e) The convergence calculation will in practice be calculated using the revised ceilings, and taking account of the adjustments listed above. Therefore the national average per hectare and the minimum payment of 60% of national average for the convergence calculation will be adjusted accordingly and will be different from those in Table 1.

- f) Table 1 is prepared on the assumption that convergence reductions are applied proportionately; in fact, as stated above, the June agreement gives Member States flexibility in how the convergence reduction is applied to farmers above the national average.

Table 2 summarises the estimated effect of adding a maximum payment per hectare of €400 or €450 to the calculations in Table 1:

A maximum rate per hectare of €400 in 2019 would have roughly the following effects:

- Around 7,600 farmers (those currently above €500/ha) would be affected.
- It would raise additional savings of €32 million in addition to the proportional reductions already applied to these farmers; presumably these savings could be used to adjust the proportional reduction applied to the remaining farmers above the national average.
- The percentage reductions applied to farmers in the highest payment categories would be increased considerably by adding a maximum payment per hectare.

A maximum rate per hectare of €450 in 2019 would have roughly the following effects:

- Almost 5,000 farmers (those currently above €550/ha) would be affected.
- It would raise additional savings of €17 million in addition to the proportional reductions already applied to these farmers.

Table 1: Partial convergence with a minimum payment of 60% of national average, based on 2010 payments database

Payment per ha Category, 2010 SPS database €	No of farms	Total Area (ha)	2010 SPS Payment €m	Average payment per ha 2010 €	Average Stocking Density per ha	Average farm size (ha)	CAP Reform Pmt	Gain/ Loss €m	% Gain/ Loss	Avg payt per ha
0 payment, some area	76	3,120	0.0	0	-	41	0.5	+0.5	-	163
0 to 20	1,991	69,640	0.8	11	0.35	35	11.4	+10.6	+1342%	163
20 to 50	4,204	181,557	6.6	36	0.31	43	29.6	+23.1	+350%	163
50 to 100	10,462	399,947	30.1	75	0.45	38	65.3	+35.1	+117%	163
100 to 150	13,137	426,654	53.5	125	0.71	32	71.9	+18.4	+34%	168
150 to 200	15,400	495,753	87.1	176	0.99	32	98.5	+11.4	+13%	199
200 to 244.87	15,109	510,293	113.6	223	1.23	34	117.4	+3.8	+3%	230
<90% of nat avg	60,379	2,086,964	291.7	140	0.80	35	394.6	+102.9	+35%	189
244.87 to 272.07 (90% to 100% of nat avg)	9,230	329,342	85.1	259	1.39	36	85.1	-	-	259
272.02 to 300	9,176	337,772	96.6	286	1.48	37	94.9	-1.7	-2%	281
300 to 350	14,729	577,358	187.3	324	1.60	39	176.2	-11.1	-6%	305
350 to 400	10,992	448,659	167.7	374	1.72	41	150.9	-16.8	-10%	336
400 to 450	6,814	294,550	124.7	423	1.79	43	108.3	-16.4	-13%	368
450 to 500	4,124	179,638	85.0	473	1.81	44	71.7	-13.3	-16%	399
500 to 550	2,692	119,842	62.6	523	1.81	45	51.6	-11.0	-18%	431
550 to 600	1,681	77,614	44.5	573	1.81	46	35.9	-8.6	-19%	463
600 to 650	1,070	48,626	30.3	623	1.82	45	24.0	-6.3	-21%	494
650 to 700	697	31,563	21.3	674	1.89	45	16.6	-4.7	-22%	526
700 to 750	416	16,752	12.1	723	1.75	40	9.3	-2.8	-23%	558
750 to 800	356	16,440	12.7	773	1.89	46	9.7	-3.0	-24%	589
800 to 850	208	9,863	8.1	823	1.90	47	6.1	-2.0	-25%	621
850 to 900	140	6,480	5.6	871	1.85	46	4.2	-1.4	-25%	651
900 to 950	77	2,986	2.8	925	1.74	39	2.0	-0.7	-26%	685
950 to 1,000	78	3,045	3.0	974	1.65	39	2.2	-0.8	-26%	716
1,000+	221	7,620	9.0	1180	1.92	34	6.5	-2.5	-28%	847
>100% of nat avg	53,471	2,178,807	873.4	401	1.68	41	770.3	-103.1	-12%	354
TOTAL	123,080	4,595,114	1,250.2	272	1.24	37	1250.0	-0.2	-0%	272

Table 2: Estimated additional effect of imposing a maximum rate per hectare of €400 or €450

Max €400/ha

Payment per ha Category, 2010 SPS database €	No of farms	PROPORTIONAL REDUCTION €m	APPLY MAX PAYMENT OF €400/HA, €m	PROPORTIONAL REDUCTION PLUS MAX RATE PER HA, €m	% LOSS	AVG PAYT PER HA
500 to 550	2,692	-11.0	-3.7	-14.7	-23.5%	400
550 to 600	1,681	-8.6	-4.9	-13.5	-30.2%	400
600 to 650	1,070	-6.3	-4.6	-10.8	-35.8%	400

Questions - Written Answers

Payment per ha Category, 2010 SPS database €	No of farms	PROPORTIONAL REDUCTION €m	APPLY MAX PAYMENT OF €400/HA, €m	PROPORTIONAL REDUCTION PLUS MAX RATE PER HA, €m	% LOSS	AVG PAYT PER HA
650 to 700	697	-4.7	-4.0	-8.6	-40.6%	400
700 to 750	416	-2.8	-2.6	-5.4	-44.7%	400
750 to 800	356	-3.0	-3.1	-6.1	-48.2%	400
800 to 850	208	-2.0	-2.2	-4.2	-51.4%	400
850 to 900	140	-1.4	-1.6	-3.1	-54.1%	400
900 to 950	77	-0.7	-0.9	-1.6	-56.7%	400
950 to 1,000	78	-0.8	-1.0	-1.7	-58.9%	400
1,000+	221	-2.5	-3.4	-5.9	-66.1%	400
TOTAL	7,636		-31.9			

Max €450/ha

Payment per ha Category, 2010 SPS database €	No of farms	PROPORTIONAL REDUCTION €m	APPLY MAX PAYMENT OF €400/HA, €m	PROPORTIONAL REDUCTION PLUS MAX RATE PER HA, €m	% LOSS	AVG PAYT PER HA
550 to 600	1,681	-8.6	-1.0	-9.6	-21.5%	450
600 to 650	1,070	-6.3	-2.1	-8.4	-27.8%	450
650 to 700	697	-4.7	-2.4	-7.1	-33.2%	450
700 to 750	416	-2.8	-1.8	-4.6	-37.8%	450
750 to 800	356	-3.0	-2.3	-5.3	-41.8%	450
800 to 850	208	-2.0	-1.7	-3.7	-45.3%	450
850 to 900	140	-1.4	-1.3	-2.7	-48.3%	450
900 to 950	77	-0.7	-0.7	-1.4	-51.3%	450
950 to 1,000	78	-0.8	-0.8	-1.6	-53.8%	450
1,000+	221	-2.5	-3.0	-5.6	-61.9%	450
TOTAL	4,944		-17.1			

Departmental Staff Rehiring

240. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by his Department, since January 2013, on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35837/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): No retired civil servant has been retained by my Department since January 2013 where normal abatement rules do not apply.

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

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

241. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures, and accompanying savings, for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in his Department

and-or non-commercial State-sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35854/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The measures applying to my Department and agencies under the aegis of my Department are set out in the relevant sectoral collective agreement under Haddington Road, appendix 4, Proposals for Civil Service and NCSSBs. As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the Haddington Road agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to my Department, the savings arising under the agreement have been incorporated in the Department's revised Estimate for 2013. Further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the Vote allocation in the context of the overall Estimates process.

Youth Cafés Provision

242. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when she expects a final decision to be made by Pobal in the awarding of a €1 million fund available from her Department for the start-up of new youth cafés; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35577/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Funding of up to €1 million is available in 2013 from my Department for fit-out, refurbishment works or building enhancement projects for the startup of new youth cafés. One of the core functions of a youth café is that it offers support to young people, ranging from practical support to advice through their participation in activities that are of interest to them and that are varied and on offer at times that suit their normal activities. The criteria for the scheme places a clear focus on long-term sustainability and service planning. Pobal is assisting my Department in managing the 2013 youth café programme. The initial appraisal process of the applications received is in the final stages. It is expected that applicants will be notified of the outcome in the coming weeks. Applicants who are successful will go through to the next round of the process which is expected to be completed by October 2013, following which drawdown of funding will commence.

Health Services Staff Issues

243. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of people who applied for the three-year incentivised career break within the Health Service Executive and in the child care area since its introduction; the number of applicants who were refused the career break; the reasons for the refusal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35706/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the HSE does not come under the remit of my Department, I have forwarded the Deputy's parliamentary question to the HSE for direct reply.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

244. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by her Department, since January 2013, on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35839/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): No retired civil or public servants have been retained by my Department since January 2013 on a short-term contract or on a consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

245. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures, and accompanying savings, for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in her Department and-or non-commercial State-sponsored bodies under the aegis of her Department. [35856/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The measures applying to my Department and agencies under the aegis of my Department are set out in the relevant sectoral collective agreement under Haddington Road, in this case in Appendix 4 (Proposals for Civil Service and NCSSBs) and Appendix 7 (Proposals for Health Sector). As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the Haddington Road agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to my Department, the savings arising under the agreement have been incorporated in the Department's revised Estimate for 2013. Further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the Vote allocation in the context of the overall Estimates process.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

246. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will support a new cystic fibrosis 13-bed unit at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin and if he would make it a priority for 2013. [35573/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): This Government is acutely aware of the challenges that people with cystic fibrosis and their families face in managing their condition and I acknowledge the need to ensure that patients with cystic fibrosis receive the right care at the right time and in the right environment – that is, dedicated accommodation in an environment which allows appropriate isolation for improved infection control. There have been a number of developments in this area in recent years including a new purpose-built dedicated Ambulatory Outpatient facility at Beaumont for patients with Cystic Fibrosis which opened in 2010/2011. Other developments in recent years include the provision of specialist adult and paediatric centres at a number of hospitals and screening of newborns for cystic fibrosis, which was introduced in July 2011. Babies diagnosed through newborn screening have improved nutrition, improved lung function, fewer admissions to hospital, require fewer antibiotics and have improved survival rates.

The work of the National Clinical Programme for Cystic Fibrosis will provide the framework for a national standardised approach to care across the health system, with a continued emphasis on ensuring the delivery of safe, effective, high quality care. It is one of a number of Clinical Programmes which overall have three main objectives - to improve the quality of care, to improve access and to improve cost-effectiveness.

In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, I have referred the matter to the HSE and asked that it reply directly to him.

Medical Card Applications

247. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35574/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas Members.

Medical Card Applications

248. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35575/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas Members.

Medical Card Applications

249. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35591/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas Members.

Hospital Appointment Status

250. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a hospital appointment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35592/13]

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 been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Medical Card Applications

251. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35593/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas Members.

Water Fluoridation

252. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to concerns raised regarding the presence of fluoride in water here; the studies that have been conducted in the past two decades on the dental benefits of this process and potential negative effects of same; and the subsequent cost of each study. [35707/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Water fluoridation is the adjustment of a naturally occurring element found in water in order to prevent tooth decay. The benefits of water fluoridation, one of the most widely studied public health policy initiatives in the world, are long established. The Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health, established in 2004, monitors new and emerging issues on fluoride and its effects. It advises that the balance of scientific evidence worldwide confirms that water fluoridation, at the optimal level, does not cause any ill effects and is the safest and most cost effective method of protecting the oral health of the population. The opinion of the Expert Body is supported by the World Health Organisation and by major international scientifically validated reviews.

There have been a number of relevant WHO documents, notably “Fluorides and Human Health”, Monograph Series 59 (1970), WHO Geneva; “Fluorides and Oral Health”, Technical Report Series No. 846 (1994), WHO Geneva; and “Environmental Health Criteria 227 FLUORIDES”, (2002), WHO Geneva. More recently, the Department of Health contributed to the review by the EU Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER, 2011) of any new evidence on the hazard profile, health effects, and human exposure to fluoride and the fluoridating agents of drinking water.

National and regional oral health surveys show a substantial benefit of fluoridation in terms of a reduction in tooth decay. The only known side effect is dental fluorosis. This is a cosmetic or aesthetic condition which refers to the way teeth look; it is not considered to be an adverse health effect. Following publication of the report of the Forum on Fluoridation in 2002 and on the advice of the Expert Body on the findings of the report, revised Regulations were introduced in 2007, reducing the level of fluoride in piped public water supplies from a range of 0.8 to 1.0

parts per million (ppm) to a range of 0.6 to 0.8 ppm. At the levels at which fluoride is present in Ireland's water supplies any occurrence of dental fluorosis is very mild or mild and in most cases only detectable by a dentist as faint white flecks on the surface of teeth.

The National Cancer Registry of Ireland (NCRI) conducted a study into cross-border rates of osteosarcoma (Comber et al, 2011) as a result of concerns raised in the United States regarding the plausibility of a link between this condition and fluoride exposure. This study did not show any difference in disease rates between fluoridated and non-fluoridated communities. This study was undertaken as part of the NCRI's work in analysing information relating to the incidence and prevalence of cancer and related tumours in Ireland and was funded from its own resources. Since the study was published, definitive results from two major studies in the United States has shown no association between fluoride exposure and osteosarcoma (Kim et al 2011, and Levy et al 2012).

The effects of fluoridation on health and related matters are kept under constant review.

Home Help Service Provision

253. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health if he will arrange for extra home help hours and additional respite to be granted to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 6W due to the demands of care and to avoid full-time institutional care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35627/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Help Service Provision

254. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if an increase in home help hours can be accommodated for a person (details supplied) in County Meath who recently broke his or her hip and has significantly decreased mobility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35638/13]

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.

Tobacco Control Measures

255. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce plain or generic packaging for tobacco products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35640/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Government approval was received on the 28th May 2013 to begin the process of introducing standardised/plain packaging of tobacco products in Ireland. My Department is currently establishing a High Level Implementation Group to oversee the implementation of a project plan and ensure that the legislation is effective in meeting the stated objectives of plain packaging.

Plain packaging, also known as generic packaging means that all forms of branding - trademarks, logos, colours and graphics - would be removed, except for the brand name, which

would be presented in a uniform typeface for all brands on the market. All packs would be in a plain neutral colour, except for the mandatory health warnings. The objective is to make all tobacco packs look less attractive to consumers and to make health warnings more prominent.

Research shows that plain packaging will:

- Increase the noticeability, recall and impact of health warning messages;
- Reduce the ability of packaging to mislead consumers to believe that some products may be less harmful than others; and
- Reduce the attractiveness of the tobacco product, for both adults and children.

Government policy in relation to smoking is to promote and subsequently move toward a tobacco free society. Standardised packaging is one of a number of measures which will be implemented in order to reduce smoking in our society. This legislative proposal, along with a number of other measures, is set out in the policy document Tobacco Free Ireland which was approved by Government yesterday and will be published in September.

Services for People with Disabilities

256. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will support and meet a group (details supplied) in County Galway. [35644/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I recognise the importance of life-skills training and day services to young people with disabilities who are leaving the education system and every effort is being made within available resources to provide services to all 2013 school-leavers. Service providers and the HSE are working closely together to identify how the needs of those individuals who require day services or training places in 2013 can be responded to within available resources and I have asked the Health Service Executive (HSE) to keep me informed of progress in that regard on an ongoing basis.

Although the 2013 allocation for disability services has been reduced by 1.2%, the Health Service Executive (HSE) National Service Plan includes an additional €4m to provide training places and day services for school-leavers and Rehabilitative/Lifeskills Training (RT) graduates in 2013. This funding has been allocated to each HSE Region based on its percentage of population:

HSE Region	Percentage	Amount
HSE South	25.59%	€1,023,600
HSE West	23.31%	€932,400
HSE DNE	22.72%	€908,800
HSE DML	28.38%	€1,135,200

Both the voluntary sector and the HSE are committed to the best use of the funding in a creative and flexible manner so as to secure as many places as possible for this cohort.

The demand for services for school-leavers continues to grow. In 2012 approximately 700 young people required new placements and this year the HSE has reported that there has been a substantial increase in the number of young people who have finished their education or life-skills training and who require a health-funded service in 2013. Providing the level of services required within the additional funding provided will continue to be a challenge in all regions of

the country. Work in this area is being progressed largely in line with the HSE guidance document developed in 2012, which led to the successful placement of 99% of RT graduates and 96% of school leavers last year. The HSE has informed me that the current position is that 81% of school leavers and 75% of RT graduates nationally have now been allocated a placement. A communication process to inform families of the services that will be available from September 2013 is currently under way.

Requests to meet my colleague Minister Reilly are arranged through his Office. Accordingly I would suggest a representative of the group in question should make contact with the Minister's Office at ministers_office@health.gov.ie.

Home Help Service Provision

257. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm if it is standard policy of Health Service Executive officials administrating home help hours to encourage patients in receipt of ten hours of home help per week, who request additional time, to avail of long-term residential care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35651/13]

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.

Domestic Violence Policy

258. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the funding allocated by him to services aimed at tackling domestic violence in County Louth, including women's refuges; the funding for these services in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [35652/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In 2010 the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence was published. It aims to provide a framework for sustainable intervention to prevent and effectively respond to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and is lead by Cosc which is the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

The HSE subsequently published its own Policy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. The principal actions are in line with the National Strategy. The HSE's policy states that a health-focused analysis of violence is crucial, not only because the consequences of such violence require a significant amount of health care system resources, but most importantly because the health care system is often the first route through which victims seek to access supports.

Nationally the HSE funds 42 front-line domestic violence service providers. 20 of these provide refuge accommodation and this number has risen from 15 since 2000. The services provide a wide range of supports such as crisis refuge, advocacy and counselling and were funded to the amount of €13.465 Million in 2012.

In relation to the specific issue raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Dental Services Provision

259. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a hospital appointment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35660/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Dental services to children up to 16 years are provided by the Public Dental Service of the HSE. The service is targeted at children at key stages in their development. Children are given dental examinations and any follow-up treatment required at these stages. When required, emergency dental treatment is available to all children up to 16 years. The HSE has been asked to examine the specific query raised by the Deputy and to reply to him as soon as possible.

Medical Card Reviews

260. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a medical card review application in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kerry. [35663/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Care of the Elderly

261. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health his plans to establish a register of those who provide private health care to the elderly; his further plans to have those facilities inspected on a regular basis by an independent agency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35669/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question Number 524 of 18 June 2013. The position remains unchanged.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Appeals

262. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the current framework for negotiations between the National Treatment Purchase Fund and proprietors of nursing homes, under the nursing home support scheme, for the provision of long-term residential care services, in particular that the current framework adequately acknowledges the cost to service providers of providing high quality care and the need to support ongoing investment to meet the increase in demand for long-term residential care. [35693/13]

264. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to reform the process underpinning the negotiations between the National Treatment Purchase Fund and proprietors of nursing homes under the nursing home support scheme for the provision of long-term residential care services to increase transparency in the process, to potentially introduce an appeals mechanism in the process and to deal with situations where negotiations between the NTPF and proprietors break down; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35695/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 262 and 264 together.

I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question Number 676 of the 28th May 2013.

Care of the Elderly

263. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to establish a forum on long-term residential care bringing key stakeholder together to plan for the ongoing and future residential care needs of the growing aging population here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35694/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question Number 674 of the 28th May 2013.

Question No. 264 answered with Question No. 262.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Issues

265. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 677 of 2 July 2013, and in view of the recent announcement of cost saving measures (details supplied) removing the 20% retail mark up for pharmacists, if a person who has both a medical card and a long term illness card will now be able to avail of long term illness prescriptions free of charge; the date on which these new measures come into effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35765/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Persons suffering from prescribed conditions, who are not already medical card holders, can get free drugs, medicines and medical and surgical appliances for the treatment of that condition under the Long Term Illness Scheme. Medical card holders are required to pay prescription charges. Prescription charges are not payable in respect of items supplied under the Long Term Illness Scheme. In the case of persons who have both the medical card and LTI, the HSE policy is that they should use their medical card to access medicines. The main reason for this is that the supply of medicines under the LTI costs the HSE considerably more than under the GMS Scheme. A retail mark-up of 20% is payable to pharmacists for items supplied under the LTI Scheme. However, following a review of the rates of fees payable to health professionals (under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act, 2009) my colleague, Minister Reilly, announced (on the 2nd of July) the elimination of the retail mark-up. Regulations are being prepared to give effect to this decision. There is no retail mark-up for items supplied under the GMS Scheme. The decision by the previous Government not to extend prescription charges to the Long Term Illness Scheme gave rise to the anomaly identified by the Deputy. This matter is under review.

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications

266. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health when a determination will be made on an application for a special chair in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35809/13]

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

Medical Card Eligibility

267. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the projected annual saving to the Exchequer following his decision to withdraw the automatic entitlement to a medical card for patients undergoing treatment for cancer. [35812/13]

272. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the changes that have been made to the criteria applying the way discretionary medical cards are awarded in the cases of persons with cancer. [35821/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 267 and 272 together.

Under the provisions of the Health Act 1970, the assessment for a medical card is determined primarily by reference to the means, including the income and expenditure, of the applicant and his or her partner and dependants. There is no automatic entitlement to a medical card for persons with a specific illness, such as cancer, nor has the criteria applied to medical card applications by cancer patients been amended or reviewed.

However, under the legislation, there is provision for discretion by the HSE to grant a medical card where a person's income exceeds the income guidelines. The HSE takes a person's social and medical issues into account in determining whether or not "undue hardship" exists for a person in providing a health service for themselves or his or her dependents. The HSE has an effective system in place for the provision of emergency medical cards for patients who are terminally ill, or who are seriously ill and in urgent need of medical care that they cannot afford. They are issued within twenty-four hours of receipt of the required patient details and the letter of confirmation of the condition from a doctor or a medical consultant. With the exception of terminally ill patients, the HSE issues all emergency cards on the basis that the patient is eligible for a medical card on the basis of means or undue hardship, and that the applicant will follow up with a full application within a number of weeks of receiving the emergency card. As a result, emergency medical cards are issued to a named individual, with a limited eligibility period of six months.

For persons with a terminal illness, no means test applies. Once the terminal illness is verified, patients are given an emergency medical card for six months. Given the nature and urgency of the issue, the HSE has appropriate escalation routes to ensure that the person gets the card as quickly as possible.

Medical Aids and Appliances Issues

268. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 665 of 2 July 2013 regarding the Health Service Executive management team that established a national control group to oversee the introduction of universal ownership for the reuse of foldable walkers, walking sticks and crutches from previous patients are made available for new patients, with sterilisation to ensure that their reuse is to the proper standard; the communications plan that will be put in place to ensure all persons working in the health care sector here are made aware of this initiative; if this scheme will cover general practitioners, ac-

cident and emergency departments and HSE offices throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35813/13]

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

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

269. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to include an illness (details supplied) on the long term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35814/13]

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.

Hospital Appointment Status

270. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an operation to remove cataracts in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35819/13]

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 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.

Home Help Service Provision

271. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the home help hours provided to a person (details supplied) in County Cork [35820/13]

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.

Question No. 272 answered with Question 267.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

273. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by his Department, since January 2013, on short-term contracts or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35846/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department has not retained any retired civil or public servants since January 2013 where normal abatement rules did not apply.

General Medical Services Scheme Administration

274. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide in tabular form the number of GMS patients registered to each dispensary doctor in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35853/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

275. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures, and accompanying savings, for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in his Department and-or non-commercial State-sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35863/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The measures applying to my Department, and agencies under the aegis of my Department, are set out in the relevant sectoral collective agreement under Haddington Road, in this case in Appendix 4 (Collective Agreement for Civil Service and NCSSBs) and Appendix 7 (Proposals for Collective Agreements in the Health Sector).

As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the Haddington Road Agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to my Department, the savings arising under HRA have been incorporated in the Departments revised estimate for 2013 and further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the vote allocation in the context of the overall estimates process.

HSE Funding

276. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether the public interest requires details of the www.mygp.ie project to be public; the steps he has taken to have the Irish Medical Organisation allow publication of the Health Service Executive's investigation into the allocation of resources on the www.mygp.ie website project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35912/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): In May 2000, the Department of Health commenced making payments in respect of development and maintenance costs for the MyGP.ie website, which had been provided for under the Indicative Drugs Target Scheme (IDTS) and was being operated by the Irish Medical Organisation (IMO).

Following the establishment of the HSE, operational responsibility for payments in respect of the website transferred to the Executive under the Health Act 2004. Payments in respect of the website were suspended at this time and the HSE and IMO engaged on issues of mutual concern regarding the website. Both parties agree to review issues through non-binding mediation and this led to the matter being resolved. The HSE was satisfied with the outcome of the mediation and the resolution of the matter. However, in resolving outstanding issues, both parties entered into an agreement that contains a confidentiality clause.

The Department understands that the HSE has taken legal advice regarding this matter and the confidentiality clause that forms part of that agreement unambiguously restrains the HSE from releasing information relating to this issue. If the HSE breached the terms of the clause, it could be in breach of contract and susceptible to High Court litigation for (a) breach of contract and/or (b) breach of confidence.

The Department also understands that the HSE has recently written to the IMO on two occasions asking it to agree, as a matter of urgency, to the confidentiality restrictions being lifted for the purposes of an FOI request relating to this issue. However, to date, the IMO has not agreed to this.

A Review of Governance and Accountability Mechanisms in the General Medical Services Scheme for and on behalf of the Department of Health (& Children) was published in 2005 and is available on the Department's website at the following link: http://www.dohc.ie/publications/gms_review.html.

Services for People with Disabilities

277. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Minister for Health the reason a wheelchair required for a child (details supplied) in County Kildare is approved for purchase but will not be ordered until October 2012. [35919/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

HSE Investigations

278. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if the threat of legal action by the Health Service Executive will be withdrawn in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; if he will expedite a response [35922/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Hospital Appointment Status

279. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine the referral of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry to St. James's Hospital, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35926/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Improving access to outpatient services is a key priority for the Government. Collaborating with individual hospitals, the SDU, together with the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) and the HSE, has developed the outpatient waiting list minimum dataset. This allows data to be submitted to the NTPF from hospitals on a weekly basis and, for the first time, outpatient data is available on www.ntpf.ie. For 2013, a maximum waiting time target has been set of 12 months for a first time consultant-led outpatient appointment and this is reflected in the HSE service plan. The SDU and the NTPF will work closely with hospitals towards achievement of the maximum waiting time.

Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and hospital involved. In relation to the specific hospital appointment query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Ministerial Appointments

280. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the appointments to the board of Aer Lingus as ministerial nominees over the past seven years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35808/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The State's shareholding in Aer Lingus currently stands at just over 25%. At this level the company's Articles of Association make provision for the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, acting through the Minister for Finance, to make up to three nominations for appointment to the Board. There are three such directors currently serving on the board; Mr Francis Hackett, Mr Colin Hunt and Mr William Slattery.

The following outlines the appointment of Ministerial nominees since Aer Lingus became a listed company in 2006.

- Mr Francis Hackett who was serving on the Board of Aer Lingus at the time of the IPO was re-designated as a 'Ministerial Nominee' from the IPO date of 2 October 2006. He has been reappointed as a 'Ministerial Nominee' twice since then, in February 2008 and February 2011.

- Mr Chris Wall who was also serving on the Board at the time of the IPO was re-designated as a 'Ministerial Nominee' in January 2008 and served on the Board until the expiration of his term in March 2009.

- Mr Colin Hunt was appointed as a 'Ministerial Nominee' in January 2008 and was reappointed in January 2011.

- Mr Leslie Buckley was appointed in May 2009 for a three year term, which expired in May 2012.

- Mr William Slattery was appointed in July 2013 for a three year term.

Sporting Organisations

281. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to a High Court action being taken by a member of the Irish Sports Council against a proposed investigation by the council into that member and others; the date on which he became aware of the intention of the Irish Sports Council to commence such an investigation; the way in which this information was made available to him by the Irish Sports Council; if he is satisfied that the provisions of the Irish Sports Council Act confers the necessary powers on the council to hold such an inquiry; if he will provide details of all expenditure incurred by the Irish Sports Council over the past ten years both through out-of-court or in-court settlements, including any legal costs involved; if he is satisfied that expenditure of this nature by the Irish Sports Council can be justified in view of the reducing budget provided to the Irish Sports Council for the development of sport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35589/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I am aware of the High Court action mentioned by the Deputy. I can confirm that I met with the Chairman of the Irish Sports Council on the 11th of April when he informed me, as a matter of courtesy, of his intention to recommend to the Irish Sports Council that an investigation be conducted into allegations of which the Chairman had been made aware.

The Deputy is aware that this matter is now before the courts and pending the determination of the court, it would not be appropriate for me to make any comment in relation to the investigation.

As the detail relating to expenditure incurred by the Irish Sport Council on legal costs and settlements is a matter for the Council, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to them for direct reply in this regard. I ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

In light of the current financial circumstances and the reductions in funding for sport, I would prefer that public money for sport is used for the development of sport rather than for meeting legal costs or settlements and I have advised the Chairman of this.

Coast Guard Services

282. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport; Tourism and Sport if he will provide a breakdown of the number of call outs of each of the coastguard units in County Louth in 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; the amount of fatalities that occurred during each of these years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35597/13]

284. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport; Tourism and Sport the average coastguard call out time for emergencies which occur in the sea in the vicinity of Clogherhead from the Greenore coastguard and from the Drogheda coastguard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35599/13]

285. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport; Tourism and Sport the length of shoreline and nautical miles which are covered by each of the Coastguard units in County Louth. [35600/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 282, 284 and 285 together.

There are three Coast Guard Units in Co. Louth at Greenore, Clogherhead and Drogheda. Details of the number of call-outs in 2011, 2012 and 2013 are as follow:

Incidents	Greenore	Clogherhead	Drogheda
2011	17	16	39
2012	28	23	37
2013 to date	8	8	28

The Coast Guard does not hold details of the number of fatalities per Unit; rather an overall national figure is recorded. This information will take longer to compile and will be forwarded to the Deputy when completed.

All Units of the Irish Coast Guard are expected to be able to muster and send out a first response team from their Station Houses with 15 minutes of activation of their pagers. Each Unit is expected to be able to organise a full Unit response within 1 hour. Clogherhead to Greenore by road takes about 1 hour and 15 minutes, and to Clogherhead from Drogheda is 20 minutes.

Depending on the extent of the incident and the search period involved the Units may be tasked to assist in each other's area, and they may also assist the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency in border areas when requested. There is also RNLi unit in Clogherhead equipped with an All Weather Lifeboat, which is a declared resource for the Coast Guard.

The shoreline length in Co. Louth is 85.22kms (52.95 mls). However, the operational area of the Units are not defined strictly by reference to length of shore line. From a shore search perspective the Drogheda Unit primarily covers the River Boyne and south towards Bettystown, the Clogherhead Unit mainly covers Dundalk Bay and the Greenore Unit mainly covers Carlingford Lough. Drogheda and Greenore Coast Guard inshore boats cover the patrol area meeting at around Dunany Point.

Coast Guard Services

283. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 752 of 12 February 2013, if he will give consideration to the provision of a D Class RNLi-built boat for the volunteer coastguard unit based in Clogherhead, County Louth; the cost to the State for the provision of such a boat and the appropriate training required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35598/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Primary maritime search and rescue services in the Clogherhead area are provided by the Clogherhead RNLi All Weather Lifeboat. This service is supplemented for inshore cover by two Coast Guard Boat Units based in Drogheda and at Greenore. In addition, there is a shoreline search unit Volunteer Coast Guard Unit based in Clogherhead. The area is also serviced by the Dublin Coast Guard helicopter Rescue 116.

Having regard to resources already available, provision of a D Class boat for the Clogherhead unit is not considered a priority at this time. The Coast Guard continues to keep the situation under review and if it is considered that another inshore boat is required in the future then the necessary discussions would take place with the RNLi in the first instance.

Basic set up costs to establish a D Class RNLi boat, excluding on-going operating, maintenance, training and inspection costs, would be in the region of €65,000 for the boat, with a further €30,000 for personal safety and protection equipment and €35,000 for towing vehicle, i.e. some €130,000 in total. The lead time for crew training would be of the order of 12-18 months estimated at €1,500 per person.

Questions Nos. 284 and 285 answered with Question No. 282.

Coast Guard Services

286. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport; Tourism and Sport the number of radio officer positions which remain vacant across the coastguard services as a result of the recruitment embargo; if he will provide the location of these positions; the steps he has taken to address these issues; and if these vacancies have led to a diminution of service. [35601/13]

287. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport; Tourism and Sport if he will provide a breakdown of the vacancies that currently exist within the coastguard services across the State as a result of the Government's recruitment embargo. [35602/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 286 and 287 together.

The Irish Coast Guard has continued to operate the 3 rescue co-ordination stations in Dublin, Malin Head and Valentia. While the public services recruitment embargo has presented challenges, new arrangements for the operation of the centres on an interoperable basis, together with investment in new technologies and new operational arrangements will enable the Coast Guard to maintain the required level of services utilising some 40 radio officer posts across the 3 stations. There are a total of 38 radio officer positions filled at this time and arrangements are now in hand to fill the outstanding 2 positions.

Road Safety Issues

288. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to improve safety at a location (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35705/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The implementation of individual national road schemes is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2007, in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting this, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Safety Issues

289. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will investigate further the claims (details supplied) that a commercial vehicle test centre issued a pass statement for a vehicle subsequently found to have numerous and significant faults, faults which remain and still represent a danger to the public. [35636/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As outlined in my previous response of the 20th June last, under the Road Safety Authority (Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness) Act 2012, the Road Safety Authority (RSA) has responsibility for ensuring the roadworthiness of commercial vehicles.

Having referred your previous question to the RSA for direct reply I understand that the RSA wrote to you on the 1st July last informing you of the details of the investigation they carried out into this case, as well as advising you that they were satisfied that there did not appear to be grounds for the Test Centre to refuse the issue of a pass statement for this vehicle. Based on the RSA's statutory responsibility in relation to commercial vehicle roadworthiness testing and the outcome of the investigation conducted I do not have any proposals to investigate this matter further.

Cycling Facilities

290. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding that will be made available by his Department to provide cycle tracks for towns that depend on tourism as a main source of income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35679/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): My Department supports the development of cycle infrastructure for both utility and recreational cycling. Funding for cycle infrastructure is provided to local authorities by my Department under the Smarter Travel Programme, a five year, €65million programme which was launched in 2012 to support increased cycling, walking and use of public transport. The main programmes under this funding stream are the Active Travel Towns, Smarter Travel Areas and National Cycle Networks.

Funding under the Active Travel Towns and Smarter Travel Areas programmes is generally targeted at utility cycling, for example through the provision of cycle lanes and secure cycle parking to make cycling more attractive as an everyday mode of travel. However the popularity of the schemes such as Dublin Bikes with tourists shows that all cycling facilities can appeal to tourists.

Funding is available under the National Cycle Network programme to local authorities for the development of cycle routes which appeal directly to the recreational cyclist, including tourists, such as the Great Western Greenway.

Just over €7 million was allocated in 2012 to fund 16 projects under the NCN. A wide variety of route types have been allocated funding, including canal tow path routes, routes along disused rail lines and routes which make use of bypassed national roads. Most projects are substantially progressed.

A further NCN funding call will be launched later this year to select projects to be funded from 2014-2016. All local authorities will be invited to apply for funding under the programme, which may be used to provide recreational cycling facilities for locals and tourists alike.

Childhood Obesity

291. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in view of the high levels of childhood obesity here and in view of the fact that sport and exercise can tackle that problem if he will consider providing funding to companies (details supplied) in order that they can have a presence in every town here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35696/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Irish Sports

Council, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport, including the allocation of funding for programmes aimed at increasing the levels of participation in sport. I have referred the Deputy's question to the Irish Sports Council for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

Air Traffic Control Services

292. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to alter existing levels of air traffic control coverage at any of the three State airports, in view of the strategic regional and national importance of Cork Airport; the steps being taken to ensure that viability of the airport is maintained and that air traffic control services will be maintained for late arrivals, new business, early cargo flights, medical evacuation and emergency services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35764/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have been made aware by the IAA that it is considering the introduction of limited restrictions in its air traffic control services at Cork Airport as a result, in particular, of low night-time traffic levels at the airport. In this context, however, it is necessary to bear in mind that under the provisions of the Irish Aviation Authority Act 1993, one of the IAA's principal objects empowers the company to decide, as it sees fit, the extent to which it should operate and manage terminal navigation services at any of the three State airports, including Cork Airport. Accordingly, I have no statutory function in relation to this matter.

I understand that the IAA has decided to postpone for a six-month period its decision on the implementation of a modified air traffic control service at Cork Airport during which time traffic levels during the night-time will be monitored. This monitoring of the operational and commercial environment at the airport is designed to ensure the provision of an air traffic control service appropriate to the level of traffic at Cork Airport, including a continuous 24 hour operation if the traffic demand requires. The IAA has advised Cork Airport that the changes under consideration would have had no impact on medical evacuation or emergency flights.

I believe that the IAA has arranged a consultation meeting in Cork in August that will also be attended by the operators of Cork Airport as well as local business representatives. This initiative will provide an excellent forum for the interested parties involved to present their concerns and interests and I am confident that a satisfactory outcome can be achieved.

Swimming Pool Projects

293. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding a facility (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35766/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): Killarney Town Council received allocations of €1.5m under the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) and €3.8m under the Local Authority Swimming Pools Programme (LASPP) in relation to the swimming pool and leisure centre in Killarney. The retention amount of the LASPP grant (€380,000) remains to be drawn down.

I am informed that an issue has arisen in relation to the guarantee for the roof. I understand that the main contractor did not pay the subcontractor in full for roofing works and the subcon-

tractor has possession of the relevant warranty. Killarney Town Council are, however, of the view that Killarney Sports and Leisure Campus Ltd have no obligation in law to the subcontractor and have discharged all of their obligations to the main contractor who was paid in full following a conciliation process.

While the Department appreciates the subcontractor's difficulty the position remains that his contractual linkage is with the main contractor and not with Killarney Town Council or with Killarney Sports and Leisure Campus Ltd.

Departmental Staff Rehiring

294. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of retired civil or public servants who have been retained by his Department, since January 2013, on a short-term contract or consultancy basis where normal abatement rules do not apply. [35851/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Since January 2013 my Department has used the services of 4 retired civil or public servants where normal abatement rules did not apply. Two were engaged for workplace investigations and two were engaged to chair interview boards.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

295. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a yearly detailed breakdown of the sectoral measures, and accompanying savings, for the duration of the Haddington Road agreement applicable in his Department and-or non-commercial State sponsored bodies under the aegis of his Department. [35868/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The measures applying to my Department and Agencies under the aegis of my Department, are set out in the relevant sectoral collective agreement under the Haddington Road Agreement, in this case the Civil Service and NCSSBs.

As stated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the Haddington Road Agreement will facilitate a reduction of €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill by 2016. In relation to my Department, the savings arising under the Agreement have been incorporated in the Department's revised estimate for 2013 and further details for 2014 and 2015 will be incorporated in the vote allocation in the context of the overall estimates process.

Road Projects Status

296. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has had a briefing from Louth County Council on the stalled Narrow Water Bridge project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35915/13]

297. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to provide central Government funding support for the Narrow Water Bridge project to ensure that the project goes ahead and that European and Northern Ireland funding is not lost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35916/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 296 and 297 together.

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

My Department has been in regular contact with the parties involved in the project referred to by the Deputy and I have been kept informed of developments.

Unfortunately, on the basis of the tender prices received, the cost of the project is well beyond that projected. Louth County Council would be required to fund the shortfall and as it is beyond their capacity to do so, a decision to put the project on hold has had to be made.

Due to budget cut backs my Department has had to curtail its own investment on major new / improvement projects in recent times to focus available funds on necessary maintenance and repair work and therefore is not in a position to make up the shortfall identified. While my Department would be willing to consider helping to make up some of the shortfall, Louth County Council and the Department of Regional Development would also have to do so.

There does not appear to be strong support for doing this given the need to prioritise road maintenance and restoration over new projects and the fact that there are many other new bridge and new road projects that have a much higher benefit to cost ratio than Narrow Water. I am very disappointed that it has not been possible to find a contractor willing to build the bridge for the estimated cost.

Bus Éireann Services

298. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request Bus Éireann to provide a bus shelter at a location (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35920/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue of bus stop improvement is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with the relevant transport provider and I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Road Improvement Schemes

299. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide funding for a section of road (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35927/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority. In July last year local authorities were invited to submit applications for consideration for funding in 2013 under the Specific Improvement Grants Scheme. Kerry County Council applied for fund-

ing for ten projects under this grant category but the road at Kilsarton Cross Currow to Cockhill was not among the Council's applications.

The Department's Strategic and Specific grant schemes are scheduled to be discontinued from 2014 onward in order to focus monies on the repair and maintenance of regional and local roads. The small amount of funding available for major schemes will focus on projects already under construction or that the Department is committed to.

It is also important to reiterate that the role of Exchequer grants for regional and local roads is to supplement Councils like Kerry County Council in their own resources spending in this area and it is open to the Council to undertake this work from its own resources.

The 2013 regional and local road grants have now been fully allocated and there are no further funds available from which an additional allocation could be made.