

## Written Answers.

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

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 9, inclusive, answered orally.*

### **Public Broadcasting Charge Introduction**

10. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding the introduction of a public broadcasting service charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45223/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Programme for Government commits to transform the TV Licence into a household based Public Service Broadcasting Charge, to be applied to all eligible households and applicable businesses regardless of the device used to access content or services. It is not my intention that this Charge would place any additional burden on those who are currently compliant and pay their €160 per year TV Licence fee. Where practicable, I also hope to retain the exemption for those in receipt of the Household Benefits Package, which includes Senior Citizens. Responsibility, however, for issues relating to benefits that arise through the Household Benefits Package such as exemptions from the liability to pay the existing TV licence and the consequent right to a free licence are matters for the Minister for Social Protection

I launched a consultation on the proposed Public Service Broadcasting Charge on 27 August which ran until the 8 October. Almost 400 responses were received from members of the public, industry and stakeholder groups. The consultation paper was based on the key findings of a Value for Money Policy Review completed by my Department earlier this year. Views were sought on a series of questions based on each of the Value for Money recommendations which can be generally categorised as pertaining to the Basis for the Charge; Eligible Households; Applicable Businesses; Payments; Collection; and Compliance and Enforcement. I am considering the responses received during the Consultation and will use them to inform proposals on the Charge which I will bring to Government with the intention that the Charge will be introduced in 2015.

*Question No. 11 answered with Question No. 9.*

### **Climate Change Policy**

12. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he is concerned at Ireland's reliance on fossil fuels in view of the recent report on climate change produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; the steps he will take in view of this report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44976/13]

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

Government climate change policy has been developed in line with the ambitious EU climate and energy targets set for 2020. These targets set three key objectives for 2020: a 20% reduction in EU greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels; raising the share of EU energy consumption produced from renewable resources to 20%; and a 20% improvement in the EU's energy efficiency. The Government is also cognisant of the need for a carefully planned 2030 energy and climate framework. This will be critical in the context of establishing a structured, and cost-effective, transition to a secure and competitive, low-carbon European economy and energy system by 2050.

While responsibility for climate change policy is primarily a matter for the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, my Department, which has responsibility for energy policy, has a critical role to play in delivering effective interventions required to achieve climate policy objectives. Ireland is currently heavily reliant on imported fossil fuels to meet our energy needs. While it is acknowledged that fossil fuels will remain part of the energy mix for some time to come, progress is being made towards increasing the share of renewable energy in our energy requirements and improving energy efficiency. The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive set Ireland a legally binding target of meeting 16% of our energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020. In order to meet this target, Ireland is committed to meeting 40% of electricity demand, 12% of heating and 10% of transport power from renewable sources, with the transport target also being legally binding. In 2012 19.5% of our electricity demand was met by renewable generation. Provisional figures show that at the end of 2012, 5.1% of heat demand and 2.3% of the energy in the transport sector was met by renewables.

Energy efficiency remains one of the most effective methods of lowering emissions, reducing energy bills and decreasing our dependence on imported fossil fuels. In the second National Energy Efficiency Action Plan, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to a 20% national energy savings target and outlined a range of ambitious, but realisable, actions to be taken. While we are progressing towards meeting our current targets under the EU 2020 framework, it is critical that we also address the task of developing and implementing the new EU 2030 climate and energy framework. The timely progression of this work, which is being led by the European Commission and is scheduled for discussion at the European Council in early 2014, will provide much needed policy and regulatory certainty. This certainty will be key to releasing the investment necessary to deliver the energy infrastructure, without which, long term energy and climate objectives cannot be realised.

*Question No. 13 answered with Question No. 8.*

### **Postcode Implementation**

14. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the costs and perceived benefits associated with a postcodes system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45041/13]

17. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the full costs associated with the introduction of a national postcode system; the date on which this project is to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44947/13]

28. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will justify the new postcode system in view of serious concerns among postal workers that jobs will be lost by the move. [45043/13]

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

I propose to take Questions Nos. 14, 17 and 28 together.

On 8 October 2013, I obtained Government approval for the launch of a new national post-code system that will provide a unique seven character code to every letter-box in the State in 2015.

The Government also approved, subject to contract, the appointment of a consortium headed by Capita Ireland as the company which will develop, roll-out and operate the Postcode System. This announcement follows a procurement process run by my Department. The post-codes contract is expected to cost around €16m as the postcode system is developed and rolled out over the next 3 years and there will be a cost of about €1.2m per year over the remainder of the licence period.

Most countries have had the benefit of postcodes since the mid 1900s. In making the move now Ireland has been able to use the technology and systems available today to move to a next generation system. The Irish code will be the first in the world to be unique to each individual address. This will alleviate the current situation whereby more than 30% of all domestic addresses are not unique. It will mean that even individual apartments and offices in large developments will each have an individual code as long as they use their own specific post-boxes.

The introduction of Postcodes will give rise to significant economic and social benefits. These benefits include:

- Enabling organisations to improve existing services and develop new service offerings;
- Delivery of improved efficiencies with regards to logistics including emergency service response;
- The innovative approach proposed will act as a strong support for the development of digital applications in the Irish economy;
- Improved efficiency and accuracy of internal business processes as a result of improved accuracy and consistency of databases across public and private sectors;
- Better planning and analysis capabilities across public and private sectors;
- Providing a stimulus to mail volumes through improved direct marketing capabilities; and
- Facilitating improved efficiencies and quality improvements in the mails sector.

An Post will see a substantial benefit as the introduction of postcodes is likely to result in an immediate and sustained increase in mail volumes as businesses update database systems to include postcodes.

### **Offshore Exploration**

15. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to increase oil and gas exploration activity in Irish coastal waters; his views on whether we need to see more activity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45046/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd):** The Government's strategy for the exploitation of the State's natural hydrocarbon resources aims to maximise the level of exploration activity and increase the level of production activity, while ensuring a fair return to the State from these activities. It

is important then that the State provides suitable opportunities for international investors and provides the right environment to encourage private industry to take the risk associated with investing in exploration.

This is achieved in a number of ways, including:

- 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;
- actively promoting the opportunity to invest in exploration in the Irish offshore, in particular to companies not currently active here; and
- offering attractive and innovative licensing opportunities, such as the 2011 Atlantic Margin licensing round.

Exploration activity levels in the Irish offshore have ebbed and flowed over the past four decades. However, Ireland currently has the highest number of exploration authorisations in place since exploration began. In addition, the success of the 2011 Atlantic Margin Licensing Round is now becoming evident. The 2011 Round represented a new approach and was designed to take account of lessons learned from earlier rounds where the response had been less positive. The 2011 Round resulted in the award of 13 new authorisations, with a two year life, and close to 90% of the Licensing Options awarded are now set to convert to Frontier Exploration Licences.

### **Defined Benefit Pension Schemes**

16. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his position regarding the classification of the ESB's pension scheme; if he is satisfied that the ESB pension scheme meets the Pension Board's minimum funding standard. [44962/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** In late 2008, the Trustees of the ESB Superannuation Scheme brought forward the Tri-Annual Valuation of the Scheme by one year to assess the financial health of the Scheme. The Actuarial Valuation to 31 December 2008 showed an ongoing valuation deficit of €1.9 billion and a Minimum Funding Standard deficit of €1.8 billion. Consequently, the ESB and the ESB Group of Unions formed a working group to assess how best to address the reported deficit and to protect as far as feasible the interest of ESB and the current members of the Scheme. ESB reached an agreement with staff in 2010 to resolve the pension deficit. The measures adopted under that agreement have, I understand, had a positive effect, resulting in the Scheme Actuary recently reporting that the Scheme is now in balance on an on-going actuarial basis.

Aside from the on-going actuarial position, the Pensions Board also requires the ESB Scheme to assess whether it could meet a certain prescribed standard, known as the Minimum Funding Standard (MFS). This effectively tests whether the Scheme could meet all its current obligations if it were wound up immediately. Neither the Government nor the ESB envisages the winding up of the Scheme but regardless, the Scheme is currently still required to meet the requirements of the MFS. I understand that the Scheme Actuary reported at the end of 2011 that the ESB scheme, like many others, did not, at that time, satisfy the MFS requirements. I understand that the Pensions Board does not require the MFS deficit to be addressed immediately but does require that a plan be developed to address it over a reasonable time. I am informed that the Trustees of the ESB scheme, with the agreement of ESB, submitted a funding plan to the Pensions Board, which was approved in October 2012. In light of the fact that the funding

plan was submitted in 2011, the then existing rules relating to the Minimum Funding Standard applied. The Pensions Board published revised MFS rules in June 2012 for addressing pension fund deficits. I am advised that the ESB plan aims to eliminate the deficit by 2018 and that this plan remains on track.

Regarding the manner in which ESB accounts for the Scheme in its financial statements, my Department has been advised by the ESB that, having taken expert legal and financial advice, the Company is satisfied that the current accounting treatment for the Scheme is correct and in accordance with applicable laws and international accounting standards. I understand that the ESB Scheme remains registered with the Pensions Board as a defined benefit scheme, based on the relevant definitions as set out by the Pensions Act.

*Question No. 17 answered with Question No. 14.*

### **Wind Energy Guidelines**

18. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the date on which new guidelines for the planning of onshore wind farms will be published; if he is concerned that wind energy companies may seek to submit their planning proposals in advance of new planning guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44965/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, in conjunction with my Department and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, is undertaking a review of the Wind Energy Guidelines which will address the key issues of noise (including separation distance) and shadow flicker. Draft guidelines will be published for public consultation by end-November 2013 with a view to finalising guidelines by mid-2014. The revised guidelines will apply to all wind farm development in Ireland, and there is nothing to preclude wind energy projects submitting planning proposals for wind farms to meet Ireland's domestic renewable energy requirements while the review is being completed.

Planning permission for major renewable energy projects of significant scale for export, which will be determined by An Bord Pleanála, must await the putting in place of a clear national planning policy framework and I have asked my Department to prepare such a framework. The policy framework will provide the opportunity to integrate relevant EU Directive requirements (including Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment), trans-boundary dimensions and stakeholder participation within the context of a national framework. The outcome will be a high level development framework taking its lead from an Inter-Governmental Agreement, EU Directive requirements and relevant national, regional and local planning policy considerations in conjunction with wider policies, objectives and requirements. It will incorporate a vision and strategy coupled with technical parameters and a spatial element.

The development of the framework will be progressed by my Department over the next 12 to 15 months and will provide confidence and certainty for all stakeholders through an open, fair, balanced and consultative process. The initial phase of public consultation has now commenced and all interested parties and members of the public have been formally invited to make written submissions on the export project which will be taken into consideration in preparing the framework. Details can be found on a new dedicated section on my Department's website, exclusive to the project, and which will be updated as the project progresses.

**Appointments to State Boards**

19. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications; Energy and Natural Resources the procedure that is followed by his Department when appointing members of the public to State boards or other agencies under the aegis of his Department; if he will outline all appointments made by him to all boards or agencies since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44974/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** This Government has made changes in relation to appointments to State Boards and bodies with new arrangements involving advertisement of vacancies for applications from suitably qualified candidates and, in accordance with the government Decision of 12 April 2011, I have, each year, on my Department's website, invited Expressions of Interest from persons wishing to be considered for appointment to vacancies on state Boards under the aegis of my Department. This information has been used to inform decisions for appointments to State Boards. Such invitations are designed to extend the range of suitable persons from which a Minister might make appointments – not to constrain that range.

In 2011 there were 31 applications received following the advertisement for Expressions of Interest from which 3 appointments were made. In 2012 there were 37 applications received following the advertisement for Expressions of Interest from which 5 appointments were made. It should also be noted that about one third of the appointments in the following table were either ex-officio appointments, reappointments, the appointment of worker directors chosen by election, or appointments made from nominations made by an Oireachtas Committee. The table details all appointments to State Boards which have been filled since 9 March 2011 to date, including the appointments made from the Expressions of Interest received, taking into consideration qualifications and legislative requirements where applicable.

Body	Appointee	Date Appointed
An Post	Mr Donal Connell	14/08/2013
-	Mr Christoph Mueller (Chairperson)	26/03/2013
-	Mr James Wrynn	15/09/2011
-	Mr Paul Henry	15/09/2011
-	Mr Noel Adamson (worker director)	01/11/2012
-	Mr Patrick Compton (work- er director)	01/11/2012
-	Mr Thomas Devlin (worker director)	01/11/2012
-	Mr William Mooney (work- er director)	01/11/2012
-	Ms Martina O'Connell (worker director)	1/11/2012
-	Mr William Scally	11/12/2012
-	Ms Lorraine Tormey	01/01/2013
-	Mr Tom O'Brien	11/06/2013

Body	Appointee	Date Appointed
Bord na Móna	Ms Denise Cronin	15/09/2011
-	Mr. John Horgan (Chairperson)	24/04/2012 (as a Director) 27/09/2012 (as Chairperson)
-	Mr Gabriel D'Arcy	01/02/2013
-	Mr Gerard O'Donoghue	02/10/2012
-	Ms Elaine Treacy	17/07/2012
-	Mr Barry Walsh	16/10/2012
Bord Gais Eireann	Mr Finbarr Kennelly	11/12/2012
-	Mr Michael McNicholas	07/05/2013
-	Ms Mari Hurley	11/06/2013
EirGrid	Dr Gary Healy	15/09/2011
-	Ms Regina Moran	15/09/2011
-	Mr Liam O'Halloran	15/09/2011
-	Ms Bride Rosney	15/09/2011
-	Ms Doireann Barry	22/12/2011
-	Mr Fintan Slye	17/07/2013
ESB	Mr Lochlann Quinn (Chairperson)	21/01/2013
-	Mr Pat O'Doherty	09/01/2013
-	Ms Noreen Wright	28/06/2011
-	Mr Seamus Mallon	03/05/2011
-	Ms Anne Butler	13/11/2012
-	Ms Noreen O'Kelly	23/04/2013
Irish National Petroleum Corporation (INPC)	Mr Sean Fitzgerald	01/06/2011
-	Mr Vincent Caffrey	01/06/2011
-	Ms Aoife MacEvilly	18/07/2012
-	Mr Aidan Donnelly –Chairperson	18/07/2012
-	Mr Pat Meehan	10/07/2013
National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA)	Ms Aoife MacEvilly	11/04/2011
-	Mr Pat Meehan CEO	01/01/2013
-	Mr Aidan Donnelly (Chairperson)	12/07/2013
-	Mr Oliver Whelan	01/04/2013
TG4	Mr. Micheál Seoighe	17/04/2012
-	Ms. Mairéad Ní Cheoinín	17/04/2012
-	Mr. Joe Connolly	17/04/2012

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Body	Appointee	Date Appointed
-	Mr. Des Geraghty	17/04/2012
-	Ms. Andréa Ní Éalaithe	17/04/2012
-	Ms Mairead Nic Suibhne	17/04/2012
-	Ms. Michelle Ní Chróinín	17/04/2012
-	Siún Ní Raghallaigh (Chairperson)	17/04/2012
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	Ms Julie O'Neill	01/05/2013
-	Mr. Edgar Morgenroth	24/04/2012
-	Mr. Michael Conlon	15/09/2011 (but resigned on 21/08/2012)
-	Ms. Anne Farrell	24/04/2012
-	Mr. Declan Waugh	29/05/2012
-	Ms. Michelle Green	29/05/2012
-	Mr. Brian Carroll	26/06/2012
-	Mr. Brendan Halligan (Chairperson)	01/10/2012
-	Dr Brian Motherway	01/05/2012
-	Mr Pat Gilroy	14/05/2013
-	Mr Michael McGarry	14/05/2013
-	Ms Anne Connolly	02/05/2013
Digital Hub Development Agency (DHDA)	Mr. Paul Holden	29/05/2012
-	Mr. Seamus Ratigan	29/05/2012
-	Mr Leonard Donnelly (Chairperson)	24/11/2012
-	Mr Brendan McDonagh	09/04/2013
-	Ms Alice Davis	24/10/2012
-	Mr Owen Keegan	07/10/2013
-	Ms Edel Flynn	19/04/2013
-	Mr Philip Maguire	09/04/2013 (but subsequently resigned on 06/10/2013)
Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi)	Mr. Ronan O'Reilly (Chairperson)	22/05/2012
-	Ms. Anne Butler	22/05/2012 (but resigned on 25/10/2012)
-	Mr. Robin Simpson	22/05/2012
-	Dr. Enda Howley	22/05/2012
-	Dr. Denis Kelliher	22/05/2012
-	Ms. Marion Coy	22/05/2012
-	Mr. Justin Gleeson	22/05/2012
-	Ms Sandra Ryan	22/05/2012



Body	Appointee	Date Appointed
-	Mr. Padraic Jordan	22/05/2012
-	Mr. Oliver Hickey	19/06/2012
-	Mr Noel Ward	21/12/2012
-		
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Mr Fintan Gorman	10/09/2013
-	Mr Peter J Nally	10/09/2013
The Mining Board	Mr Michael Neary	17/11/2011
-	Mr Michael MacGrath S.C. (Chairperson)	12/03/2013

### National Broadband Plan Implementation

20. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications; Energy and Natural Resources if the national mapping process to identify those areas which would not be served with high-speed broadband without State intervention is complete for County Donegal; and if not, the percentage of the county which remains to be mapped and when he expects the mapping process to be complete; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44935/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The objective of the national mapping exercise under the National Broadband Plan is to identify and map current and planned broadband services, both basic and next generation access (NGA). The process for participating in the mapping exercise has been published on my Department's website ([www.dcenr.ie/nbpmapping](http://www.dcenr.ie/nbpmapping)) and notified to all undertakings authorised by ComReg. Information has been sought from participating operators in respect of current coverage as well as investments planned up to July 2016 and beyond, where appropriate.

Mapping data has been submitted to my Department by a total of 23 operators and the process of analysing the data and supporting information is now underway. The mapping data is being assessed on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the EU State Aid Guidelines, not on a county by county basis. Accordingly, it is not possible to categorise the mapping in terms of percentages of particular counties. When all of the information has been analysed, a clear picture should emerge of coverage throughout all of the country, including County Donegal.

It is my intention to publish the map showing existing and planned NGA broadband coverage early next year, along with the Government's proposals for a State-led intervention to roll out high speed broadband across the country.

### Wind Energy Generation

21. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will ensure that a full cost benefit analysis of job creation in the wind industry is carried out; the likely job creation for north Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45034/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** A full cost benefit analysis is under way to determine if it is mutually beneficial for Ireland and the United Kingdom to enter an Inter-Governmental Agreement in early 2014 to facilitate trade in renewable energy. A key part of this analysis is the potential for job creation in Ireland.

A preliminary cost-benefit analysis completed by NewERA ahead of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Kingdom last January indicated employment creation arising from a 3 Gigawatt project would be expected to be in the order of 3,000 to 6,000 job years in the construction phase, with the actual number dependent on the construction schedule to 2020. NewEra also advised that there would be about €1 billion of construction spending on civil engineering works over 2 to 3 years. There would also be additional jobs created in the on-going maintenance of turbines over a 20-year operating life. Further employment opportunities would arise if turbines or components were manufactured in Ireland. All relevant State agencies, particularly in the enterprise area, will be required to co-ordinate their activities early in the process to ensure Ireland maximises the employment potential of export projects. This opportunity has already been identified by the IDA and Enterprise Ireland in their clean technology growth strategies.

Deployment of wind generation to meet our domestic targets has already begun to realise economic benefits. A recent Irish Wind Energy Association member survey indicated that 3,400 people are currently employed in the sector. Employment creation will be further strengthened as we continue to deploy renewable energy and related technologies for the domestic and, potentially, the export market. With Ireland's strong capabilities in areas such as engineering and ICT, there will also be opportunities to develop new products across the information technology, remote communications and software sectors.

### **Connemara Oil Field**

22. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide the details of an oil find by Statoil in 1997 in the Connemara field; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45049/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd):** The Connemara Oil Field is located in Block 26/28 in the Porcupine Basin, approximately 165 km offshore the west of Ireland, and was discovered by BP in 1979. In 1997, as part of a planned full field development for the Connemara Field, Statoil Exploration Ireland Limited drilled two appraisal wells on the field. The first well was aimed at testing the main reservoir sands of Upper Jurassic, Oxfordian age. The second well was drilled to test the stratigraphically higher sandstone reservoir of Upper Jurassic, Portlandian age.

The results of the appraisal programme did not meet expectations. The first well revealed poorer reservoir characteristics than anticipated and also encountered low flow rates together with rapid declining well pressure and slow pressure build-up. The second well encountered a thinner than expected Portlandian reservoir and consequently, was not tested.

On the basis of the results of the appraisal programme the wells were plugged and abandoned and Statoil decided not to proceed with the development of the Connemara Field. Statoil relinquished the Connemara Field acreage in October 1999.

### **Oil and Gas Exploration**

23. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the progress he has made in developing a new fiscal and regulatory framework for the oil and gas exploration industry in Ireland; the persons he has consulted in developing this new framework; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44956/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** On 9 May 2012 the former Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Natural Resources and Agriculture published its Report on Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration. The Report con-

tained a number of recommendations in respect of the fiscal and regulatory framework applying to oil and gas exploration in Ireland. At my request the Report was debated in Seanad Éireann on 27 June 2012 and in Dáil Éireann on 14 May 2013, with the debate concluding on 9 July 2013. During the course of the Dáil debate I stated my intention to seek further independent expert advice on the “fitness-for-purpose” of Ireland’s fiscal terms, such expert advice to focus on what level of fiscal gain is achievable for the State and its citizens and, equally important, on the mechanisms best suited to produce such a gain.

On 24 September 2013 my Department issued a request for tenders on the public procurement website [etenders.gov.ie](http://etenders.gov.ie) for the provision of expert advice on Ireland’s oil and gas exploration development and production fiscal terms. The deadline for receipt of tenders was 15 October 2013. My officials are currently evaluating the tenders received.

### Sale of State Assets

24. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide an update on the proposals to sell the energy section of Bord Gáis Éireann; if the division of Bord Gáis Éireann debt between the two proposed new companies has been decided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44980/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** Bord Gáis Éireann is in the process of selling its energy business, Bord Gáis Energy. BGÉ and its advisors, working with NewERA, who are advising the Government in relation to the sale, are currently assessing the latest bids received for Bord Gáis Energy. The Deputy will understand that, as the process is ongoing, it would be inappropriate for me to make any further public comment on either the transaction or the way in which debt may be treated as part of the transaction.

### Seirbhísí Leathanbhanda

25. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Sandra McLellan** den Aire Cumarsáide, Fuinnimh agus Acmhainní Nádúrtha cad iad na pleananna atá aige chun forbairt a dhéanamh ar an ngréasán idirlín leathanbhanda sa Ghaeltacht; an leagfaidh sé amach an dul chun cinn atá déanta ar fhorbairt an ghréasáin sin go dtí seo; an dóigh leis go bhfuil tionchar ag an easpa idirlín leathanbhanda ar chruthú post; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [38492/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** Tá margadh teileachumarsáide na hÉireann saortha go hiomlán ó 1999 de réir riachtanais Threoracha cheangailteacha ón AE. Is cúram don earnáil phríobháideach, a oibríonn sa mhargadh lánsaortha, faoi rialáil rialtóra neamhspleách, An Coimisiún um Rialáil Cumarsáide (ComReg), é na seirbhísí teileachumarsáide a sholáthar, lena n-áirítear seirbhísí leathanbhanda, ar an gcéad ásc. Tá seirbhísí leathanbhanda á soláthar ag roinnt soláthraithe tráchtála seirbhísí, ar ardáin éagsúla lena n-áirítear DSL (.i. thar línte teileafóin), fosaithe gan sreang, soghluaiste, cábla, snáthoptach agus saítilít. Tá sonraí faoi na seirbhísí leathanbhanda atá ar fáil ó chontae go contae ar shuíomh idirlín ComReg ag [www.callcosts.ie](http://www.callcosts.ie).

Tá sé mar aidhm i bPlean Náisiúnta Leathanbhanda an Rialtais, a d’fhoilsigh mé i mí Lúnasa 2012, athrú ó bhonn a dhéanamh ar chóras leathanbhanda na hÉireann d’fhonn a chinntiú go mbeidh leathanbhanda ardluais ar fáil ag gach saoránach agus gach gnólacht, lena n-áirítear iad siúd i gceantair Ghaeltachta. Bainfear an sprioc seo amach mar seo a leanas:

- creat beartais agus rialála a sholáthar a chabhróidh le hinfheistíocht tráchtála a bhrostú agus a spreagadh, agus

- infheistíocht faoi threoir an Stáit i gceantair nach mbeadh buntáiste tráchtála iontu don

mhargadh.

Ó foilsíodh an Plean tá infheistíochtaí á ndéanamh ag an earnáil tráchtála i seirbhísí líne fhosaithe agus i seirbhísí ardluais gan sreang, i gceantair uirbeacha agus leathuirbeacha go háirithe. Ní féidir leis an Stát idirghabháil a dhéanamh ach le rochtain ar sheirbhísí leathanbhanda a chinntiú i gceantair ina dteipeann ar an mhargadh iomaíoch na seirbhísí sin a sheachadadh. D'fhonn an infheistíocht faoi threoir an Stáit a chur chun cinn do na ceantair nach bhfuil bhfuil leas tráchtála le baint ag an margadh astu, ní mór próiseas soláthair a dhearadh agus faomhadh Cúnamh Stáit an AE a fháil.

Tá feachtas cuimsitheach larscáilíochta ar bun ag mo Roinn faoi infheistíocht reatha agus ionchasach na hearnála tráchtála le fáil amach cad iad na háiteanna ina bhfuiltear ag súil go mbeidh seirbhísí leathanbhanda ardluais á seachadadh sna blianta atá romhainn. Úsáidfear torthaí an fheachtas léarscáilíochta seo le léiriú go cruinn cad iad na ceantair ar gá díriú orthu le hinfeistíocht faoi threoir an Stáit mar atá beartaithe faoin bPlean Leathanbhanda Náisiúnta.

Tá dianullmhúcháin teicniúla, airgeadais agus dlí ar bun lena n-áirítear idirbheartaíocht le páirtithe leasmhara. Cuirfear an próiseas soláthair i gcrích don idirghabháil fhaofa de réir rialacha soláthair na hÉireann agus an AE agus táthar ag súil go seolfar é i 2014.

Tá feidhmiú an Phlean Náisiúnta Leathanbhanda á chomhlánú ag an Straitéis Náisiúnta Digiteach a sheoil mé i mí Iúil seo caite. Tá an chéad chéim den Straitéis Náisiúnta Digiteach dírithe ar theascáin shonracha den phobal, ar an nglacadh digiteach a fheabhsú agus leis na sochair eacnamaíocha agus shóisialta a thagann le teicneolaíochtaí digiteacha a fhíorú. Aithnítear sa straitéis chomh luachmhar is atá sé do phobail, do shaoránaigh agus do ghnólachtaí glacadh leis an idirlíon. Mar shampla, léiríonn taighde a rinneadh don Choimisiún Eorpach go bhfásann gnólachtaí a bhfuil láithreach shuntasach acu ar líne dhá uair chomh mear, go n-easpórtáileann siad a dhá oiread agus go bhfostaíonn siad a dhá oiread daoine. Tá togra ag an Straitéis Náisiúnta Digiteach mar sin le cabhrú le gnólachtaí beaga trádáil ar líne.

Trí fheidhmiú an Phlean Náisiúnta Leathanbhanda agus an Straitéis Náisiúnta Dhigiteach, déanfaidh mé dhícheall a chinntiú go mbeidh rochtain ar leathanbhanda ardluais ag gach cuid d'Éirinn agus go mbeidh gach saoránach agus gach gnólacht in ann a bheith rannpháirteach go hiomlán i ngeilleagar agus i sochaí a bheidh cumasaithe go digiteach, agus an leas is mó a bhaint as.

### Corrib Gas Field Issues

26. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if it is true that a tunnelling expert sent by the Department to investigate claims by residents around Srahwaddaconn Bay that there was bubbling in the Srahwaddaconn estuary over the area where Shell was tunnelling as part of the Corrib project and that an expert was denied access to the tunnel by Shell where weeks later a Shell employee died when a compressed air pipe attached to the tunnel boring machine exploded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45047/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** A representative for Environ, the independent consultants appointed by my Department to assist in the oversight and monitoring of the conditions of consent to construct the Corrib Gas pipeline, conducted a site visit during the 2nd and 3rd of July this year. The purpose of this brief visit to the Corrib Project, which did not require access to the tunnel, was to:

- a) Review the points raised during the previous visit;
- b) Assess the possible reasons behind the “depressions” in Sruwadaconn Bay that had been

recently reported; and

- c) Examine what lessons have been learned from these incidents.

The Environ report of the visit, dated 8th July, 2013 confirmed that there was an opportunity to view the site, but due to the need to be certified for confined space work, there was no opportunity to visit the tunnel. The confined space course is of two day duration and as the Environ representative had not completed such safety training it was not possible on safety grounds for him to enter the tunnel.

It should be noted that matters with regard to workplace health and safety are a matter for the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and are beyond the remit of Environ.

Tunnelling works are currently suspended due to the recent fatal incident referenced by the Deputy. Investigations into the incident are being carried out by both the HSA and by Shell E&P Ireland Ltd itself. It should be noted that Shell is not under investigation, the employer in this instance is the German tunnelling company Herrenknecht which is subcontracted to companies Wayss & Freytag and BAM Civil who are responsible for tunnelling operations.

### **Renewable Energy Generation Targets**

27. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which he expects to be in a position to facilitate the development of the wind energy sector within the context of achieving previously identified targets; if the development of the sector will be governed by specific or particular planning guidelines, statutory regulations or instruments; if he will set out the merit of clean and safe energy production in comparison with the use of fossil fuels or other forms of electricity generation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45163/13]

45. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to meet the 2020 European targets for renewable energy; his plans to provide incentives for the installation of renewable energy products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45028/13]

46. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the areas of priority identified by his Department in developing the renewable energy sector here; the targets set by his Department for the proportion of Ireland's energy stock to be provided by wind power, tidal power, solar power and biofuels, respectively, in 2016; the level of progress achieved by his Department to date in meeting these targets since the Government entered into office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45044/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):**  
I propose to take Questions Nos. 27, 45 and 46 together.

The overarching objective of the Government's energy policy is to ensure secure and sustainable supplies of competitively priced energy to all consumers. Ireland is currently heavily reliant on imported fossil fuels to meet our energy needs. While it is acknowledged that fossil fuels will remain part of the energy mix for some time to come, progress is being made towards increasing the share of renewable energy in our energy requirements.

The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive set Ireland a legally binding target of meeting 16% of our energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020. In order to meet this target, Ireland is committed to meeting 40% of electricity demand, 12% of heating and 10% of

transport power from renewable sources, with the transport target also being legally binding. The Directive also requires that Member States set out in a National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP) their trajectories towards meeting these targets. Ireland's NREAP, which can be downloaded from my Department's website, assumes Ireland's 16% target will be met incrementally at around 1% per annum. Provisional figures for 2012 indicate that 6.9% of our overall energy requirements were met from renewable sources, made up of 19.5% in electricity, 5.1% in heat and 2.3% in transport. A second progress report on the NREAP is due for completion by the end of this year.

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. At the end of quarter three this year, the total amount of renewable generation connected to the grid was just over 2,100 MW. It is estimated that a total of between 3,500 and 4,000 MW of onshore renewable generation capacity will be required to allow Ireland to meet its 40% renewable electricity target. The primary support mechanisms for renewable electricity in Ireland are the Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff (REFIT) schemes. In order to facilitate the rate of build of renewable generation capacity required to meet the 2020 target, a number of changes to the REFIT 1 and 2 schemes were introduced in 2013. Full details of the revised terms and conditions of these schemes can be found on my Department's website. Currently, 3,000 MW of renewable generation has taken up connection offers under the Gate 3 grid connection programme.

Renewable heat deployment is underpinned by current policies such as REFIT3 which supports Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plants, ensuring an increase not only in the amount of heat from renewable sources but also in the amount renewable electricity produced. This builds on the increases in renewable heat which were achieved by the Greener Homes Scheme, the Renewable Heat Deployment Programme (ReHeat) and the CHP Deployment Programme. In the transport sector, the penetration of renewable energy will grow mainly with the increased use of sustainable biofuels but also from the deployment of electric vehicles. My Department is also currently finalising a Bioenergy Strategy following intensive cross-Departmental and stakeholder engagement. The strategy will set out the actions required to optimise the contribution that energy from biomass can make to the 2020 renewable energy targets.

As we look beyond 2020 and towards the goal of a low carbon energy system, the need to expand the renewable generation portfolio is apparent. This will include technologies still at the pre-commercial stage such as wave and tidal, and their development will be considered in the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan which will be published shortly by my Department. In addition, analysis undertaken by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland of the case for support for solar power is currently under review.

As regards planning guidelines for the wind energy sector, the development of all wind farms in Ireland is subject to planning legislation, which include requirements for public consultation. In addition, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, in conjunction with my Department and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, is undertaking a review of the Wind Energy Guidelines which will address the key issues of noise (including separation distance) and shadow flicker. Draft guidelines will be published for public consultation by end-November 2013 with a view to finalising guidelines by mid-2014. The revised guidelines will apply to all wind farm development in Ireland.

Ireland's excellent renewable energy potential can also be developed for export. Expert advice and evidence shows that Ireland has the capability to achieve its national targets for renewable electricity from onshore renewable generation alone, with capacity to spare. Work is progressing very well on signing an Inter-Governmental Agreement between Ireland and the

United Kingdom in early 2014 to facilitate trade in renewable energy. This means that there is potential for projects of scale aimed at export markets. Planning permission for such projects, which will be determined by An Bord Pleanála, must await the putting in place of a clear national planning policy framework and I have asked my Department to prepare such a framework. The policy framework will provide the opportunity to integrate relevant EU Directive requirements (including Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment), trans-boundary dimensions and stakeholder participation within the context of a national framework.

The outcome will be a high level development framework taking its lead from the Inter-Governmental Agreement, EU Directive requirements and relevant national, regional and local planning policy considerations in conjunction with wider policies, objectives and requirements. It will incorporate a vision and strategy coupled with technical parameters and a spatial element. The development of the framework will be progressed by my Department over the 12 to 15 months and will provide confidence and certainty for all stakeholders through an open, fair, balanced and consultative process. The initial phase of public consultation has now commenced and all interested parties and members of the public have been formally invited to make written submissions on the export project which will be taken into consideration in preparing the framework. Details can be found on a new dedicated section on my Department's website, exclusive to the project, and which will be updated as the project progresses.

*Question No. 28 answered with Question No. 14.*

### **Wind Energy Generation**

29. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the steps he is taking to ensure that communities are fully engaged in the wind energy planning and development process in the context of the current national debate on wind energy; if the proposed national renewable energy export policy and framework which will guide An Bord Pleanála will also include the domestic market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45035/13]

34. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he is satisfied that the concerns expressed by communities regarding wind energy development have been properly addressed by wind energy companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45032/13]

36. **Deputy Charles Flanagan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he is satisfied that the concerns expressed by communities regarding wind energy development have been properly addressed by wind energy companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45037/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):**  
I propose to take Questions Nos. 29, 34, and 36 together.

I am aware of the concerns expressed by certain communities regarding wind energy development for export and I have spoken publicly on this matter on a number of occasions. Some of these concerns have been needlessly exacerbated by poor communications and misinformation and I have emphasised the need for developers to engage with local communities in an effective and timely manner. The views of local communities must be at the heart of the transition to renewable energy. Industry can go a long way towards achieving public acceptance by addressing and mitigating human, environmental and landscape impacts and delivering the best possible engineering solutions. It is also important that developers communicate fully and accurately

the local as well as the national socioeconomic benefits flowing from investment projects. A recent Government policy statement on the matter acknowledges the need for social acceptance and for project developers to examine appropriate means of building community gain considerations into project planning and budgeting.

One of the key requirements for proposals of a significant scale for wind energy export will be the achievement of the necessary planning consents in Ireland. Planning permission for such projects, which will be determined by An Bord Pleanála, must await the putting in place of a clear national planning policy framework and I have asked my Department to prepare such a framework. The policy framework will provide the opportunity to integrate relevant EU Directive requirements (including Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment), trans-boundary dimensions and stakeholder participation within the context of a national framework. The outcome will be a high level development framework taking its lead from an Inter-Governmental Agreement, EU Directive requirements and relevant national, regional and local planning policy considerations in conjunction with wider policies, objectives and requirements. It will incorporate a vision and strategy coupled with technical parameters and a spatial element.

The development of the framework will be progressed by my Department over the next 12 to 15 months and will provide confidence and certainty for all stakeholders through an open, fair, balanced and consultative process. The initial phase of public consultation has now commenced and all interested parties and members of the public have been formally invited to make written submissions on the export project which will be taken into consideration in preparing the framework. Details can be found on a new dedicated section on my Department's website, exclusive to the project, and which will be updated as the project progresses.

In addition, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, in conjunction with my Department and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, is undertaking a review of the Wind Energy Guidelines which will address the key issues of noise (including separation distance) and shadow flicker. Draft guidelines will be published for public consultation by end-November 2013 with a view to finalising guidelines by mid-2014. The revised guidelines will apply to all wind farm development in Ireland.

### **Postcode Implementation**

30. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if the new national postcode system will reflect the Irish or English place names of cities, towns and townlands in the codes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44953/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** On 8 October I announced that the Government has approved, subject to contract, the launch of a national postcode system in 2015. A postcode operator will design and run the postcode under license for an initial ten year period extendable at the discretion of the Minister for Communications by a further five years. The new postcode system will provide a unique code to every postal address in Ireland, including individual apartments. The Postcode will be a 7 character code in the format A65 B2CD, with the first three characters relating to a general area or postal district in which the address is located. The code denoting the general area will not be based on a placename and, therefore, will be language neutral. In Dublin, the existing postcodes will appear as the first three characters of the 7 character code.



## Electricity Generation

31. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will ensure that there is a real and meaningful engagement process between EirGrid and residents in the areas affected by the Grid Link project who have very serious concerns about the impact that this major project will have on their communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45031/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure (July 2012) emphasised the importance of early transparent engagement and consultation with local communities and stakeholders by developers of large infrastructure projects.

I am aware that EirGrid is committed to public consultation and that they have been engaging in a comprehensive process in regard to the Grid Link project. EirGrid's consultations have involved opening five regional information centres, a lo-call project information telephone line (1890 422 122), local radio advertising, and national and local print advertising. I understand that thirty-three open days were held within the project area over the last 16 months and that since autumn 2012 the Grid Link Project team has visited marts, shopping centres and agricultural shows, attending over 120 events to date where thousands of stakeholders have engaged with the team. I am also aware that the project team briefs and updates County Councils, Town Councils, Chambers of Commerce and other local organisations and national and local politicians regularly and have done so since the launch of the project in April 2012.

I understand the company welcomes observations and views in relation to the Grid Link Project which is still at an early stage. The identification of route corridor options is a key opportunity for public input given that the decision regarding the final route of this electricity line is yet to be made. I would encourage members of the public and stakeholders to participate in the consultation process, as such participation makes for better project implementation overall.

## Broadband Services Speeds

32. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the percentage of households in County Donegal that currently have access to broadband speeds of 30 Mbs; the percentage of households in County Donegal that currently have access to broadband speeds of 40 Mbs; if all households in County Donegal will have access to broadband speeds of at least 30 Mbs by 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45027/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** Ireland's telecommunications market has been fully liberalised since 1999 in accordance with the requirements of binding EU Directives. The market has since developed into a well-regulated market, supporting a multiplicity of commercial operators, providing services over a diverse range of technology platforms. Details of broadband services available in each County, including County Donegal, 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 fails to deliver such services. The Government's National Broadband Plan, which I published in August 2012, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed broadband is available to all citizens and businesses, including those in County Donegal. This will be achieved by providing:

- a policy and regulatory framework that assists in accelerating and incentivising commercial investment, and

- 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, including in parts of Donegal. In order to progress the State-led investment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest, a full procurement process must be designed and EU State Aids approval must be obtained.

My Department is engaged in a comprehensive mapping exercise of the current and anticipated investment by the commercial sector to identify where the market is expected to deliver high speed broadband services over the coming years. This will culminate in the development of coverage maps which will aggregate the information provided by operators. These maps will indicate the current and future availability of high speed broadband throughout the country, as well as where there are gaps. The situation pertaining to County Donegal will be captured within the maps, which will be made available on my Department's website.

Intensive technical, financial and legal preparations, including stakeholder engagement, are ongoing. The procurement process for the approved intervention will be carried out in accordance with EU and Irish procurement rules and it is expected that it will be launched in 2014.

Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, I am committed to ensuring that all parts of Ireland have access to high speed broadband, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in, and maximise the benefits of, a digitally enabled economy and society.

### **Electricity Transmission Network**

33. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will outline a response to the OECD's Economic Survey of Ireland 2013, in particular, his views on whether the OECD's suggestion that ownership of the electricity transmission grid should be transferred from the ESB to EirGrid; his views on whether the ESB's generating business should also be separated into competing generating companies and partially privatised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44977/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Government, in July 2011, considered the ownership of the Irish electricity transmission system and the appropriateness of transfer of transmission assets from ESB to EirGrid. This consideration was undertaken in the context of how best to implement the unbundling provisions of the "Third Energy Package" and the various options set out therein.

The Government's July 2011 decision, on foot of a detailed analysis of the transmission assets, was that Ireland would apply the option or derogation set out in Article 9.9 of the relevant Directive (Directive 2009/72/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 concerning common rules for the internal market in electricity and repealing Directive 2003/54/EC). Effectively, the Government's decided to confirm the current transmission asset ownership regime. An application for certification under Article 9.9 was submitted to the European Commission. On 12 April 2013 the European Commission certified the transmission system arrangements in Ireland as being in accordance with Article 9.9.

As regards the 2013 OECD report, I should highlight that the report did not make a fresh recommendation regarding transfer of the ownership of the electricity transmission assets. Rather, it reported on the current state of play in relation to recommendations previously made

and it noted that our transmission system arrangements had been certified by the European Commission in May 2013.

With regard to ESB's generation business, in February 2012 the Government committed to the sale of some of ESB's non-strategic electricity generation assets. Certain assets have been identified for sale and progress is being made with the first sale announcement expected to be made shortly.

More generally, it is also important to note that the opening up of the power generation sector in Ireland has led to the entry of new players and investors.

*Question No. 34 answered with Question No. 29.*

### **Wind Energy Generation**

35. **Deputy Charles Flanagan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will ensure that a full technical and economic analysis of the wind energy export project is carried out in advance of an intergovernmental agreement between Ireland and the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45036/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** In January of this year the UK Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change Mr. Ed Davey MP and I signed a Memorandum of Understanding on energy cooperation. That Memorandum sent a strong signal of our shared interest in developing the opportunity to export green electricity from Ireland to Britain and will result in completion of consideration of how Irish renewable energy resources, onshore and offshore, might be developed to the mutual benefit of both countries. An agreed programme of work to this end, including a full technical and economic analysis, is underway with the ambition to settle on an Inter-Governmental Agreement in early 2014. A key objective, from an Irish Government perspective, is to realise the potential for investment, jobs and growth.

The amount of energy to be procured by the UK and the mechanisms for sharing the resultant economic benefits, including an appropriate return to the Exchequer, are among the matters to be addressed ahead of signing any Inter-Governmental Agreement.

*Question No. 36 answered with Question No. 29.*

### **Wind Energy Generation**

37. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the steps he is taking to ensure that Irish workers, crew, boat builders and installation companies are given priority when installing offshore wind infrastructure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45026/13]

43. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the steps being taken to ensure that the Government objective of ensuring local employment where possible on energy projects is being pursued by project developers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44898/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 37 and 43 together.

I refer to the reply to Question No. 333 [44826/13] of 22 October.

### **Garda Investigations**

38. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in view of the fact that a person (details supplied) is subject to an investigation by the Metropolitan Police in relation to the person's Dublin hacking operation, the reason no investigation has been ordered by him into media violations of privacy and unlawful activity, nor any other steps taken to attempt to deal with this situation. [45042/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** Any criminal investigation in this jurisdiction such as the one referred to in this case by the Deputy is a matter for An Garda Síochána to consider and not one in which my Department or I, as Minister, have a role.

### **Mine Sites Remediation**

39. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding the restoration of the Avoca mines site, County Wicklow. [45221/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** A study commissioned by my Department and undertaken by CDM set out a plan for full remediation of the Avoca mines site, with costs identified in excess of €50 million. Given current pressures on the public finances, resources are not available to fund the full series of measures recommended in the report. My Department has, however, provided funding of €3m for a programme of essential works to make safe hazards arising from adits, shafts and unstable spoil heaps, and provision of further fencing and signage.

My Department has recently invited tenders for the provision of technical design, procurement and project management expertise and I expect to have a multi-disciplinary project team in place before the end of the year to assist the Department in identifying the works to be prioritised and to project manage all elements of the work to be carried out over the next three years. The team will be required, on appointment, to liaise and consult with relevant stakeholders throughout the duration of the project.

### **Post Office Network**

40. **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. [45218/13]

**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. The opportunity to pay the local property tax via An Post outlets was also secured. An Post was 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.

*Question No. 41 answered with Question No. 7.*

### **National Broadband Plan Implementation**

42. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide an update on progress on the national broadband plan; if the plan will be fully implemented in its original form; if the Government is still committed to co-fund fibre-speed rural broadband access of at least 30 megabits per second; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44968/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Government's National Broadband Plan, which I published in August 2012, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed broadband is available to all citizens and businesses. This will be achieved by providing a policy and regulatory framework that assists in accelerating and incentivising commercial investment, and 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. 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.

In order to progress the State-led investment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest, a full procurement process must be designed and EU State Aids approval must be obtained. My Department is engaged in a comprehensive mapping exercise of the current and anticipated investment by the commercial sector to identify where the market is expected to deliver high speed broadband services over the coming years. The results of this mapping exercise will inform the precise areas that need to be targeted in the State-led investment as envisaged in the National Broadband Plan.

In devising any State intervention to deliver high speed services to areas of the country where such services are not commercially viable and will not be provided by the market, my Department will be adopting a technology neutral approach, as required under EU law. This means specifying our requirements rather than specifying a particular technology. Intensive technical, financial and legal preparations, including stakeholder engagement, are ongoing. The procurement process for the approved intervention will be carried out in accordance with EU and Irish procurement rules and it is expected that it will be launched in 2014.

Implementation of the National Broadband Plan will be complemented by the National

Digital Strategy which I launched in July last. The first phase of the National Digital Strategy targets specific segments of society, aiming to improve digital adoption and to realise the economic and social benefits that digital technologies can bring.

Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, I am committed to ensuring that all parts of Ireland have access to high speed broadband, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in, and maximise the benefits of, a digitally enabled economy and society.

*Question No. 43 answered with Question No. 37.*

### **Electricity Generation**

44. **Deputy Paudie Coffey** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the reason the 400 kV gridlink electricity infrastructural project by EirGrid is necessary; the justification for such a large investment by a semi-State body; its purpose, in view of the fact that there are existing HV networks in use servicing these areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45033/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** Development of the high voltage electricity grid as planned in the Grid25 strategy is critical to Ireland's economic and social development. The businesses that sell goods and services and provide employment need a reliable energy supply that enables them to compete in an increasingly globalised economy. Ensuring secure reliable and safe supplies of electricity is critical to Ireland's ability to attract inward investment and retain and create jobs.

The Grid Link Project is a key initiative under Grid25. Without this project, the grid in the south and east of Ireland would not be sufficient to meet the region's future electricity needs. The project will facilitate both conventional generation and renewable energy projects. It will reinforce the grid in Leinster and Munster and support future interconnection with grids outside of Ireland. It is a significant upgrade of the electricity grid across the south and east and is the largest project under the Grid25 programme. The project will involve an estimated €500 million investment and will enable Ireland to meet its 40% renewable electricity target, while also reducing our reliance on imported fossil fuels.

*Questions Nos. 45 and 46 answered with Question No. 27.*

### **Better Energy Homes Scheme Expenditure**

47. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a breakdown of the community projects in the greater Dublin area which will receive support as part of the recently announced allocation of €13 million from his Department towards community energy projects under the better energy scheme administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45045/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Government will spend €13 million in Exchequer funding by the end of 2013 on over 80 community based energy efficiency projects under the Better Energy Communities and the Better Energy Areas schemes across the country. Both schemes are administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) under the Better Energy Programme. The funding will

deliver energy efficiency upgrades to approximately 3,500 homes of which 80% are experiencing energy poverty. The budget allocation will also allow for the delivery of energy upgrades to more than 290 public and community buildings.

Out of the total funding, €7 million will be spent under the Better Energy Communities scheme. This scheme provides sustainable energy upgrades and enhanced energy to existing buildings, services, facilities and processes in the community sector. The scheme aims to support existing community groups and networks to achieve on-going and lasting energy savings. Innovative and pioneering partnerships for the delivery of projects between the public and private sectors, domestic and non-domestic sectors, commercial and not-for profit organisations are encouraged around the country.

The remaining €6 million will be disbursed under the Better Energy Areas scheme. The scheme, which is free of charge to the customer, primarily delivers energy upgrades to low income homeowners experiencing extreme energy poverty. The scheme was introduced as a pilot under the Affordable Energy Strategy in 2012 and is administered under the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme.

Below are details of the breakdown of projects for delivery in 2013 under Better Energy Communities and Better Energy Areas in the greater Dublin area.

#### Better Energy Communities Scheme 2013

Lead Applicant	Project Title	Location	Grant Support
Dublin Simon Community	Dublin Simon Community project	Supported Housing at 35-36 Sean McDermott Street, D.1  Chester House, 314-316 North Circular Road, D. 7  Riversdale House, Riversdale Avenue, Palmerstown, D. 20  Blessington Street, 32-33 Blessington Street, D. 7  Roylands, 7 Main Street, Tal-laght, D. 24  Charity Shop, 57 Lower Camden Street, D. 2	575,451.75
Irish Social Finance Centre Limited	Irish Social Finance Centre	Irish Social Finance Centre Inchicore (former AIB building)	53,771.76
Ecoconcertive	Ecocert	Dundrum SC, Nutgrove SC & Stillorgan SC	45,128.01

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<p>Musgrave Retail Partners Ltd with GAA</p>	<p>Musgrave Community Project</p> <p>24 Shops &amp; 22 GAA clubs Nationwide</p>	<p>Including...</p> <p>Kilmacud Crokes &amp; St Vincents Dublin</p> <p>Centra Ballinteer, 83 Ballinteer Rd, Ballinteer, Dublin 16</p> <p>Centra North King St</p> <p>Centra Parnell St, Unit 5, Greeg Court, Parnell St Dublin 1</p> <p>SuperValu Donabate, Donabate Town Centre, Donabate, Co.Dublin</p> <p>SuperValu Mount Merrion, 27 The Rise, Mount Merrion, Dublin</p> <p>Centra Middle Abbey St, 35 Curzon House, Lower Abbey St, Dublin 1</p> <p>Centra Ballyfermot (Decies Rd), 47-51 Decies Rd, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10</p> <p>SuperValu Balbriggan</p> <p>SuperValu Killester</p> <p>SuperValu Sallynoggin</p>	<p>523,645.58</p> <p>Total Grant Funding for Nationwide project</p>
<p>South Dublin County Council</p>	<p>South Dublin Co Co Community Scheme</p>	<p>Jigsaw Clondalkin, Neilstown Church, Clondalkin, Dublin 22</p> <p>Lucan Leisure Centre, Griffeen Park, Lucan, Co Dublin.</p> <p>Ballymount Depot, Ballymount Ind. Estate, Dublin 24</p>	<p>103,149.91</p>



Aras na Cluaine, Management Company	Light Upgrade to common areas	Aras na Cluaine, Waterylane, Clondalkin, Dublin 22  Apartment Complex	13,029.80
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	Energy Upgrades	<p>1. Community Centres - Cois Cairn, Connaught Ave, Bray, Co. Wicklow -</p> <p>Sallynoggin, Church Place, Pearse Road, Sallynoggin, Co. Dublin -</p> <p>Park House, Library Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin</p> <p>2. County Hall, Marine Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin</p> <p>3. Public Lighting, Wyattville Road, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18</p> <p>4. GPS for maintenance service fleet</p> <p>5. Heritage Buildings- Cabinteely House, Cabinteely Park, Old Bray Road, D.18-</p> <p>Dalkey Town Hall, Dalkey, Co. Dublin</p> <p>6. Libraries - - Stillorgan Library, St. Laurences Park, St. Laurences Park, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin -</p> <p>Dalkey Library, Castle St., Dalkey, Co. Dublin- Shankill Library</p> <p>7. Rochestown House, Sallynoggin Road, Sallynoggin, Co. Dublin</p>	399,662.71

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Dublin Fire Brigade	-	Blanchardstown Fire Station, Porters Road, Coolmine Ind. Estate, D. 15  Finglas Fire Station, Mellows Road, Finglas, Dublin 11	448,596.95
Future Fit t/a re-play sport	Lower Costs for 6 Sports Communities through Energy efficiency	Edmondstown Golf Club Ltd, Edmondstown Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16  Irish Basketball Arena Ltd, Tymon Road, Dublin 24	65,580.44 – Dublin Projects Only
DAA	Energy Efficiency and M&T Upgrade Project	3 No. Electrical Vehicals EV points  Lighting upgrade to Servisair Cargo warehouse  Green Screens	31,946.40
Airtricity	Grand Canal Harbour	Grand Canal Harbour Public Lighting Retrofit	49,700.00

Better Energy Areas Scheme 2013

Project Title	Description of Projects
South Dublin County Council	<p>Moderate and deep energy upgrades will be installed in 75 homes and one community house in Tallaght, Dublin 24. 80% of the homes are energy poor. The measures include attic insulation, cavity insulation, window upgrades, CFLs and high efficiency gas condensing boilers with full heating controls package.</p> <p>Retrofit Energy Ireland and South Dublin County Council are the partners in this project.</p> <p>Total Project: € 379,540.20</p> <p>Grant Approved: €209,502.80</p>

Project Title	Description of Projects
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	<p>Moderate energy upgrades will be installed to 101 units in the Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown areas of County Dublin. 96% of the homes are energy poor. The measures include heating upgrades, attic insulation, cavity wall insulation and CFLs</p> <p>Retrofit Energy Ireland and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council are the partners in this project.</p> <p>Total Project: € 448,166.93</p> <p>Grant Approved: €251,220.00</p>
Cherry Orchard, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	<p>Deep upgrades to 77 housing association homes in Cherry Orchard, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10. 75% of the homes are energy poor.</p> <p>This project represents an opportunity to trial a form of Pay as You Save energy retrofit financing.</p> <p>The measures include high efficiency gas boilers, remote access heating controls, loft and cavity wall insulation, CFLs and windows and doors.</p> <p>NABCO and Electric Ireland are the partners in this project.</p> <p>Total Project: € 890,262.20</p> <p>Grant Approved: €585,865.54</p>

### Military Aircraft Landings

48. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of foreign military planes landing at Shannon Airport which is in clear breach of our neutral status. [45368/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The Air Navigation (Foreign Military Aircraft) Order 1952 gives the Minister for Foreign Affairs primary responsibility for the regulation of activity by foreign military aircraft in Ireland. Permission to land at Irish airports, including Shannon Airport, is subject to the condition that the aircraft are unarmed, carry no arms, ammunition or explosives, do not engage in intelligence gathering, and that the flights in question do not form any part of military exercises or operations. There is no incompatibility between such landings and Ireland's traditional policy of military neutrality, which is characterised by non-participation in military alliances.

I refer the Deputy to Question 56 of 6 March 2013, and to Questions 6 and 9 of 15 October 2013, which provide information on the number of foreign military aircraft for which permission was sought to land at Shannon Airport in 2012 and 2013.

## **Passports Data**

49. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of Irish passports in circulation in date and currently valid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45385/13]

50. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of Irish passports issued to persons ordinarily resident in Ireland or persons using Irish addresses on their application in each of the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45386/13]

51. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of Irish passports issued to persons ordinarily resident outside Ireland or persons using addresses in other countries on their application in each of the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45387/13]

52. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the connection to Ireland that is required in order to qualify for an Irish passport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45388/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 49 to 52, inclusive, together.

There were approximately 4,695,000 Irish passports in circulation, in date, and valid on 21 October 2013. The Passports Act 2008 requires that before issuing a passport to a person, the Passport Service must be satisfied that the applicant is an Irish citizen. An Irish citizen is defined in the Act as a person who:

- is an Irish citizen under the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Acts 1956 to 2004; or
- acquires Irish citizenship under those Acts or any other enactment.

The Passport Service technology system does not record “address” information in the structured format necessary to facilitate the production of management information in relation to place of residency etc. The availability of this information would require a fundamental redesign of the system, which could not be cost justified for this facility alone. This matter will be addressed in the context of any major system changes which may emerge in the future.

Additionally as passports are issued for a ten year period it would not be unusual for people to change address a number of times over this period, information which is not provided to the Passport Service.

## **Tax Reliefs Application**

53. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding a VHI premium in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45370/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The position is that from 16 October 2013, tax relief for medical insurance premiums will be restricted to the first €1,000 per adult and the first €500 per child insured. Any portion of premium paid in excess of these ceilings will no longer qualify for tax relief. The new ceilings will ensure continuing support via the tax system for those who purchase standard policies, while reducing Exchequer exposure to more

expensive policies. Pricing of insurance premiums is a matter for insurers.

For the purposes of calculations it has been assumed that the €2,400 quoted in the details supplied is the actual current net premium cost, which is split equally between the individual in question and his wife. On that basis, the family will pay an additional €200 towards their medical insurance cover as result of Budget 2014, which is set in calculation below.

#### Previous Renewal or Policy Commencement

Medical Insurance	€
Cost of medical insurance cover:	€3,000
Less tax relief at source (€3,000@20%) =	(€600)
Cost of medical insurance cover after tax relief at source:	€2,400

#### Next Renewal

Medical Insurance	€
Cost of medical insurance cover:	€3,000
Less tax relief at source (€2,000@20%) =	(€400)
Cost of medical insurance cover after tax relief at source:	€2,600

#### Insurance Costs

54. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to review the cost of insurance for young females (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45375/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** At the outset, I would point out that the calculation of annual premium rates is a commercial decision for the insurance company in question. Neither I, as Minister for Finance, nor the Central Bank of Ireland, can require a company to change its rates or prohibit a company from doing so. The primary purpose of the 2012 amendment to the Equal Status Acts is to provide in Irish law for the mandatory introduction within the EU of unisex premiums and benefits in insurance. As a result of the ruling, insurers have to change how they price risk.

While the exact movement in premiums is difficult to predict, the European Commission has indicated that it intends to monitor the evolution of the insurance market and of overall price levels post the removal of the insurance derogation in December 2012.

#### Tax Reliefs Application

55. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to review the new health insurance tax relief restrictions announced in budget 2014 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45377/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The position is as I stated in Budget day speech, that from 16 October 2013, tax relief for medical insurance premiums will be restricted to the first €1,000 per adult and the first €500 per child insured. Any portion of premium paid

in excess of these ceilings will no longer qualify for tax relief. The new ceilings will ensure some continuing support via the tax system for those who purchase medical insurance policies, while reducing Exchequer exposure to more expensive policies. I have no plans to review this decision.

Furthermore, I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that, as the annual returns received from health insurers are not required to provide an individualised breakdown of the premium payments applying to individuals covered by health insurance policies, there is no basis on which an estimate of the impact of the Budget measure on older people could be separately identified.

### **Health Insurance Prices**

56. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if persons paying more than €800 for a private health plan will see a price rise following on from the recent changes announced in budget 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45418/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The position is that from 16 October 2013, tax relief for gross medical insurance premiums will be restricted to the first €1,000 per adult and the first €500 per child insured. Some insurers currently quote prices that are net of tax relief at source, i.e. the tax relief available is deducted from the gross premium to leave a net payable amount. Ultimately, pricing of insurance premiums is a matter for insurers. Any portion of premium paid in excess of the new ceilings will no longer qualify for tax relief.

The new ceilings will ensure some continuing support via the tax system for those who purchase medical insurance policies, while reducing Exchequer exposure to more expensive policies.

### **Health Insurance Prices**

57. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance with regard to figures regarding persons in possession of private health plans, if 90% of policy holders will be affected by recent changes in budget 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45419/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The position is that from 16 October 2013, tax relief for medical insurance premiums will be restricted to the first €1,000 per adult and the first €500 per child insured. Any portion of premium paid in excess of these ceilings will no longer qualify for tax relief. The new ceilings will ensure some continuing support via the tax system for those who purchase medical insurance policies, while reducing Exchequer exposure to more expensive policies. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that based on 2012 data, the most up to date data available, it is estimated that up to 577,000 policy holders, which equates to just under 53% of all policies, may be affected by this measure.

However, I should point out that many will only be affected marginally, depending on the cost of the policies that individuals purchase. In addition, individuals can of course opt for less expensive policies and therefore avoid the impact of this measure entirely.

### **Tax Credits**

58. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider making adjust-

ments to the single parent tax credit to allow an element of tax planning whereby the spouses could elect which spouse claims the credit or the credit could be split in the most tax efficient way by the Revenue Commissioners (details supplied). [45469/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Neither the Revenue Commissioners nor my Department would ever provide advice to facilitate tax planning. I assume the Deputy is referring to the changes announced in Budget 2014 to the One-Parent Family Tax Credit. The position is that the One-Parent Family Tax Credit is being replaced with a new Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit from 1 January 2014. The Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit will be of the same value, i.e. €1,650, as the existing One-Parent Family Tax Credit and will also carry the same entitlement to the extended standard rate tax band of €36,800 per annum.

The new credit will be targeted such that it is available only to the primary carer of the child. A maximum of one credit will be available per single carer/claimant, regardless of whether he or she cares for more than one child. This is the same condition that applies to the current One-Parent Family Tax Credit.

Allocation of childcare responsibilities is primarily for parents to agree. Practical implementation issues are being considered as part of the Finance Bill process.

### Tax Credits

59. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will clarify the position regarding which parent would be allowed the single parent tax credit in the case of one child living with his or her mother and a second child living with its father, which is a common situation. [45470/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The position is that the One-Parent Family Tax Credit is being replaced with a new Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit from 1 January 2014. The Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit will be of the same value, i.e. €1,650, as the existing One-Parent Family Tax Credit and will also carry the same entitlement to the extended standard rate tax band of €36,800 per annum. The new credit will be targeted such that it is available only to the primary carer of the child.

A maximum of one credit will be available per single carer/claimant, regardless of whether he or she cares for more than one child. This is the same condition that applies to the current One-Parent Family Tax Credit.

Allocation of childcare responsibilities is primarily for parents to agree. Practical implementation issues are being considered as part of the Finance Bill process.

### Credit Unions

60. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an update of the situation in Maynooth Credit Union following the court ruling of 18 October 2013; and if the ruling affects the situation at Newbridge Credit Union. [45350/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As Minister for Finance I have no role in the Court process relating to Maynooth Credit Union and I do not propose to comment as the matter is still currently before the Courts.

## **Tax Credits**

61. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Finance how the single-person child carer tax credit will be applied where, by court order or de facto, a 50-50 split in caring is in place (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45363/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As the Deputy is aware, the One-Parent Family Tax Credit is being replaced with a new Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit from 1 January 2014. The Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit will be of the same value, i.e. €1,650, as the existing One-Parent Family Tax Credit and will also carry the same entitlement to the extended standard rate tax band of €36,800 per annum. The new credit will be targeted such that it is available only to the primary carer of the child. A maximum of one credit will be available per single carer/claimant, regardless of whether he or she cares for more than one child. This is the same condition that applies to the current One-Parent Family Tax Credit.

Given the difficult fiscal environment it is essential to review all tax reliefs, credits and incentives in order to ensure that they are properly targeted and if necessary re-focused in order that they can achieve the socio-economic objectives that are set for them. A system that allows multiple claims in respect of the same child is unsustainable.

The Commission on Taxation acknowledged that the One-Parent Family Tax Credit plays a role in supporting and incentivising the labour market participation of single and widowed parents. However, in its recommendations it concluded that the credit should be retained but that it should be allocated to the principal carer only. The restructuring of the credit will achieve such an outcome.

Allocation of childcare responsibilities is primarily for parents to agree. Practical implementation issues, such as that which you have raised, are being considered as part of the Finance Bill process.

## **Alcohol Sales**

62. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance the value of sales in recent years from off-licence alcohol sales; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45379/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the way in which Alcohol Products Tax and VAT are collected does not differentiate between off-licence and other sales.

## **VAT Rate Application**

63. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance the reason swimming lessons attract the highest rate of VAT at 23%; if he will consider reducing or abolishing this in view of the health benefits and as a measure to help tackle Ireland's very high drowning death statistics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45380/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The VAT rating of goods and services is subject to the requirements of EU VAT law with which Irish VAT law must comply. Sports related coaching, such as swimming lessons are generally chargeable to VAT at the standard rate, currently 23%, in accordance with section 46(1)(a) of the Value Added Tax Consolidation Act 2010, as amended, and is in compliance with Article 96 of the EU VAT Directive (Council



Directive 2006/112/EC).

Swimming lessons provided to children of pre-school and school-going age qualify for exemption from VAT in circumstances where the lessons delivered meet the requirements of the aquatics strand of the physical education curriculum for primary and post-primary schools, as set out by the Department of Education and Skills. In such instances, swimming lessons are regarded as “education” thereby qualifying as an exempt activity for the purposes of paragraph 4(3) of Schedule 1 of the VAT Consolidation Act 2010, as amended.

### Tax Code

64. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider putting in place a DIRT free limit per person on small savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45381/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I have no plans to put in place a Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT) free limit on savings. Such a measure could be difficult to administer in the event of individuals opening a number of accounts to keep the interest payment on individual accounts below a certain level. This happened prior to the introduction of DIRT to avoid the provision that interest payments above a threshold were reported to Revenue. Such an exemption would also affect the yield projection from the proposed DIRT increase. It is not possible to forego this income given current budgetary constraints.

### Tax Code

65. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance if he is concerned that the DIRT increase would impact on persons who have savings put away for major life phases such as college or nursing home care; if he will examine ways of exempting such cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45382/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As I announced in Budget 2014, the rate of Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT), and the rates of exit tax that apply to payments from life assurance policies and investment funds, are being increased and will now be 41% whether payments are made annually or more frequently (previously 33%) or are made less frequently than annually (previously 36%). The increased rates will apply to payments, including deemed payments, made on or after 1 January 2014. DIRT and exit taxes are deducted only from the interest or return from savings and investments; they are not deducted from the principal sum invested.

In certain cases, deposit interest can be paid without deduction of DIRT or individuals can get a refund of DIRT deducted. These cases are:

- Individuals aged over 65 years: Since the enactment of the Finance Act 2007, individuals can have their interest paid without deduction of DIRT, or can have a refund of DIRT deducted, provided they or their spouse or civil partner are aged 65 years or over, and their total income in a year, including the interest, is below the relevant annual exemption limit. The limits for 2014, are €18,000 for single or widowed persons or surviving civil partners, and €36,000 for married couples and civil partners;

- Permanently incapacitated individuals: an exemption from DIRT also applies where an individual, his or her spouse or civil partner:

(i) is permanently incapacitated by reason of physical or mental infirmity from maintaining himself or herself; and

(ii) is not liable to pay income tax because of the level of his or her income.

These exemptions may benefit some of the people mentioned by the Deputy in his question. I have no plans to widen the exemptions or reliefs from DIRT.

### **IBRC Mortgage Loan Book**

66. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance if persons with mortgages with the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation are being offered the opportunity to purchase the mortgages at a discount. [45389/13]

69. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the sale of a loan to a third party; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45425/13]

80. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Finance with regard to the pending sale of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation mortgage loan books, if individual mortgage holders of the former Irish Nationwide Building Society will be permitted to buy out their mortgages; if there are any legislative barriers for such individual mortgage holders to do so; the process of the sale of such mortgages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45517/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 66, 69 and 80 together.

The Special Liquidators have given significant consideration to and have sought independent advice from PWC in relation to how the residential mortgage portfolio and other loans in IBRC are to be dealt with. Following that independent advice, the Special Liquidators have decided that the residential mortgage book would be split into four segments consisting of performing, non-performing, owner occupier and buy to let mortgages. The Special Liquidators have confirmed that all Borrowers are permitted to buy-out their mortgage at par value and that there are no legislative barriers for such Borrowers to do so. The Special Liquidators have also confirmed that the residential mortgage customers of IBRC Limited (in Special Liquidation) continue to enjoy the protection of the Central Bank Code of Conduct on mortgage arrears and other protections in Irish consumer law.

I am advised by the Special Liquidators that the decision to offer the residential mortgage book for sale in this way was arrived at having regard to the scale of the process and size of the IBRC loan book. Furthermore the Special Liquidators have confirmed that the decision to sell these loans as part of a portfolio is the most efficient method of disposal and the one which is most likely to maximise ultimate sales realisations for the Special Liquidators having regard to the public interest. The decision concerning how the loans will be packaged for sale and what bidders constitute qualifying bidders for the purposes of the sales process is to be made by the Special Liquidators and I will not intervene in this matter.

### **Tax Code**

67. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance with regard to each measure of the ten point tax reform plan to help small business, if he will detail the impact including levels of take-up, cost to the State, and the number of additional jobs created. [45395/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** In the November 2012 Medium Term Fiscal Statement, the Department of Finance published a paper on the importance of small business to the Irish economy. This paper highlighted that small and medium sized businesses make up over 99% of businesses in Ireland and account for almost 70% of people employed. Despite Ireland's reputation as one of the world's most globalised economies, 64% of private sector workers are employed by indigenous non-exporting firms, with 56% working for indigenous, non-exporting small businesses. These numbers highlight the importance of domestic demand for sustaining and generating employment in Ireland, and suggest that our recovery strategy needs to give some additional support to small businesses.

To that end, the 10 Point Tax Reform Plan contains measures to assist small business in a number of ways by:

- Helping their cash flow position;
- Helping them access funding;
- Reducing the costs associated with the administrative burden of tax compliance;
- Boosting demand for their products in new markets; and
- Incentivising them to create jobs.

The measures are as follows:

- Reforming the 3 Year Corporation Tax Relief for Start Up Companies to allow unused credits to be carried forward to help create jobs and improve cash flow;

- Amending the Close Company Surcharge by increasing the de minimis level to €2,000 to reduce the administrative burden and assist cash flow;

- Increasing the amount of expenditure eligible for the R&D Tax Credit on a full volume basis (without reference to the 2003 base year) to €200,000 to encourage innovation and help cash flow;

- Increasing the VAT cash receipts basis accounting threshold from €1m to €1.25m to help cash flow;

- Extending the Foreign Earnings Deduction for work related travel to Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal & Tanzania to help boost demand for Irish goods and services abroad;

- Extending the Employment and Investment Incentive scheme to 2020 to help companies access funding;

- Extending the general rate and Young Trained Farmers rate of stock relief and amendments to the definition of registered partnerships for stock relief to give a targeted assistance to the farming sector;

- Introducing a Capital Gains Tax relief for Farmers for land restructuring to give a target assistance to the farming sector;

- Reviewing the 'carried interest' provision in the tax code to help small businesses to access funding;

- Announcing a joint Revenue and Department of Finance public consultation: 'Taxation of Micro Enterprises: Reduction in Compliance Costs' to identify ways to ease the administrative

burden.

**Measures 1 to 9** above were implemented in Finance Act 2013 which was enacted in March 2013. Revenue data on take-up of the various measures will not be available until the 2013 income and corporation tax returns of relevant businesses are filed with Revenue. The exact filing date will depend on individual circumstances but in the main will arise in Q4 2014.

To elaborate on some of the specific items in the plan, I would note that in relation to **Measure 4**, the annual turnover threshold for eligibility for the cash basis of accounting for VAT was increased from €1 million to €1.25 million in Budget 2013 with effect from 1 May 2013. While there are no direct statistics available, it is expected that over 800 businesses will have benefitted from this Budget change.

In relation to **Measure 5**, the Foreign Earnings Deduction was extended in Finance Act 2013 to include for work related travel to Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal & Tanzania to help boost demand for Irish goods and services abroad. This relief is available to all qualifying persons travelling to these countries for work-related travel for the tax years 2013 and 2014.

In respect of **Measure 6**, the EII was extended to 2020 to help companies access funding. This is a state aid scheme and accordingly, the approval of the European Commission is required. An application was made to the European Commission in June to extend the EII until 2020. Officials have been assured by the Commission that the necessary approval will be received shortly.

In respect of **Measure 7**, extending the general rate and Young Trained Farmers rate of stock relief and amendments to the definition of registered partnerships for stock relief to give a targeted assistance to the farming sector.

As regards **Measure 8**, Section 48 of Finance Act 2013 provides for relief from capital gains tax on disposals of farm land for farm restructuring, subject to a Commencement Order, which I made on 6 June 2013 (due to the need to obtain EU State Aid approval for the measure). The relief applies to a sale, purchase or exchange of agricultural land in the period from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2015 where Teagasc has certified that a sale and purchase or an exchange of agricultural land was made for farm restructuring purposes. The initial sale or purchase, or the exchange, must occur in the relevant period and the subsequent sale or purchase must occur within 24 months of that sale or purchase.

**Measure 9** relates to reviewing the 'carried interest' provision in the tax code to help small businesses to access funding. Following a review of the carried interest provisions in the tax code, Finance Act 2013 made a number of changes with the aim of making the provisions operate as intended. Firstly, it extends the scope of the relief so that it is not limited to carried interest derived from investment in trading companies at the start-up phase only. Secondly, it links the relief to the overall performance of the investment portfolio of the qualifying venture capital fund. Thirdly, it reduces the duration of the period for which the investment in the target companies must be held from 6 years to 3 years. Lastly, it extends the relief that is currently available to companies and partnerships to individual venture fund managers. These amendments are designed to assist companies engaging in innovation activities to access investment from venture capital funds.

As yet, no information is available on the number of people who have availed of CGT farm restructuring relief and/or availed of the revised carried interest provisions because they will be applied for via personal income tax returns for 2013 which will not be submitted until late in 2014. It is not anticipated that these returns will include a provision for the separate capture of

specific information in relation to these incentives.

Finally, in respect of **Measure 10 - 'Taxation of Micro Enterprises: Reduction in Compliance Costs'**, the public consultation closed in February 2013, and only a small number of submissions were received (7 in total). The results of the consultation are being considered by the Department of Finance and the Revenue Commissioners at present, with a view to identifying next steps. The Deputy will also be aware that I announced enhancements to some of these measures in my recent Budget speech.

### **Property Taxation Collection**

68. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a breakdown by local authority of the amount of revenue collected from the property tax to date in 2013; and total estimated revenue on a local authority basis in 2014. [45404/13]

73. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Finance in relation to the local property tax, if he will confirm since its collection the percentage of those persons considered to be the responsible person who have registered for the tax; the percentage who have actually made arrangements to pay the tax; if he will confirm the figure that has been collected to date per county; of the figure collected, the amount that has been distributed to the relevant local authority; the amount that has been retained by the Exchequer of the figure collected; the amount that has been allocated to paying off the national debt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45472/13]

98. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of properties registered for the local property tax where the registered value is higher than the estimate placed on the property by Revenue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45576/13]

99. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of properties registered for the local property tax where the registered value is lower than the estimate placed on the property by Revenue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45577/13]

100. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue that will be raised in 2014 from properties valued at greater than €1 million for the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45578/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 68, 73, and 98 to 100, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that yield and compliance data for the Local Property Tax (LPT) for 2013 are compiled on the basis of the number of properties and is available broken down by city and county councils nationally. The most up to date figures, which are published on the Revenue Commissioners website at: <http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/lpt/lpt-stats-0913.pdf>, include the percentage distribution of properties per value band and show that 0.2% of properties are valued at over €1 million. I am further advised that by the end of September 2013 approximately €200m had been transferred by Revenue to the Exchequer.

In the Budget which I presented to the House last week, I indicated an estimated revenue of €550 million for 2014 from LPT. However, the Commissioners advise that it is not possible to state at this point the precise amount of LPT which is expected to be collected for 2014 for each local authority, nor the expected revenue from properties valued at over €1m. There are a number of factors which could affect these figures including the continuation of the very strong level of voluntary compliance that was achieved in 2013, the impact next year of Revenue's

national compliance programme to follow-up on those liable persons who have failed to meet their LPT obligations for 2013, and the level of deferrals of LPT staying constant.

LPT Returns are still being filed and work is on-going to refine the LPT Register. More detailed data and analysis, including analysis in relation to a comparison of the Revenue Estimates with self-assessed valuations will be published in due course. The Deputies will be aware that Revenue has just commenced the Pay and File campaign for LPT 2014, which is their current priority in relation to LPT.

Section 157 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, as amended, provides that, in each financial year commencing with 2014, the Minister shall pay from the Central Fund or the growing produce thereof into the Local Government Fund an amount equivalent to the Local Property Tax, including any interest paid thereon, paid into the Central Fund during that year. Accordingly, receipts from the Local Property Tax received in 2013 will remain in the Exchequer and will be used to meet the many expenditure obligations faced by the State. The allocation to the Local Government Fund for 2013 had already been decided before the Local Property Tax commenced.

*Question No. 69 answered with Question No. 66.*

### **Tax Residency Issues**

70. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he or his Department has received from the French Government or any other government a list of suspected tax evaders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45437/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Information on Irish residents who derive income from sources outside the State is received on a regular basis under the provisions of the exchange of information article in our double taxation treaties and, in the case of EU Member States, information can also be received under the provisions of Council Directive 2011/16/EU on administrative assistance in the field of taxation. The taxes covered by Ireland's double taxation treaties and Council Directive 2011/16/EU are income tax (including the universal social charge), corporation tax and capital gains tax. Some of Ireland's more recent double taxation treaties enable exchange of information relating to "taxes of every kind and description".

The most commonly used methods by which information is exchanged are:

- *On request*, i.e. where the Revenue Commissioners identify a particular case and request information from the Competent Authority of the other country;

- *Spontaneously*, i.e. where a tax official of the other country becomes aware of information, for example during an audit, which could relate to loss of Irish tax;

- *Automatically*, i.e. information covering many cases of a similar kind that can be transmitted systematically on a regular basis, e.g. refunds of withholding tax to persons with addresses in Ireland.

In relation to France, information is received by the Revenue Commissioners regularly from the French Ministry of Finance under the provisions of the Exchange of Information Article in our double taxation treaty with France and under the provisions of Council Directive 2011/16/EU. This has included information provided spontaneously in relation to a list of 33 Irish residents. Settlements in 19 of these cases, following investigation by Revenue, amount to €4.3 million. Enquiries are on-going in 6 other cases, and 8 cases have been closed as it was estab-

lished that there were no tax issues. A prosecution is before the Courts in 1 case, and 3 other cases are under investigation for prosecution.

The Deputy may also wish to note that I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that other treaty partner countries, namely Australia, United Kingdom and the United States have advised them that they have obtained a very significant amount of data revealing complex offshore structures and that they intend to use this data to share information with partners, including with Ireland. They have also indicated that in view of the complexity of the data, this is likely to take some time and they will make such information available to Revenue via the Competent Authority.

### **Tax Reliefs Abolition**

71. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Finance the effect the changes in budget 2014 abolishing top slicing in 2014 will have on the tax liability of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45450/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Government's decision to abolish top slicing relief will only apply in respect of ex-gratia termination lump sum payments made on or after 1 January 2014. Recipients of payments made prior to that date will continue to be entitled to claim the relief. Based on the information provided, it is not possible to estimate the tax liability due in respect of the redundancy package for the individual in question. Full information on the calculation of the reliefs that apply to ex-gratia payments are set out in leaflet IT21 which is available on the Revenue website at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/leaflets/it21.html>.

### **Credit Unions Regulation**

72. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding a submission (details supplied) from Newbridge Credit Union; if any meetings have taken place or are planned regarding the submission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45451/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Following on from a meeting with Newbridge Credit Union Action Group on 19 September, it was agreed that on receipt of an alternative proposal from the Action Group, it would be communicated to the Central Bank with a view to examination of the proposal and a meeting being arranged between the Central Bank and the Action Group. The Action Group recently submitted a document entitled 'Alternative Proposal regarding Newbridge Credit Union Limited' and I have referred the proposal to the Governor of the Central Bank for examination as agreed and the Action Group has been informed of this. This matter is currently being considered by the Central Bank.

*Question No. 73 answered with Question No. 68.*

### **Universal Social Charge Yield**

74. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue accrued to the Exchequer via the universal social charge in each year since its introduction. [45496/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The data requested by the Deputy are listed in the table. It is important to take into account that the figures displayed for 2011 and 2012 in the table below are based on end-year outturns and are on a Revenue Net Receipt basis. These can differ slightly from Exchequer Receipts for reasons of accounting and timing. The estimate for 2013 USC receipts is provisional pending the outcome of the end year collection

figures but is consistent with the income tax estimates contained in Budget 2014.

€bn	2011	2012	2013
USC	3.1	3.8	3.9

### Tax Reliefs Cost

75. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Finance the tax forgone by the Exchequer as a result of taxation expenditures in respect of private health insurance in each year since 2007. [45498/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the cost to the Exchequer of tax relief allowed through the tax relief at source (TRS) system for medical insurance premia from 2007 to 2012 and the estimated costs for 2013 are set out in column two of the table below. The figures in column two do not include further costs to the Exchequer of age-related tax relief at source, which was established by the Health Insurance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. Those costs are shown separately in column three of the table. The cost of the age-related tax credit is offset by a stamp duty on health insurance policies. The age-related tax credit and stamp duty were part of an interim scheme of risk equalisation, which was introduced in order to provide direct support to community rating in the private health insurance market and is intended to be revenue neutral over its duration. This interim scheme expired on 31 December 2012 and was replaced from 1 January 2013 by a permanent risk equalisation scheme, provided for in the Health Insurance (Amendment) Act 2012.

Tax Year	Cost €m (excluding cost of the Age-Related Tax Credit)	Cost of Age-Related Tax Credit €m
2007	300	Not applicable
2008	321	Not applicable
2009	373	216
2010	390	308
2011	404	333
2012	448	436
2013 (estimates)	500	115

Figures shown in table are rounded to the nearest million.

### Tax Yield

76. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of revenue generated by the Exchequer in each of the past five years through taxes and duties on alcohol and tobacco. [45500/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the revenue generated by the Exchequer in each of the past five years through taxes and duties on alcohol and tobacco is as follows:

#### Alcohol

Year	Alcohol Products Tax - €m	VAT (Estimated) - €m
2009	968.0	1,075
2010	826.4	1,010



Year	Alcohol Products Tax - €m	VAT (Estimated) - €m
2011	829.5	1,014
2012	846.1	1,097
2013 (Jan-Sep)	667.8	835

## Tobacco

Year	Tobacco Products Tax - €m	VAT (Estimated) - €m
2009	1,216.5	336
2010	1,159.7	315
2011	1,126.1	325
2012	1,072.3	339
2013 (Jan-Sep)	634.2	198

**Property Taxation Yield**

77. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Finance the total take from property tax in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45513/13]

78. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Finance the total anticipated tax take from property tax in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45514/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 77 and 78 together.

My colleague may be aware that the estimated outturn for 2013 and the forecast yield for 2014 for all major tax heads were published in Budget 2014 and can be found in Table 8 on page C.15 of the Budget booklet (Local Property Tax is listed as “Local Taxes” in the table). For convenience, the table is replicated as follows.

**Exchequer Tax Revenues 2013-2014**

-	Estimated Outturn 2013 - €m	Budget Forecast 2014 - €m	Forecast Y-on-Y Change - %
Customs	250	255	+1.4
Excise Duty*	4,720	4,815	+2.0
Capital Gains Tax (CGT)	390	400	+3.2
Capital Acquisitions Tax (CAT)	405	380	-5.9
Stamp Duty	1,310	1,475	+12.6
Income Tax	15,730	17,045	+8.3
Corporation Tax	4,355	4,380	+0.6
VAT	10,365	10,740	+3.6
Local Taxes	300	550	+83.3
Total	37,825	40,040	+5.8

### Tax Credits

79. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he has any proposal to remove the single parent tax credit from the parent who is deemed to be the secondary carer. [45516/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The position is that the One-Parent Family Tax Credit is being replaced with a new Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit from 1 January 2014. The Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit will be of the same value, i.e. €1,650, as the existing One-Parent Family Tax Credit and will also carry the same entitlement to the extended standard rate tax band of €36,800 per annum. The new credit will be targeted such that it is available only to the primary carer of the child. A maximum of one credit will be available per single carer/claimant, regardless of whether he or she cares for more than one child. This is the same condition that applies to the current One-Parent Family Tax Credit. Allocation of childcare responsibilities is primarily for parents to agree. Practical implementation issues are being considered as part of the Finance Bill process.

*Question No. 80 answered with Question No. 66.*

### Tax Reliefs Application

81. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance further to his comments in Limerick on 18 September 2013, the nature of the deal which he expected to make with the pensions industry in respect of the promised introduction of a cap on a pension tax relief. [45528/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** In Budget 2013, I made a number of commitments in relation to the tax provisions affecting supplementary pension provision. I said that tax relief on pension contributions would continue at the marginal rate of tax. In addition, I gave an undertaking that the 0.6% pension fund levy would not be renewed after 2014. I considered that I was in a position to make these significant commitments on foot, among other things, of proposals in late 2012 from the pensions sector for changes to the Standard Fund Threshold (SFT) regime, as an alternative to standard rating of pension tax relief, which it was claimed would yield savings and tax revenues in the region of €400 million. Pending further analysis of this claim, I included a much lower figure of €250 million in the Budget 2013 arithmetic. That analysis has since revealed significant downside risks to the achievement of even this lower level of yield or savings. The estimate of the yield from the changes to the SFT regime which I announced in last week's Budget is €120 million. These changes differ in some respects from those proposed by the pensions sector and reflect, on legal advice, the requirement to protect pension rights at the date of change. In addition, valuation factors to place a value on Defined Benefit pensions for SFT purposes will vary with the age at which the pensions are drawn down thereby improving equity within the regime.

I would not categorise my engagement with the pensions sector on this matter as a "deal", in the manner suggested by the Deputy. However, the assessment that the changes to the SFT regime required to deliver on the Budget 2013 commitment to cap taxpayer subsidies to higher value pensions would have a considerably lower yield than originally put forward, meant that the achievement of the overall budgetary objectives (including the continuation of the reduced VAT rate for the tourism sector and to make provision for potential State liabilities which may emerge from pre-existing or future pension fund difficulties) necessitated the imposition of the additional 0.15% pension fund levy for 2014 and 2015.

## Pensions Levy Issues

82. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the basis for his decision to increase the pension levy in budget 2014; the expected yield from this measure; and the purpose to which he intends to put these funds. [45529/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I announced in my Budget speech last week that the 0.6% Pension Fund Levy introduced to fund the *Jobs Initiative* in 2011 will be abolished from the 31st of December 2014. I will however, introduce an additional levy on pension funds at 0.15%. I am doing this to continue to help fund the *Jobs Initiative*, including the continuation of the reduced 9% VAT rate detailed below and to make provision for potential State liabilities which may emerge from pre-existing or future pension fund difficulties. The additional levy within the existing legal framework will apply to pension fund assets in 2014 and 2015. The additional yield from the changes to the levy in 2014 and 2015 is estimated at €135 million in each year. The revenues arising to the Exchequer from the levy are, in common with Exchequer revenues generally, not hypothecated to any particular item of expenditure or liability but have been used to help fund the various measures introduced by the *Jobs Initiative*.

One of the very significant and successful measures introduced by the *Jobs Initiative* – the reduced VAT rate of 9% on tourism and certain other services – was due to end this year. In my Budget speech, I announced the continuation of the reduced 9% VAT rate. I also announced that the Air Travel Tax is being reduced to zero with effect from 1 April 2014. The combined cost of these initiatives is estimated at close to €400 million in a full year.

The *Jobs Initiative* also included a number of current and capital expenditure measures. While the details of the expenditure on these measures are a matter for my colleagues in Cabinet, I would ask the Deputy to note that the *Jobs Initiative* originally provided for 5,000 places under Jobbridge, the National Internship scheme and 5,900 places under the Springboard scheme. Numbers who have participated in Jobbridge have now exceeded 20,000 with an evaluation by Indecon Economic Consultants finding that 61.4% of survey respondents were in employment within 5 months of finishing their internships. The Springboard scheme, now in its third iteration, has expanded to over 16,500 places. The expansion of these schemes, reflective of their success, will require further funding from the Exchequer.

The extent of the potential State liabilities from the pre-existing or future pension fund difficulties is a matter currently under examination by my colleague the Minister for Social Protection. As I have already indicated, however, the proceeds from the levy that accrue to the Exchequer are not set aside to meet discrete items of expenditure or liability and expenditure decisions on the use of those and other funds will be made as they arise in the normal way.

## National Debt Issues

83. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide estimates of the national debt as at the end of 2013; the end of 2014 and the end of 2015. [45533/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The table sets out the estimates of end-year National Debt for the years 2013 to 2015 consistent with the recent fiscal forecasts in Budget 2014. The end-2012 National Debt outturn is also included in the table for information.

€ billion (End-Year)	2012	2013*	2014*	2015*
National Debt	137.6	173.8	183.6	189.8

\**Estimate*

*Source: NTMA*

It is important to bear in mind the distinction between National Debt and General Government Debt (GGD). National Debt is the net debt incurred by the Exchequer after taking account of cash balances and other financial assets. The large increase in National Debt in 2013 over 2012 primarily reflects the issuance of €25 billion in Government bonds in February 2013 to replace the IBRC Promissory Note, as well as the estimated Exchequer Borrowing Requirement (EBR) for 2013. While the Promissory Note had been part of GGD since 2010, it was not part of the National Debt. One of the consequences of the February transaction is that National Debt and GGD are now more closely aligned.

GGD is a measure of the total gross consolidated debt of the State and is the measure used for comparative purposes across the European Union. It is reported on a gross basis and, unlike National Debt, it does not net off cash balances and other financial assets. National Debt is the principal component of GGD but GGD also includes the debt of central and local Government bodies.

For comparison purposes the table sets out the estimates of end-year General Government Debt for the years 2012 to 2015 consistent with the recent fiscal forecasts in Budget 2014.

€ billion (End-Year)	2012	2013	2014	2015
General Government Debt	192.5	205.9	204.7	209.4

*Source: Department of Finance & CSO*

### Government Deficit

84. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance further to comments made at the recent Fine Gael national conference that the €2.5 billion adjustment will deliver a deficit of 4.8% in 2014 and a primary surplus also, which means our debt can start to reduce, the plans there are to begin paying down our national debt. [45534/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The achievement of a primary surplus in 2014 will be a welcome milestone in the correction of the public finances. It is a key metric in assessing the underlying sustainability of Ireland's public finances and is a necessary first step towards lowering our debt levels. It shows that excluding interest expenditure, revenues are sufficient to meet the expenditure obligations of the State. As the deficit further improves and we achieve the targets under the excessive deficit procedure (EDP) the primary surplus is forecast to increase to 2.6% of GDP by 2016. General government debt is a measure of the total gross consolidated debt of the State and includes national debt, as well as the debt of central and local government bodies. For international comparisons, the standard metric is to express general government debt as a percentage of GDP. This ratio has increased substantially in recent years as a result of borrowing to fund a series of deficits and to provide support to the financial sector. In 2013, the ratio of general government debt to GDP is expected to peak at just over 124% before falling to under 115% in 2016. Adhering to the path of prudent budgetary

management will allow the debt levels to decline while implementation of policies to encourage economic growth will further aid the reduction in the debt to GDP ratio.

The EDP targets a general government deficit of 3% or less of GDP in 2015. Three years from when Ireland exits the excessive deficit procedure, the “debt rule” as described by the Stability and Growth Pact and implemented by section 4 of the Fiscal Responsibility Act 2012, will fully apply. Under the debt rule, when the ratio of general government debt to GDP exceeds 60%, the difference must be reduced by 1/20th of the difference per year. It will be this rule that will anchor Government policy on Ireland’s debt into the future.

### **Property Taxation Administration**

85. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 51 and 61 of 10 October 2013, the position regarding property tax in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45536/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by Revenue that it is incorrect to state that the person in question only selected one payment option when completing her 2013 Local Property Tax (LPT) Return. Revenue has examined the return submitted and has confirmed to me that the person selected three different options, including direct debit, deduction at source from her Department of Social Protection payment and payment via a service provider. Every person completing an LPT Return has the full range of payment options available to choose from and is entitled to select the method that best suits individual circumstances. The person in question is no different in this regard. I commend Revenue for the wide range of payment options that it has made available to assist people in meeting their LPT obligations.

Revenue refutes the Deputy’s allegation of incompetence and states it has made every effort to assist the person in question in meeting her obligations. Revenue cannot be blamed for the incorrect completion of the payment option segment of the LPT Return. As I stated to the Deputy in reply to Questions Nos. 51 and 61 of 10 October, the information supplied to Revenue by liable persons for deduction at source from a Department of Social Protection pension is electronically transferred between both computer systems and Revenue cannot validate the accuracy of the data provided in advance of the data transfer.

Revenue has also informed me that the daughter of the person in question has been offered assistance on two separate occasions. On foot of the first conversation Revenue confirmed and activated the person’s preferred payment option of ‘payment service provider’ and considered the matter to be closed until the Deputy’s Parliamentary Questions on 10 October. On foot of those Questions, a member of the Revenue LPT team made direct contact with the person’s daughter and explained the various payment options. The official also outlined the eligibility criteria for deferral of LPT should the person wish to consider making such an application.

The Deputy also asked how the person in question should apply for deferral of LPT. I am informed that, from the information available to Revenue, it appears that the person qualifies for deferral based on her income. Should she wish to avail of that option, she or her daughter on her behalf should contact the LPT Helpline at 1890 200 255 and the LPT team will provide every assistance. The person can still pay her LPT on a phased basis between now and the end of the year should she choose to do so and again the LPT Branch will be glad to offer any advice in this regard.

The deferred tax, including interest, will become a charge on the property until the tax is

paid. If the property is sold or transferred, any outstanding LPT charges would have to be paid at that point. The interest will be charged on the deferred amounts from the due date of payment until such time as it is paid, at a daily rate of 0.011%, which equates to 4% per annum. Anyone who has been allowed a deferral may at any time make either a full or partial payment of the deferred amount. Revenue has provided detailed guidance on deferrals at [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie) should the Deputy require any further information.

In summary, Revenue has made every effort to date to assist the person in question in meeting her LPT obligations. I urge the Deputy to offer the person in question every assistance in understanding and concluding her 2013 LPT affairs as quickly as possible thereby removing any stress that the delay might be causing for her.

### **VAT Rate Application**

86. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the European Court of Justice decision on the application of a lower VAT rate for supplies of horses and greyhounds and the way it can be addressed while being mindful of the potential negative impact on the sectors that any increase would have; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45538/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** European Court of Justice Case C108/2011 concerns the rate of VAT applying to (a) the supply of live horses and greyhounds, (b) the hire of horses and (c) the supply of ‘no foal, no fee’ insemination services. All of these activities, including livestock in general, are currently charged to VAT in Ireland at the super-reduced rate of 4.8% under Article 110 of the EU VAT Directive. On 14 March 2013 the Court found against Ireland, in that some of the conditions of Article 110 were not fulfilled in applying the 4.8% rate to the supply mentioned. The application of the 4.8% rate to the supply of livestock in general, however, was not in dispute. Ireland must comply with the ECJ Judgement, and Finance (No. 2) Bill 2013, which is published today, includes measures in this regard. However, while the Finance Bill changes comply with the Court decision, the measures introduced are also mindful of the possible impact of VAT increases on the sectors concerned.

Firstly, the VAT rate applying to (a) the supply of live horses, other than those intended for use as foodstuffs or for use in agricultural production, (b) the supply of greyhounds, and (c) the hire of horses, will be increased from 4.8% to 9%. However, the 4.8% rate will continue to apply to livestock in general, and to horses that are intended for use as foodstuffs or for use in agricultural production.

In addition, the VAT rate on ‘no foal, no fee’ insemination services will be increased from 4.8% to the 13.5% reduced rate, so that the same 13.5% rate applies to all insemination services, for all animals, including livestock, horses and greyhounds. The 13.5% rate also applies to the supply of livestock and horse semen.

I would point out that the application of the 9% and the 13.5% rates, respectively, are the minimum VAT rates allowable to these supplies under EU VAT law, given the current VAT rate structure in Ireland.

I would also point out that when these changes are introduced, Ireland will still apply one of the lowest VAT rates in the EU to these services. Most Member States apply the standard VAT rate to the supply of horses not intended as food or for agriculture; with France applying their 19.6% and the UK applying their 20% rate, for example.

In addition, the Finance Bill provides for the new arrangements to come into effect from 1

May 2014. This will allow additional time for the sector to transition to new VAT arrangements.

Furthermore, after the introduction of the legislation, the Revenue Commissioners will produce a leaflet which will provide clarification on how the new arrangements will apply particularly in respect of horses intended for use as foodstuffs and for use in agricultural production, to which the 4.8% VAT rate will continue to apply. The delayed introduction of the new VAT treatment to 1 May 2014 will facilitate a proper consultation between Revenue and the industry concerned in relation to this leaflet, to ensure that all relevant services and supplies that qualify, remain at the 4.8% rate.

With regard to the impact of the increase in the VAT rate of horses and greyhounds not qualifying for the 4.8% rate from 1 May 2014, it should be noted that horse breeding and minding will continue to qualify as agricultural services under the flat-rate farmer scheme. As such, the VAT rate increase should not impact on flat-rate farmers supplying horses. VAT registered farmers supplying horses to other registered persons or farmers will, as always, be entitled to reclaim VAT on business purchases and as such the rate of VAT does not impact on them.

Where a flat-rate farming horse breeder purchases a horse from a VAT registered dealer, the VAT on this purchase will increase from 4.8% to 9%. However, the increase in the cost of purchasing horses due to the VAT increase will be accounted for under the flat-rate addition calculation in subsequent years. In addition, flat-rate farmers engaged in horse breeding will continue to have the option to become registered for VAT to claim VAT on their purchases.

### **Illicit Trade in Tobacco**

87. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Finance the way in which the Revenue Commissioners estimate the tobacco smuggling rate, which shows a reduction of 2% in the past year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45554/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the incidence of illicit cigarette consumption in the State is estimated on the basis of a survey of smokers carried out by IPSOS MRBI on behalf of Revenue and the National Tobacco Control Office of the HSE. The survey for 2012 indicated that 13% of all smokers were classified as having an illegal cigarette pack. The comparable figure from a similar survey carried out in 2011 was 15%. I am aware that there are other estimates of the incidence of illicit tobacco products in the Irish market. However, Revenue considers the figures from the IPSOS MRBI survey to be the most reliable, on the basis of the methodologies used, the consistent manner in which the surveys have been undertaken over a number of years and because the survey distinguishes between legal personal imports and contraband cigarettes. The surveys are geographically representative and also take social class, age, gender and nationality into account.

I am advised that a similar survey will be carried out in respect of the current year and it is anticipated that the results will be available in the first quarter of next year.

### **Crime Prevention**

88. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Finance if it is the case that the Revenue Commissioners purchased new smuggling detection equipment, including a van scanner, recently; the funding stream used for the purchase of this equipment; if funding was provided by a group (details provided); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45555/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners, who are responsible for the collection of taxes and duties and for tackling the smuggling of dutiable and prohibited goods that, following a tender process, a Scan Van was acquired by Revenue in July 2012. The Scan Van is a specialist vehicle incorporating an x-ray facility, radiation detection facilities and ionscan technology. It is used for monitoring baggage and cargo at airports and ports for narcotics, cigarettes, radioactive materials and other contraband. It also allows Revenue enforcement officers to perform controls at locations, such as warehouses and courier depots, where X-ray technology was not previously available.

I am advised also that three modern replacement baggage x-ray scanners have also been purchased in recent months for use at Dublin Airport, Shannon Airport and Rosslare Ferryport respectively.

The acquisition of the Scan Van and other new baggage scanners was funded by Revenue with assistance from the European Union Hercules Programmes. The additional and replacement equipment will complement the two Revenue mobile X-ray container scanning systems, which are based at Dublin Port and Rosslare Ferry Port, both of which are available for deployment on a risk assessment basis, at various locations throughout the country.

### **Tax Credits**

89. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance if he will explain his decision to abolish the one parent family tax credit; the projected saving generated from this cut; if a regulatory impact analysis was carried out; if so, the conclusions of same; the consultation that was carried out with affected groups; if his attention has been drawn to the disproportionate impact on those affected by it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45557/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As the Deputy is aware, the One-Parent Family Tax Credit (OPFTC) is being replaced with a new Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit from 1 January 2014. The Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit will be of the same value, i.e. €1,650, as the existing OPFTC and will also carry the same entitlement to the extended standard rate tax band of €36,800 per annum. The new credit will be targeted such that it is available only to the primary carer of the child. A maximum of one credit will be available per single carer/claimant, regardless of whether he or she cares for more than one child. This is the same condition that applies to the current OPFTC. Given the difficult fiscal environment it is essential to review all tax reliefs, credits and incentives in order to ensure that they are properly targeted and if necessary re-focused in order that they can achieve the socio-economic objectives that are set for them. A system that allows multiple claims in respect of the same child, as can happen with the OPFTC, is unsustainable.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that based on the most up to date data it is estimated that the expected yield from replacing the One-Parent Family Tax Credit with the Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit from 1 January 2014 will be €18 million in 2014 and €25 million in a full year.

This measure will be implemented via the Finance Bill and thus a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) is not compulsory. In addition, paragraph 2.21 of the RIA guidelines states that ‘the publication of an RIA may not be appropriate in the case of tax law/regulations or the imposition of charges because of their sensitivity and the need to guard against potential evasion or avoidance.’

Furthermore, it is not customary to consult particular groups that may be affected by Budget



measures. However, a review of all tax expenditures and reliefs takes place in the run up to annual Budget.

As the Deputy may be aware, the OPFTC was examined by the Commission on Taxation. That Commission accepted submissions as an important source of views in fulfilling their mandate. In addition, it consulted widely with a large number of interested parties in both the private and public sectors, to help in its deliberations. In its 2009 report it acknowledged that the OPFTC plays a role in supporting and incentivising the labour market participation of single and widowed parents. However, in its recommendations it concluded that the credit should be retained but that it should be allocated to the principal carer only. The restructuring of the credit as announced in the Budget will achieve such an outcome.

Qualification for the new credit will depend on whether the individual concerned is the primary carer for the relevant child. Allocation of childcare responsibilities is primarily for parents to agree. Practical implementation issues are being considered as part of the Finance Bill process.

### Government Deficit

90. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance further to a newspaper article (details supplied), if he will provide a detailed explanation on the level of budget adjustment for 2014 and the way this adjustment will be achieved in terms of carry forward, tax adjustments, expenditure adjustments, new savings and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45560/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As I outlined in my Budget Day speech, in order to achieve a deficit of 4.8% of GDP, a total adjustment package of the region €3.1bn was necessary. This comprised €2.5bn in expenditure cuts and tax increases complemented with additional resources/other savings of €0.6bn. A summary table of the adjustment package is outlined as follows.

-	€bn
Expenditure measures	1.6
Current expenditure measures	1.4
Increase in savings from Prior Year Measures	0.1
Capital expenditure measures	0.1
Taxation measures	0.9
Net new measures	0.4
Revenue carryover	0.5
Other	0.6
Total Adjustment Package	3.1

Additional detail on what encompasses the other elements of the adjustment package may also be useful. Firstly, the NTMA Budget debt service estimate for 2014 is lower than the corresponding April SPU estimate, of the order €0.2bn, due to an improvement in the interest rate environment generally and lower than previously planned bond issuance. Turning to the Central Bank income, during the summer, the Central Bank provided an estimate of the 2013 surplus income to be paid to the Central Fund in 2014 based on results to that date and projections for the remainder of the year. The Central Bank revised this estimate upwards by €0.1bn in September, in light of actual results for the first nine months and the consequent revisions of

projections for the remaining three months of 2013. In terms of savings from the Live Register, the numbers in work rose by 33,800 in the year to the second quarter of 2013 and the Live Register at the end of quarter 3 2013 was down by just over 20,000 when compared to the same period last year. On foot of this recovering labour market, live register savings have exceeded those previously expected of the order €0.15bn. Finally, the remaining €0.15bn arises from a number of other factors mainly connected with state asset transactions.

Complementing tax and expenditure measures with additional resources and other savings, some of which may be once off, is consistent with the composition of previous adjustments published in the National Recovery Plan/Budget 2011 and the contribution of additional dividends outlined in Budget 2013.

### **VAT Rate Application**

91. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Finance if he will give consideration to the points raised in correspondence (details supplied) from the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45562/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** With regard to the VAT point raised in the correspondence, regarding proposed changes to the current 4.8% bloodstock VAT rate, I would point out that European Court of Justice Case C108/2011 concerns the rate of VAT applying to (a) the supply of live horses and greyhounds, (b) the hire of horses and (c) the supply of 'no foal, no fee' insemination services. All of these activities, including livestock in general, are currently charged to VAT in Ireland at the super-reduced rate of 4.8% under Article 110 of the EU VAT Directive. On 14 March 2013 the Court found against Ireland, in that some of the conditions of Article 110 were not fulfilled in applying the 4.8% rate to the supply mentioned. The application of the 4.8% rate to the supply of livestock in general, however, was not in dispute. Ireland must comply with the ECJ Judgement, and Finance (No. 2) Bill 2013, which is published today, includes measures in this regard. However, while the Finance Bill changes comply with the Court decision, the measures introduced are also mindful of the possible impact of VAT increases on the sectors concerned.

Firstly, the VAT rate applying to (a) the supply of live horses, other than those intended for use as foodstuffs or for use in agricultural production, (b) the supply of greyhounds, and (c) the hire of horses, will be increased from 4.8% to 9%. However, the 4.8% rate will continue to apply to livestock in general, and to horses that are intended for use as foodstuffs or for use in agricultural production.

In addition, the VAT rate on 'no foal, no fee' insemination services will be increased from 4.8% to the 13.5% reduced rate, so that the same 13.5% rate applies to all insemination services, for all animals, including livestock, horses and greyhounds. The 13.5% rate also applies to the supply of livestock and horse semen.

I would point out that the application of the 9% and the 13.5% rates, respectively, are the minimum VAT rates allowable to these supplies under EU VAT law, given the current VAT rate structure in Ireland.

I would also point out that when these changes are introduced, Ireland will still apply one of the lowest VAT rates in the EU to these services. Most Member States apply the standard VAT rate to the supply of horses not intended as food or for agriculture; with France applying their 19.6% and the UK applying their 20% rate, for example.

In addition, the Finance Bill provides for the new arrangements to come into effect from 1

May 2014. This will allow additional time for the sector to transition to new VAT arrangements.

Furthermore, after the introduction of the legislation, the Revenue Commissioners will produce a leaflet which will provide clarification on how the new arrangements will apply particularly in respect of horses intended for use as foodstuffs and for use in agricultural production, to which the 4.8% VAT rate will continue to apply. The delayed introduction of the new VAT treatment to 1 May 2014 will facilitate a proper consultation between Revenue and the industry concerned in relation to this leaflet, to ensure that all relevant services and supplies that qualify, remain at the 4.8% rate.

With regard to the impact of the increase in the VAT rate of horses and greyhounds not qualifying for the 4.8% rate from 1 May 2014, it should be noted that horse breeding and minding will continue to qualify as agricultural services under the flat-rate farmer scheme. As such, the VAT rate increase should not impact on flat-rate farmers supplying horses. VAT registered farmers supplying horses to other registered persons or farmers will, as always, be entitled to reclaim VAT on business purchases and as such the rate of VAT does not impact on them.

Where a flat-rate farming horse breeder purchases a horse from a VAT registered dealer, the VAT on this purchase will increase from 4.8% to 9%. However, the increase in the cost of purchasing horses due to the VAT increase will be accounted for under the flat-rate addition calculation in subsequent years. In addition, flat-rate farmers engaged in horse breeding will continue to have the option to become registered for VAT to claim VAT on their purchases.

### **State Bodies Expenditure**

92. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the multiple independent procurement of research grant management software by agencies under the control of his Department and the total cost to the taxpayer of these systems; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the same supplier has supplied all but one of these systems and that all are compliant with European Commission standards on the exchange of research information and are all capable of being integrated into one grant management system, as has been done in the US and the UK with the consequent savings that produces; the reason, despite the existence of a national research platform report, no progress has been made on the implementation of an integrated national research platform; and if his attention has been drawn to the consequent diversion of resources in research bodies HEs and others to the management of these multiple systems and away from the proper good governance of public resources spent on research. [45566/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** In response to the Deputy's question I am not aware of the procurement of research grant management software by any agency under the remit of my Department.

### **Tax Yield**

93. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of deposit interest retention tax that is expected to be collected in 2014; the way this compares to the projected outcome for 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45571/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT) is contained in the income tax estimate for 2013 and 2014 shown in Table 8 on page C.15 of the recently published Budget 2014. The income tax forecast includes €500 million of DIRT in 2013. As the Deputy will be aware, the DIRT rate was increased to 41 per cent in Budget 2014

as set out in the Summary of Budget Measures. This is expected to yield €105 million in 2014 and €140 million in a full year. Taking this and the expected prevailing economic environment into account, the yield from DIRT in 2014 is estimated to be of the order of €625 million.

It should be pointed out that these figures are subject to revision as emerging fiscal and economic data are taken on board.

### **Tax Yield**

94. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of deposit interest retention tax collected in 2011; if he will provide in tabular form the amount of DIRT collected by each financial institution liable for collection of the tax in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45572/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I can inform the Deputy that €473 million was collected in respect of DIRT in 2011. However, I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that their obligation to observe confidentiality for taxpayers and small groups of taxpayers precludes them from providing the information requested in respect of each financial institution.

### **Credit Unions Regulation**

95. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of credit unions that are currently subject to lending restrictions by the Central Bank of Ireland; the way this compares to the position at the end of 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45573/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The imposition of lending restrictions is the responsibility of the Registrar of Credit Unions, who is the independent regulator for credit unions. Within her independent regulatory discretion, the Registrar acts to support the prudential soundness of individual credit unions, to maintain sector stability and to protect the savings of credit union members. As Minister for Finance, my role is to ensure that the legal framework for credit unions is appropriate for the effective operation and supervision of credit unions.

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

The Registrar has advised me that currently about 58% of all credit unions are subject to lending restrictions. This compares to a corresponding figure of 57% at the end of 2012. Almost all credit unions with a lending restriction in place have a maximum individual loan size restriction. Of the credit unions with lending restrictions, over 69% currently, which compares with 68% at the end of 2012, can lend €20,000 or more to an individual member, which is a sizeable amount and should cover most circumstances.

Of the credit unions with maximum individual loan size restrictions, 60% can lend from €20,000 to just under €30,000, 4% can lend from €30,000 to just under €45,000, 4% can lend from €45,000 to just under €75,000 and less than 2% can lend from €75,000 up to €100,000. Fewer than 2.6% of credit unions are restricted to issuing loans of less than €10,000 to an

individual member. The figure in 2012 was fewer than 2.5%. While fewer than 1% of credit unions were restricted to issuing loans of less than €5,000 per member in 2012, no credit union is currently similarly restricted. These are the cases where the Registrar of Credit Unions has the more significant concerns in terms of risk to members' savings.

The Registrar has also advised that individual credit union lending restrictions currently in place are reviewed on a regular basis to determine whether they are still set at appropriate levels. Lending restrictions are typically given effect by regulatory directions. As from 1 August 2013 regulatory directions are appealable to the Irish Financial Services Appeals Tribunal.

### **General Government Debt**

96. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the impact of the previously reported 2012 general government deficit of the EUROSTAT ruling in respect of the treatment of the revenue from the 4G licence sale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45574/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The revenue figure in relation to the sale of 4G licences was previously allocated as income in 2012. In nominal terms the effect of the change in treatment was a worsening of the 2012 general government deficit by €723 million and an improvement by the same amount in 2013. As a percentage of GDP this had an approximate impact of 0.44% in both years. The amendment to the accounting treatment of this item was included in the figures for both Budget 2014 documentation and the September 2013 EDP return submitted by the CSO.

### **Government Bonds**

97. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the level of sales of Irish Government bonds held by the Central Bank of Ireland following the deal in respect of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation promissory note undertaken to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45575/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I have been advised by the Central Bank that the portfolio of Government bonds now held by the Bank following the liquidation of IBRC will be sold as soon as possible, provided conditions of financial stability permit. The Bank has, however, undertaken that a minimum amount of bonds will be sold in accordance with the following schedule: to end 2014 (€0.5bn), 2015-2018 (€0.5bn p.a.), 2019-2023 (€1bn p.a.), 2024 and after (€2bn p.a.). The Bank normally reports in detail on its balance sheet only at annual intervals although it also publishes a more aggregate balance sheet on a monthly basis. While the latter does not contain details of its investment holdings, it is my understanding that, in its Annual Report for 2013, the Bank will report on any progress towards the €0.5 billion minimum sales by end-2014.

*Questions Nos. 98 to 100, inclusive, answered with Question No. 68.*

### **Departmental Budgets**

101. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the expenditure adjustment that will be made within his Department in 2014; the full-year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45585/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Department of Finance's budget and staffing allocation reflects ongoing ambitious objectives and goals, across a broad spectrum of economic, fiscal, financial and international policies, set out in its Statement of Strategy. This is particularly important as we target an exit from the EU/IMF programme of support and the Government has recognised this in the ECF numbers and resources allocated to the Department. Notwithstanding this, my Department has achieved considerable economies in a number of areas through, for example, the abolition of payable orders, efficiencies in accommodation footprint, and process improvement efficiencies. The full extent of these efficiencies is not immediately obvious because the Department has taken-on additional clients in the shared services area (these services are not recharged to the clients) and premises lease savings will accrue to the Office of Public Works vote.

During the course of 2014 my Department will incur once-off funding costs in relation to a number of policy areas, including the Government approved National Payments Plan project. We have also included an estimate for legal fees related to actions linked to the banking sector. These additional costs exceed the various cost savings expected to be achieved in 2014 relating to improved work practices.

### National Training Fund

102. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current level of the retained national training fund surplus; the estimated amount at the end of 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45592/13]

103. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will set out in tabular form the gross receipts and expenditure in respect of the national training fund for each year from 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45593/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 102 and 103 together.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of NTF gross receipts and expenditure is set out in tabular form. At the start of 2013 the retained NTF surplus was €155,003,907. It is estimated that the surplus will amount to €116,975,000 at the end of 2013.

-	2005 - €	2006 - €	2007 - €	2008 - €	2009 - €	2010 - €	2011 - €	2012 - €
Gross Receipts	329,599,000	374,814,180	433,299,870	419,459,071	374,543,416	310,187,483	400,102,076	317,877,514
Expenditure	312,738,283	352,718,974	394,598,181	399,146,178	366,482,465	395,221,769	326,269,322	340,896,121

### Bus Éireann Services

104. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department has sent Bus Éireann a document purporting to be the unsigned affidavit of a private bus operator working for Bus Éireann in school transport, which alleges corruption in Bus Éireann in an area that is one of the 11 school transport areas, albeit not the Dundalk or Limerick areas. [45600/13]

105. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the date a document purporting to be the unsigned affidavit of a private bus operator working for Bus Éireann in school transport, which alleges corruption in Bus Éireann in an area that is one of the 11 school transport areas but not the Dundalk area and not the Limerick area, was sent to Bus Éireann by his Department. [45601/13]

106. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the complaints in a document purporting to be the unsigned affidavit of a private bus operator working for Bus Éireann in school transport, which alleges corruption in Bus Éireann in an area that is one of the 11 school transport areas but not the Dundalk area and not the Limerick area, are the first time these complaints have been made to Bus Éireann; if they are not the first time, the date on which they were first made; and the reason no action was taken by Bus Éireann on them at that time. [45602/13]

107. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will confirm that the employees of Bus Éireann from whom a document purporting to be the unsigned affidavit of a private bus operator working for Bus Éireann in school transport, which alleges corruption in Bus Éireann in an area that is one of the 11 school transport areas but not the Dundalk area and not the Limerick area, originates, are still employees of Bus Éireann in October 2013. [45603/13]

108. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the assurances given to him by the CEO of Bus Éireann, in his letter dated 15 March 2012, on the non-existence of bullying and bribery in the Bus Éireann section of school transport has changed or if the CEO still holds the same view. [45604/13]

109. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has confidence in the assurance given by the CEO of Bus Éireann that the allegation noted in the CEO's letter to him regarding bullying and bribery are groundless; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45605/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 104 to 109, inclusive, together.

A document of the type referred to by the Deputy was received in my Department on 12th September 2013. This document was referred to Bus Éireann that day for investigation in accordance with the Company's own internal procedures. I am informed by Bus Éireann that this specific complaint was not made previously. An unsubstantiated allegation was made in February 2010 alleging inducements in relation to the awarding of school bus contracts in the same office but no evidence was found, on investigation, to support this allegation. Additional information was requested from the complainant but was not forthcoming, nonetheless all staff in the office concerned were interviewed in connection with the matter at the time. No substance was found to the allegation. Bus Éireann has advised that, on receipt of the document, an investigation was immediately instigated in accordance with the Company's own internal procedures. This is currently ongoing. My Department, as with all such cases, will be advised of the steps taken, if any, arising from this investigation. It is inappropriate for me to comment further on this matter pending the outcome of this investigation.

### **Broadband Services Provision**

110. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has any proposals to provide high-speed broadband to the schools in Annaghdown and Corrandulla, County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45420/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** Under the Schools Broadband Access Programme the Department provides for the supply of internet connectivity for all recognised primary schools. All contracts under the Schools Broadband Access Programme are regularly reviewed so that schools have access to the best quality connectivity solutions af-

fordable within the available resources. Contracts for these schools were re-tendered last year under a public procurement competition. As a result of this the number of service providers has been expanded from 6 to 13.

As a result, Scoil Breadáin was awarded a 6 Mbit/s connection and was installed on 1/11/12. Scoil Bhrige agus Bhreadáin Naofa was awarded a 8Mbit/s connection and was installed on 20/11/12.

### **Schools Building Projects Administration**

111. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding accessing information in relation to tenders for school building projects after the tender has been awarded; if it is the practice that all those who tendered for a particular scheme are notified in writing where their tender ranked; his Department's policy in relation to this matter; if this information may be accessed through the freedom of information process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45453/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** In line with the Department's Design Team Procedures, standard template letters developed in conjunction with the Capital Works Management Framework and which are available on the Departments web-site, are generally used by schools and their design teams in providing feedback to unsuccessful tenderers. Details in relation to the lowest tender is supplied to all unsuccessful tenderers on large scale projects. Unsuccessful tenderers are given information regarding the apparently most successful tender but are not generally informed of their specific ranking in the list of unsuccessful tenderers. With regard to your query in relation to Freedom of Information process, issues in relation to commercial sensitivity would have to be considered when determining a response to any FOI request.

### **Student Grant Scheme Applications**

112. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will expedite a student grant application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45463/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy a letter issued on 22nd October requesting return of the Final Course Acceptance Form. The application will be reviewed on receipt of the requested documentation and a decision will issue to the applicant.

### **Teaching Contracts**

113. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a reply will issue to correspondence (details supplied) regarding substitute teachers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45471/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** A reply will issue this week. I regret the delay in replying to the Deputy's correspondence in relation to post-qualification experience for newly qualified teachers. I am aware that there are newly qualified teachers not yet holding teaching positions in schools and I will continue to keep the matter under review.



An increase in the level of supervision and substitution hours to be provided by existing teachers was one of a set of proposals for a public service agreement put forward by the Labour Relations Commission, which now form the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2016 (the Haddington Road Agreement). As the LRC proposals are part of a wider public-sector pay agreement that represent compromises by both employers and unions, I do not have the ability to alter the terms of that agreement.

However, I am pleased to inform the Deputy that provision has been made in the 2014 estimates for increases in teacher numbers due to demographics as well as increases in resource teacher numbers. In addition, a number of measures have been taken to alleviate difficulties for new teachers. Managerial authorities of schools have been directed to recruit unemployed teachers ahead of retired ones, in an effort to ease the difficulties for those who cannot find work in the profession. JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme, can provide newly qualified teachers with opportunities to gain experience and to undertake the necessary teaching duties to complete the process of probation.

The Teaching Council has responsibility for induction and probation of both primary and post primary teachers. All teachers must complete their induction and probation successfully before they can achieve full registration with the Teaching Council. If a registered teacher is unable to complete the requirements of a registration condition within the specified period, the teacher may apply to the Council for an extension to that period. The Teaching Council will be able to advise a teacher in relation to how to proceed should this become relevant to him or her.

### **Higher Education Courses Applications**

114. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the numbers of students who entered university degree courses in science in 2007 and 2008; the number that continued to second and subsequent years of study; the numbers of those students who were conferred with science degrees; the number of those that did not progress from year to year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45494/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I have been informed by the Higher Education Authority that in 2007/08 there were 2376 new entrants to Science Honours Bachelor Degree courses in the 7 Universities. 11% of these new entrants did not progress from 1st year in 2007 to second year in 2008. The data for completion is not yet available but the completion rate for Honours Bachelor Degree science courses in the 7 Universities for the 2006/07 new entrants is approximately 76%. The most recent report by the HEA on retention and progression, entitled 'A Study of Progression in Higher Education', is available on the HEA website, [www.heai.ie](http://www.heai.ie).

### **School Transport Provision**

115. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a school route (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45519/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** A new school transport service to the school referred to by the Deputy was sanctioned by my Department, in accordance with the terms of the Primary School Transport Scheme. Bus Éireann, which operates the Scheme, on behalf of my Department, has advised that the service commenced on 21st October 2013.

## **Student Grant Scheme Administration**

116. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of applications processed by Student Universal Support Ireland for the 2013-14 academic year; if he will provide comparative figures for the 2012-13 academic year; if he will outline on a county basis the number of students who have received payment; the total amount paid to applicants to date; the number of applications still awaiting processing; his views on the progress made this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45537/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** Officials in my Department have been informed by Student Universal Support Ireland that all 59,000 applications received by the 5 August closing date have been processed and that 4,000 new applications received following the closing date and up to early September have also been processed. 3,600 new applications received since early September are currently being processed but priority is being given to applications received before the closing date and to the final assessment of those applications for which documents were submitted on time.

Currently, SUSI has processed 35,000 of the 41,000 applications in respect of which documents were received before the 24 September deadline for submitting documents. The remaining 6,000 applications will be processed by end-October. A further 8,000 applications in respect of which documents were received after the 24 September deadline will then be processed during November.

Regarding the 2012/13 academic year, by late September 2012, just over 6,500 students had returned their documents on time and 4,300 of these applications had been processed at the final assessment stage. Data is not yet available from SUSI on the total number, or a breakdown on a county by county basis, of payments made to students.

For the 2013/14 academic year the grants administration process has undergone significant development to enhance its effectiveness and deal with the difficulties experienced last year. I am assured by City of Dublin Education and Training Board that SUSI is continuing to develop and improve its services and will deliver a much-improved service to students in 2013.

## **Research and Development Funding**

117. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the multiple independent procurements of research grant management software by agencies under the control of his Department and the total cost to the taxpayer of these systems; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the same supplier has supplied all but one of these systems and that all are compliant with European Commission standards on the exchange of research information and are all capable of being integrated into one grant management system, as has been done in the US and the UK with the consequent savings that produces; the reason, despite the existence of a national research platform report, no progress has been made on the implementation of an integrated national research platform; and if his attention has been drawn to the consequent diversion of resources in research bodies, HEs and others to the management of these multiple systems and away from the proper good governance of public resources spent on research. [45567/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** As the Deputy may be aware, competitive research funding made available from my Department is managed by one body, the Irish Research Council. The Council uses an online grant management system for all its research programmes which provides an efficient and user-friendly service to applicants. This

system was first procured by its predecessor, the Irish Research Council for Science Engineering and Technology in 2008, and developments to date have cost €128,980. There is also an annual licence and maintenance cost of some €16,000.

I understand that this system is also used by other national research funding agencies and that these agencies have joined to create a user group to explore ways to optimise their use of the system and to examine common requirements and opportunities for efficiencies. It is important to note that each system is customised for that agency's particular programmes and clientele, however, efforts are being made to streamline the systems where possible and to maximise opportunities for efficiencies.

### Departmental Expenditure

118. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the expenditure adjustment that will be made within his Department in 2014; the full year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45584/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** In Budget 2014 my Department was required to secure savings of €44 million to meet the ceiling set in the Comprehensive Expenditure Review 2012-14.

The Department has been able to identify sufficient expenditure savings to allow me protect frontline education services in 2014, including protecting class sizes. Savings that have recently crystallised, particularly in relation to superannuation expenditure, have reduced the amount the Department is required to find through policy measures to €33 million. The following table outlines the savings measures taken to secure these savings and their full year impact.

Savings Measure	2014	F/Year
Reduction in allocation to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)	€25m	0
Abolish €20 long-term unemployment bonus paid to FAS, VTOS and Youthreach participants (new entrants)	€2m	€7m
Require FAS apprentices to pay pro-rata Student Services Charge proportionate to the percentage of time they spend in IOTs.	€1m	€1m
Savings arising from adjustments in cases where FAS training course participants can receive concurrent DES and DSP payments.	€5m	€5m

### Office of Public Works Properties

119. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a list of all the properties leased or rented on behalf of the State which are not fully occupied; the extent to which these are not fully occupied; and the rent being paid by the State for the unoccupied space by building. [45338/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes):** The civil service office accommodation portfolio held by the Commissioners of Public Works comprises over 860,000 square metres, 58% of which is owned and 42% is leased. None of the leased office buildings within the portfolio are vacant.

The Commissioners actively manage the portfolio to ensure optimal use of space and this ongoing process has resulted in substantial reductions in the office property footprint and annu-

al rental expenditure. Between 2008 and the end of 2012, the Commissioners have surrendered over 87,000 square metres of office space and reduced its annual rent roll by €27.6 million.

The Commissioners have no occupancy details for leased premises in the wider public service.

### Research and Development Funding

120. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on the multiple independent procurements of research grant management software by agencies under the control of his Department and the total cost to the taxpayer of these systems; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the same supplier has supplied all but one of these systems and that all are compliant with European Commission standards on the exchange of research information and are all capable of being integrated into one grant management system, as has been done in the US and the UK with the consequent savings that produces; the reason, despite the existence of a national research platform report, no progress has been made on the implementation of an integrated national research platform; and if his attention has been drawn to the consequent diversion of resources in research bodies, HEs and others to the management of these multiple systems and away from the proper good governance of public resources spent on research. [45565/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** In response to the Deputy's question none of the Offices or Agencies under the remit of my Department has procured the research grant management software referred to. Neither my Department nor the Offices or Agencies under my remit are familiar with the specific applications referred to in the question, but I would certainly agree that it is the case that multiple systems can often be integrated. The feasibility of this will generally depend on the availability of published standards for the interfaces and the licensing models employed, but the most important issue will be whether the underlying business processes in the research/education entities are also aligned.

### Departmental Expenditure

121. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason the 2014 expenditure report did not separately show the 2014 and full-year effect of expenditure measures announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45579/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** The *Comprehensive Expenditure Report 2012-2014 (CER)* published by my Department on 5 December 2011 set out current expenditure ceilings for Departments for the period 2012 to 2014. The ceilings and savings measures contained in the CER were informed by the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) carried out in 2011. In setting out current expenditure ceilings for 2012 to 2014, the CER outlined the impact of 2012 savings on subsequent years and also the further savings that would be required to remain within the ceilings in 2013 and 2014. The savings measures specified were a direct result of the CRE process where Departments realigned spending plans for the three year period with Departmental priorities.

The *Expenditure Report 2013* reconciled changes in the expenditure ceilings for 2013 and 2014 with those published in the CER and outlined the savings necessary to adhere to the 2014 ceiling taking into account the effect in 2014 of savings measures to be implemented in 2014. As the *Expenditure Report 2014* deals with savings for the final period covered by the ceilings set out in the CER, the reconciliation versus the previous ceiling and detail in respect of expen-

diture savings measures was provided exclusively for 2014.

As I announced on Budget Day, the next CRE will commence in the coming months. This CRE will inform the final determination of expenditure allocations for 2015 to 2017 to ensure alignment between the multi-year expenditure ceilings and developing Government priorities.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

122. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to set out the expenditure adjustment that will be made within his Department in 2014; the full-year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45589/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's budget and staffing allocation reflects its strategy of delivering well managed and well-targeted public spending, delivered through modernised, effective and accountable public services. While savings have accrued due to the transfer of certain functions and pay reductions across the group, these are offset due to the significant start-up costs of the shared services and the transfer of maintenance service costs to OPW.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, together with the Shared Services and Office of Government Procurement functions, continues to deliver key outputs set out in the Public Service Reform Plan which was published in November 2011. This investment in the Government's reform agenda will yield longer term cost savings and facilitate service continuity in a smaller and leaner Public Service. When these centres are fully operational, annual savings targets are estimated as follows:

- Office of Government Procurement - The procurement reform programme is targeting up to €500m of much needed savings for tax payers over the next 3 years.

- Peoplepoint (transactional HR) - €12.5m

- Payroll Shared Services (transactional payroll and pension services) - €5.6m

My Department has also collaborated with the Department of Finance to achieve administrative efficiencies within our shared facilities, particularly in the accommodation footprint.

### **Employment Data**

123. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs created, the number of jobs lost and the net change in employment in enterprises supported by Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and county enterprise boards for each year since 2009; and the targets for gross and net jobs growth for each body for 2014. [45392/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Forfás Annual Employment Survey, which is usually carried out in October of each year, reports on job gains and losses in companies that are supported by the Enterprise Development agencies. Details of the level of employment, job losses and the number of new jobs created in IDA and Enterprise Ireland client companies in each year from 2009 to 2012, are set out in the following Tables 1 and 2.

It should be noted that prior to 2010, CEBs could only report on the number of jobs existing

in CEB-supported companies. In 2010, the CEBs' data recording system was changed thereby enabling them to produce figures for jobs existing, job gains and job losses for the years from 2010 onwards. The figures for jobs created and lost in CEB-supported companies since 2010 are set out in the following Table 3. 2012 was a particularly good year for job creation in Agency supported companies, with IDA client companies creating a total of 12,722 gross new jobs (6,570 net new jobs). The IDA client base in Ireland now employs 136,505 people on a full time permanent basis, a level last recorded before the global financial crisis began in 2008. Clients of Enterprise Ireland created 12,861 gross new jobs (3,338 net new jobs).

The 2013 Forfás Employment Survey, which will be available in early 2014, will detail jobs created by the client companies of the above Agencies. As highlighted in my Budget 2014 press release last week, both Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland have a target of 12,000 gross jobs growth each for 2014. As part of the CEB restructuring process, which will lead to the establishment of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in each County, a range of performance metrics are being developed within a framework Service Level Agreement. These metrics will include jobs targets for each LEO to deliver. The CEB/LEOs are expected to support the creation of a further 4,500 gross jobs in 2014.

**Table 1: Jobs Created and Lost and Net Change in companies supported by Enterprise Ireland since 2009**

Enterprise Ireland	2009	2010	2011	2012
Jobs Created	8,888	10,987	14,023	12,861
Jobs Lost	27,891	15,354	10,453	9,523
Net Change	-19,003	-4,367	+3,570	+3,338

**Table 2: Jobs Created and Lost and Net Change in companies supported by IDA Ireland since 2009**

IDA Ireland	2009	2010	2011	2012
Jobs Created	4,615	9,075	13,068	12,722
Jobs Lost	18,028	9,545	6,950	6,152
Net Change	-13,413	-470	+6,118	+6,570

**Table 3: Jobs Created and Lost and Net Change in companies supported by the County & City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) since 2010**

IDA Ireland	2009	2010	2011	2012
Jobs Created	4,615	9,075	13,068	12,722
Jobs Lost	18,028	9,545	6,950	6,152
Net Change	-13,413	-470	+6,118	+6,570

### Departmental Agencies Funding

124. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the capital, current and total funding allocated to Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland and county enterprise boards for each year since 2009; and the capital and current budget allocated for 2014. [45393/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The capital allocations to Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland and the County Enterprise Boards are set out in the following table. Where relevant, the table also highlights additional capital carryover provided to Agencies to facilitate them in operating multi-annual programmes.

Table 1: 2009 to 2013 Capital Allocations

Agency	2009 Allocation	2010 Allocation	2011 Allocation	2012 Allocation	2013 Allocation
Enterprise Ireland – enterprise	€94.8m +€3.5m Capital Carryover	€77.5m	€72.5m	€70.5m +€13.125m Capital Carryover	€55m +€11m Capital Carryover
Enterprise Ireland – research and innovation	€125.936m +€0.5m Capital Carryover	€121.393m	€131.393m	€132m +€5m Capital Carryover	€127m
Industrial Development Agency	€73.594m	€86m + €5m Capital Carryover	€86m	€86m	€79m + €7m Capital Carryover
Science Foundation Ireland	€159.941m + €5.5m Capital Carryover	€150m	€160.8m	€156m	€145.3m + €7m Capital Carryover
County Enterprise Boards*	€14.229m + €6m	€14.994m + €3.3m	€15m + €3.3m	€15m + €3.78m	€15m + €3.18m

\*Enterprise Ireland Capital Allocations 2009 and 2010 included €78m funding towards the Enterprise Stabilisation Fund.

\*\*County and City Enterprise Board (CEB) Capital Allocations

In 2009, the CEBs received an initial capital allocation of €14.229 which was supplemented by an additional €6m under the Capital Carryover process. In the years from 2010 to 2013, the initial CEB Capital allocations were supplemented by additional allocations during the year, as outlined in the previous Table 1, from savings achieved elsewhere in the Department's Vote.

Table 1: 2009 to 2013 Current Allocations

Agency	2009 Allocation	2010 Allocation	2011 Allocation	2012 Allocation	2013 Allocation
Enterprise Ireland – enterprise*	€102.222m	€93.954m	€91.723m	€85.287m	€80.841m
Enterprise Ireland – research and innovation	€7.752m	€6.694m	€8.866m	€7.942m	€4.685m
Industrial Development Agency	€41.877m	€39.24m	€38.577m	€35.822m	€38.447m

Agency	2009 Allocation	2010 Allocation	2011 Allocation	2012 Allocation	2013 Allocation
Science Foundation Ireland	€10.583m	€9.833m	€14.342m	€13.669m	€10.05m
County Enterprise Boards	€13.583m	€13.316m	€12.242m	€11.386m	10.893m

\*In addition to direct financial support to industry, this allocation also includes funding support for Seed & Venture Capital.

### 2014 Capital Allocation

The Exchequer DJEI capital allocation for 2014 is €442m, which it is expected, together with both capital carryover and reinvestment of income generated by agencies, will maintain IDA, SFI, EI and CEB allocations broadly in line with 2013 expenditure. The issue of Capital Carryover will be decided in the context of the Revised Estimates Volume that will be conducted during November and early December. Individual Agency allocations will be agreed when final capital carryover amounts have been confirmed.

### 2014 Current Allocation

The Department's current expenditure ceiling for 2014 has been set by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform at €339m. This includes the total Pay, Pensions and Non-Pay expenditure provisions for the Department, its offices and its agencies for next year. The distribution of this current expenditure provision will also be decided as part of the Revised Estimates process during November and early December.

### Capital Programme Expenditure

125. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the capital spend by his Department for each year since 2009; and the capital allocation to his Department in budget 2014. [45394/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Exchequer capital funding is primarily expended through various agencies under the remit of my Department, including IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, Shannon Development, Inter Trade Ireland, INTERREG, the National Standards Authority of Ireland, and the 35 City and County Enterprise Boards. Capital funding has also been allocated for expenditure by my Department in 2013 in respect of the Temporary Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme, the Tyndall National Institute and, via the Higher Education Authority, for the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions.

The table below sets out the Department's capital expenditure for the period 2009 to 2012 inclusive.

Year	Total spend	Including Carryover provision
2009	€497.864m	€18.326m
2010	€484.194m	€6.440m
2011	€486.898m	-
2012	€482.158m	€18.125m

The capital expenditure for the period January to the end of September 2013 was €266.71m



which is broadly in line with the profiled amount. The 2013 allocation also includes €25m carryover provision this year.

The initial 2014 capital provision for the Department, as set out in the 2014 Expenditure Report, is €442m. It is anticipated that the 2014 capital provision will be further enhanced by a capital carryover provision through the Revised Estimates Volume in the coming weeks. Plus through the provision secured by DJEI agencies to use our resource income for additional capital investment purposes.

### **Insolvency Payments Scheme Payments**

126. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding an award under the Unfair Dismissals Act in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 17. [45427/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** There are two significant issues that arise in this case. Firstly the matter of seeking to enforce the payment of an award made by one of the employment rights bodies and secondly on this not succeeding, the potential to have recourse to the Insolvency Payments Scheme for payment arising from that award. I am fully aware of the difficulties that are being experienced by the individual in this case who has had an award made in her favour and yet continues to be unable to receive the payment due. This particular matter is currently being examined in detail in my Department in consultation with the Department of Social Protection.

Where an employer is legally insolvent (liquidation, receivership, bankruptcy etc.) the employee may be entitled to seek redress from the State under the Insolvency Payments Scheme which is operated by my colleague, the Minister for Social Protection. I am aware that there are some cases including the present case, where employers have ceased trading without engaging in a formal insolvency or winding-up process and where the company may have closed owing certain payments or statutory awards to its former employees. Whilst it will not be possible to address the issue of so-called 'informal insolvency' through the workplace relations reforms which I have commenced, as it raises issues concerning insolvency law and the operation of the Insolvency Payments Scheme, I am informed by the Minister for Social Protection that the legislative position with regard to these types of situations is currently being reviewed by her Department with a view to establishing what, if anything, can be done to progress payments to individuals where no liquidator or receiver has been appointed.

Any queries concerning such issues under the Insolvency Payments Scheme including policy, are fully within the remit of my colleague the Minister for Social Protection Joan Burton T.D and should be made directly to her.

### **Research and Development Funding**

127. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on the multiple independent procurements of research grant management software by agencies under the control of his Department and the total cost to the taxpayer of these systems; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the same supplier has supplied all but one of these systems and that all are compliant with EU Commission standards on the exchange of research information and are all capable of being integrated into one grant management system as has been done in the US and the UK with the consequent savings that produces; the reason despite the existence of a national research platform report, no progress has been made on the

implementation of an integrated national research platform; if his attention has been drawn to the consequent diversion of resources in research bodies, HEs, and others to the management of these multiple systems and away from the proper good governance of public resources spent on research. [45564/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The relevant enterprise agencies under the remit of my Department are Enterprise Ireland (EI), IDA Ireland (IDA) and Science Foundation Ireland (SFI). These are independent agencies, each with their respective statutory functions, governance and management structures. Accordingly, procurement is a day-to-day operational matter for the agencies and for their respective Accounting Officers and not one in which I have a function.

Each of the agencies operates a payments / accounting system for research funding. I have been informed that SFI and EI operate a research funding payments/accounting system that operates on the same platform and was supplied by the same vendor following separate tendering procedures undertaken by the agencies. IDA Ireland operates a different system provided by another vendor.

My understanding is that because of the distinct mandates, different types of grants and a client base that can be variable, each system is highly configured and customised to meet the individual needs of each agency. To the extent that there are synergies and common issues that can be jointly addressed, both SFI and EI, along with other research funding agencies using the same research payments/accounting system, have joined to create a user group which allows them to come together to explore ways to optimise their use of the system. This would be a common approach across the Civil and wider Public Service (e.g. Local Authorities and Government Departments that use the same payroll software etc.).

### **Departmental Expenditure**

128. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the expenditure adjustment that will be made within his Department in 2014; the full-year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45587/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The net Exchequer provision as published in the Expenditure Report 2014 is €732.07 million. This allocation will ensure that my Department and its agencies will continue to deliver a full suite of programmes of activity and supports in respect of the 3 Programme Areas of Jobs and Enterprise; Innovation; and Regulation, at a further reduced cost to the taxpayer. It will also help to ensure that the Government maintains its adherence to the EU/IMF Consolidation Programme and return the public finances to a sound footing.

In line with commitments under the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure, my Department and its Agencies will deliver over €13m in efficiency savings in respect of 2014. This significant level of savings comes in addition to savings that are being delivered under the Haddington Road Agreement, as well as various items of expenditure no longer included in my Department's Estimate in 2014, such as costs associated with Ireland's Presidency of the EU.

These savings will be delivered at the Departmental level through administrative efficiency measures and changes to business processes. Further savings will also be delivered by the Agencies under the aegis of my Department through administrative and operational efficiencies, rationalisation measures and reprioritisation of spending in respect of a number of projects.

The 2014 funding provision will enable the Department and agencies to provide continued supports for the full range of vital job measures that have proved instrumental in turning around the jobs market and getting growth into the economy over the past two years, such as:

- Delivery of measures under Action Plan for Jobs 2014.
- IDA will target approximately 12,000 new jobs in 2014 whilst maintaining supports to its client base which currently employs over 260,000 people in Ireland.
- Enterprise Ireland will target 12,000 new jobs and generate €17.5 billion in exports. The Agency will also support 95 new High Potential Start-Up companies with commitments to create 2,100 new jobs.
- Over €300 million in research and innovation funding supports through Enterprise Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, the Higher Education Authority, Tyndall National Institute and Ireland's participation in the European Space Agency. These supports will leverage well in excess of €100 million in research funding to Ireland from non-exchequer sources next year from the likes of the EU and industry partners.
- An additional €3.5 million in supports for business start-ups and entrepreneurial supports by Enterprise Ireland through the County Enterprise Boards/Local Enterprise Offices network in 2014.

In conclusion, I am satisfied that the provision in the 2014 Expenditure Report, enhanced by any additional provision accruing from the carryover of capital savings in 2013, will ensure that the requisite supports are in place in my Department to continue the work in turning around the jobs market and returning growth to the economy.

### **Regional Aid**

129. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if County Kerry will be a priority county for regional aid from 2014; the efforts he is making to secure this status for County Kerry; the benefits that would accrue to County Kerry compared with the status quo; when he expects to be able to announce the details of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45599/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Regional Aid Guidelines enable the State's industrial development agencies to pay grants, at enhanced rates, to businesses in order to support new investment and new employment in productive projects in Ireland's most disadvantaged regions. This helps the convergence of these regions with the more advantaged regions of the Union. All such grants come from the exchequer, i.e. there is no EU or other external funding.

The new guidelines were adopted by the Commission on 19 June 2013, and will enter into force on 1 July 2014. As a result, the current guidelines that were due to expire at the end of this year are to be extended for a six month transition period.

During the Regional Aid Guideline process thus far, my Department has consulted relevant stakeholders including various Government Departments, the industrial development agencies, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Forfás, the Central Statistics Office, the Border Midland and Western Regional Assembly, the Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly, and the eight Regional Authorities, and this consultation is ongoing.

The initial Regional Aid Guidelines proposal from the Commission, published in May 2012, presented significant challenges for Ireland, in that they proposed a complete ban on aid to large enterprises in all but the most disadvantaged 'A' regions. All Irish regions are classified as 'C' regions, meaning that they are also disadvantaged, but to a lesser extent than 'A' areas. Following sustained engagement with the Commission and likeminded Member States a compromise was agreed with the Commission that will allow Member States to provide investment aid to large enterprises for new economic activities and diversification of existing enterprises into new products or new process innovation.

As things stand, Kerry qualifies for regional investment aid for SMEs under the current 2007-2013 Regional Aid Map, at a rate of 20% for medium sized companies (50 to 249 employees) and 30% for small companies (under 50 employees). Since January 2009, Kerry no longer qualifies for regional aid for investment projects by large companies. Under the 2014-2020 Guidelines, if Kerry, or any other Irish region, was to be designated, aid to all categories of companies would be allowed. The rates for SME's would be the same as those 2007-2013 rates listed above. The rates for investment by large companies would be 10% for certain activities only.

My officials are currently compiling the most up to date economic data for each county in order to determine which counties will qualify for inclusion in a revised Regional Aid Map for Ireland. Relevant data includes comparative unemployment levels and GDP by county. Once this data has been compiled and analysed, qualifying regions up to a maximum of 51.28% of the total population will be included in the new map. This must be agreed by Government and submitted to the Commission by the end of June, 2014.

### Social Insurance Yield

130. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the revenue accrued from PRSI contributions in each year since 2007. [45497/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

#### Social Insurance Fund PRSI Income from 2007 to 2012

Year	€'000
2007	7,722,010
2008	7,984,182
2009	7,164,606
2010	6,708,018
2011	7,426,480
2012	6,786,340

### Treatment Benefit Scheme Eligibility

131. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will qualify for assistance with a hearing aid; or if there is any other assistance with such an important matter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45342/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Department's treatment ben-

efit scheme, of which the hearing aid grant is an element, is based on PRSI contributions paid. Only PRSI paid at classes A, E, H, or P count towards qualification for the benefit. There are two rules that must be met in order for a person to qualify, for claims made in 2013, the person claiming must have:

1. At least 260 qualifying contributions paid since first starting work, and
2. At least 39 qualifying contributions paid or credited in 2011 (or, for anyone aged over 60, in the Governing Contribution Year at the time they turned 60 – in this case, 2006).

While the person referred to, satisfies condition 1, the contributions paid in the relevant tax years 2006 and 2011 are recorded as Class S contributions. Class S contributions are self-employed contributions, which are paid at a reduced rate and do not count for qualification towards treatment benefit. As a result the person concerned is not currently eligible for treatment benefit.

The person referred should contact his local HSE office, as the HSE also operate an audio-logical scheme and they will be able to advise him of any entitlement he may have under that scheme.

*Question No. 132 withdrawn.*

### **Carer's Allowance Appeals**

133. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason the family of a child (details supplied) in Dublin 17 with a recognised disability was refused carer's allowance and domiciliary care allowance. [45360/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 3 October 2013, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

### **Fuel Allowance Eligibility**

134. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Social Protection the steps she will take to assess eligibility for fuel allowance in respect of persons here who are receiving the UK winter fuel payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45397/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** In 2013, my Department will spend an estimated €211 million on the fuel allowance scheme, providing some 410,000 customers with an additional weekly payment of €20 during the winter.

The United Kingdom winter fuel payment is an annual lump sum payment made to eligible people to help towards their winter heating costs. It ranges from £100-£300 sterling. Until recently, only a small number of people living in Ireland (just over 7,000 in 2012) were in receipt of the payment as eligibility had to be shown while living in the UK and before moving to Ireland. Following a recent judgment of the European Court of Justice, eligibility has been

extended to people living outside the UK who have a “genuine and sufficient link” to the UK social security system. It is expected that more people living in Ireland may become eligible for the UK payment.

As the fuel allowance scheme in Ireland is a means tested payment, which is paid on the basis that an applicant is unable to provide for his or her own heating needs, the Department would need to take account of the UK payment when determining eligibility. This process involved is under consideration.

### **Social Welfare Appeals Status**

135. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45414/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an oral hearing of the appeal of the person concerned took place on 3 October 2013 and that the Appeals Officer is now considering the appeal in the light of all of the evidence submitted, including that adduced at the oral hearing. The person concerned will be notified of the Appeals Officer’s decision when the appeal has been determined.

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.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications**

136. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason the family of a child (details supplied) in Dublin 17 with a recognised disability was refused carer’s allowance and domiciliary care allowance. [45430/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** An application for domiciliary care allowance was received on 5th September 2013. The application was disallowed as it was considered that the child does not meet the eligibility criteria for the allowance. A letter issued on 2nd October 2013 advising of the decision.

In the case of an application which is refused on medical grounds the applicant may submit additional information and/or ask for the decision to be reviewed or they may appeal the decision directly to the Social Welfare Appeals Office within twenty one days.

### **Household Benefits Scheme**

137. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Social Protection if in view of the hardship and fear that the abolition of the telephone rental allowance is causing, if same will be reinstated as a matter of urgency; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45432/13]

145. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of senior citizens affected by her decision to discontinue the telephone allowance; and the projected saving to the Exchequer. [45508/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 137 and 145 together.

My overall concern in this Budget has been to protect the primary social welfare rates. To allow us to protect these core payments, we have had to look very carefully at other additional payments such as the household benefits package, including the telephone allowance, which is currently €9.50 per month (about €2.20 per week). While we have cut the telephone allowance, there have been no cuts to the electricity/gas allowance, free travel, the free television licence, the fuel allowance or the living alone increase. I am not in a position to reverse the decision to abolish the telephone allowance.

The abolition of the allowance is expected to yield savings of €44 million in 2014 and €46 million in 2015. In December 2012, there were 394,671 people getting a telephone allowance from the Department and 218,188 or 55% were in receipt of State pension contributory, State pension non-contributory or State pension transition. In addition, a further 21,040 older people were in receipt of the allowance but not receiving a pension from my Department. The remaining 155,443 customers were in receipt of other schemes from the Department for example widow's pension, disability allowance, carer's allowance, or invalidity pension, some of whom may be over 65 years of age.

The cost of the telephone allowance scheme has risen each year and the number of eligible customers has increased very significantly. In 2007 there were some 316,000 people receiving the telephone allowance, today there are almost 400,000, an increase of 24%. Each year almost 10,000 extra customers become eligible for the allowance because of the increased number of pension recipients.

The telephone allowance was introduced at a time when telephone services were more expensive and fewer people had telephones. In recent years the nature of the telephone market has been transformed with deregulation, mobile services and bundled services including television, broadband and telephone. There is a wide variety of deals and great competition now available.

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government has responsibility for the Seniors Alert Scheme which provides grant support for the supply of equipment such as personal alarms, smoke detectors and security lighting to enable older people without sufficient means to continue to live securely in their homes. The grant assistance is made available through community and voluntary groups registered with the Department and the equipment supplied under the scheme remains the property of the community group. The budget allocation for 2013 was €2.35 million. While the equipment currently provided requires the use of a landline, there are other companies in the market providing similar services based on mobile technology.

Finally, if any person is in particular difficulty an application may be made for an exceptional needs payments (ENP) under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme, to help meet an essential, once-off cost which an applicant is unable to meet out of his or her own resources. There is no automatic entitlement to this payment. Each application is determined by a Department based on the particular circumstances of the case.

### **Bereavement Grant Applications**

138. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of applications approved for financial assistance towards burial costs under each of her Department's schemes in 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45435/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** In 2012 there were 26,553 applications approved for financial assistance towards burial costs under the schemes within the remit of my Department in 2012. A table detailing this number by scheme is attached for the Deputy's information.

Scheme	Approved Applications
Bereavement Grant	22,793
Supplementary Welfare Allowance – Funeral and Burial Expenses	3,760
Total	26,553

### Carer's Allowance Appeals

139. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection when the payment of carer's allowance will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Laois who lodged their application in December 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45452/13]

**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 the 23rd of April 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These were received in the Appeals Office on 15th August. The appeal was referred to an Appeals Officer on 23rd October, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

### Family Income Supplement Application Numbers

140. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of public service workers who are currently supplementing their income with family income supplement; the number of those public service workers currently with applications awaiting approval; her views on whether, in certain cases, the reduction of public service hours in an effort save money on wages has put an additional burden on her Department, specifically in respect of family income supplement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45474/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The family income supplement (FIS) is an in-work income support for employees on low earnings who have families and who otherwise might be at risk of financial poverty. FIS also preserves the incentive to remain in employment in circumstances where the employee might only be marginally better off than if he or she were unemployed and claiming social welfare. FIS is available to public sector employees and private sector employees on an equal basis. While the estimated expenditure for 2013 on FIS is expected to be €229.6 million, almost €282 million has been provided in Budget 2014 for this scheme. There are currently some 41,000 families in receipt of a FIS payment. Take-up of FIS has continued to improve over the past 2 years as more people are supported to take up or remain in employment.

To qualify for payment of FIS, a person must be engaged in full-time insurable employment



which is expected to last for at least 3 months and be working for a minimum of 38 hours per fortnight or 19 hours per week. Furthermore, the average family income must be below a specified amount which varies according to the number of qualified children in the family.

Figures for the recorded numbers of public servants in receipt of FIS for each year from 2008 to August 2013 are given in the following table. The proportion of FIS recipients who were employed in the public service stood at about 10 -11% between 2008 and 2011. Since 2012 the proportion of FIS recipients who are public servants has dropped somewhat to approximately 9%.

Table: FIS recipients who are public servants

Year Ending	Number in receipt end Dec	Number Public Servants end Dec	% of FIS recipients who are Public Servants
2008	27,798	2,720	10%
2009	25,963	2,951	11%
2010	28,223	3,151	11%
2011	28,876	2,976	10%
2012	32,307	2,860	9%
2013*	41,391*	3,595*	9%

\*End August 2013.

There are approximately 300 recently received new and renewal applications from public servants currently awaiting a decision.

### Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

141. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the maximum rent at which they can receive support and the maximum rent support payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45485/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Department is not a position to assess this customers eligibility as a request for further information required to make a decision was sent to the client on 12th August 2013 to which no response has been received.

### Rent Supplement Scheme Appeals

142. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an appeal in respect of rent support will be decided in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45486/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** According to the records of this Department the person concerned has not submitted an application for a rent supplement in respect of his current address.

### Child Benefit Payments

143. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when outstand-

ing child benefit will be paid in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45487/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Child benefit is paid up to and including the month of a child's 16th birthday, and continues to the month of the 18th birthday provided the child is in full-time education. In order for payment to continue after the age of 16, it is necessary for the school/college to certify that the child is in full-time education and will be until the age of 18.

In the case of the person concerned, a completed application form has been received and child benefit has been restored. A payment notification has issued to him and payment for the months from July 2013 to November 2013 will be lodged to his nominated bank account on Tuesday, 5 November 2013.

### **Supplementary Welfare Allowance Applications**

144. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if arrangements have been made to make payment of supplementary welfare allowance to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare while awaiting a decision in respect of further documentation in regard to an appeal hearing or oral hearing, in view of the extreme hardship caused to the applicant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45489/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** According to the records of this Department the person concerned has not recently submitted an application for supplementary welfare allowance. The person concerned was previously refused supplementary welfare allowance for failure to attend two oral appeals hearings with respect to a jobseeker's allowance claim.

*Question No. 145 answered with Question No. 137.*

### **Social Welfare Fraud Data**

146. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of reports her Department received from members of the public in 2012 regarding social welfare fraud; the number of reports that were investigated; the number investigated successfully; the number of prosecutions brought; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45532/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** All anonymous or confidential reports received are examined and where relevant, are referred to scheme owners and/or to the Department's inspectors for follow-up action. It is very important to note that a payment is not suspended or stopped on the basis of an anonymous report. The anonymous report, however, may be a "trigger" for a review of a customer's entitlement. In 2012, 28,022 anonymous reports were dealt with by the Department's Control Division. In 18,306 cases, a report of suspected fraud was sent to the relevant area for examination. In 9,716 of the cases received, it was not possible to issue a report due to lack of information, no claim being in payment or the information reported would not impact on entitlement.

It should be borne in mind that while there is sometimes a perception of fraud, when a case is examined the individual may be doing something that is allowed under the rules for the particular payment that they are in receipt of. For example, a claimant can be working and receiving a One Parent Family payment provided earnings are within the limits and the Department

is aware the situation is legitimate. Anonymous reports are not available to deciding officers when making their decisions. A deciding officer's decision will be based on the full facts and circumstances of the case, including in many instances the report of a social welfare inspector. As a result, statistics on the outcomes of anonymous reports are not available. In addition, prosecutions are not instigated on the basis of anonymous reports.

It is the Department's policy to consider for prosecution cases of fraud against the social welfare system. The Department ensures that all cases that merit prosecution are forwarded for consideration of legal proceedings. In considering cases of social welfare fraud for legal proceedings the Department applies defined and recognised best practice standards. This includes the duration of the fraud, amount overpaid, previous incidences of social welfare fraud etc. At the end of 2012, 675 cases were in the courts system (i.e. on hand with the Chief State Solicitor/Local State Solicitor), at various stages of the process.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

147. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection the expenditure adjustment that will be made within her Department in 2014; the full-year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45590/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Budget 2014 provided for: expenditure reduction measures of €226 million in 2014; €30 million in savings through additional fraud and control measures; and €34 million in savings through efficiencies and lower than anticipated expenditure on certain schemes, an overall expenditure reduction package of €290 million in 2014. The savings in 2015, 2016, 2017 and in a full year arising from these expenditure reductions will be an estimated €334 million, €351 million, €363 million and €372 million respectively.

### **Departmental Funding**

148. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a committee (details supplied) will receive the balance of funding sought in view of the fact that additional information was supplied and approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45390/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley):** My Department sanctioned a grant of €30,000 in 2011 to the committee in respect of which details have been supplied by the Deputy. This grant was for improvement works on the roof of the facility in question. A total of €14,651.26 of this funding was paid out in 2012 as a first instalment. However, I am advised that the remaining works that were grant aided have not yet been completed. The complete refurbishment of the building will require major investment as the building in its present condition cannot be used for its intended purpose. I understand that the committee is now seeking other sources of funding to complete the restoration work. My Department will be willing to further examine the application to have the balance of the grant in question paid when the completion of the relevant works has been satisfactorily advanced.

### **Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Payments**

149. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a payment in respect of the turf cutting compensation scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45398/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme has been received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question. I am advised that a payment of €1,500 in respect of year 1 of 15 (2012) and a payment of €1,518 in respect of year 2 of 15 (2013) have been made to this applicant. Under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme, legal agreements have been issued and are being issued to qualifying applicants by my Department. Turf cutters who sign and return their legal agreement to my Department will also receive a once-off incentive payment of €500. The applicant has returned his legal agreement and I am advised that this payment of €500 will be made to him in the coming weeks.

### **Departmental Agencies Issues**

150. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will instruct the National Parks and Wildlife Service on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45399/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** The relevant person has been informed by staff of my Department that the item in question is available for collection.

### **Living City Initiative**

151. **Deputy Ann Phelan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the extension of the Living City initiative announced by him in budget 2014 (details supplied) will have an effect on the three existing pre-1915 houses in Vicar Street, Kilkenny, in view of the proposed central access scheme for the city; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45424/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** I refer to my reply to Question No. 76 of 22 October 2013. I welcome the announcement by my colleague, the Minister for Finance, that the Living City Initiative will be extended to include designated areas of four other cities, including Kilkenny, and to all buildings in the relevant areas built prior to 1915. The initiative will provide tax incentives for works performed to refurbish residential and retail buildings in the designated areas, either to bring them up to a habitable standard or to make improvements to buildings which are currently inhabited. I understand that the areas within Kilkenny city to which the initiative will apply have yet to be defined and that legislation for the Living City Initiative will be provided, subject to commencement order which will be dependent on EU State Aid approval. There is no direct relationship between the Living City Initiative and the current archaeological issues being examined with regard to the Kilkenny Central Access Scheme project.

### **Energy Schemes Issues**

152. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will request EirGrid to facilitate the expansion of the EirGrid Grid Link consultation phase for a further three months beyond 26 November in order to allow local interest groups (details supplied) and concerned parties more time to consider and collect information and make submission on the proposed route; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45396/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** This is a matter for EirGrid and one in which I, as Minister, have no function.

## National Broadband Plan Implementation

153. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the requirements of the national broadband scheme in respect of quality of service to customers availing of the broadband service; if his Department or ComReg is responsible for the oversight of this scheme to ensure the service meets the required standard of service and speed and is not subject to contention at times of high usage which leaves the service below the standards set out by the Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45406/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The broadband service contracted under National Broadband Scheme (NBS) is a basic, affordable, scalable product in keeping with EU State Aid clearance for the Scheme in September 2007. Under the terms of the contract which my Department has in place with Hutchison 3G Ireland Ltd (trading as “3”), the NBS mobile wireless service currently offers minimum download and upload speeds of 2.3Mbps and 1.4Mbps respectively, subject to a maximum contention ratio of 18:1. The NBS satellite service, which is utilised in a small number of cases for technical reasons associated with the location of the premises, offers minimum download and upload speeds of 3.6Mbps and 384 kbps respectively, subject to a maximum contention ratio of 48:1.

My Department has well-established monitoring arrangements in place to ensure that the NBS delivers the minimum specified service or better to all users. Throughout the contract period, network utilisation and performance data is submitted by “3” to my Department on a monthly basis. The NBS contract guarantees service levels and imposes a service credit regime on “3”, with significant financial consequences in the event that minimum specification service levels are not met. The NBS contract also provides that where NBS customers do not receive the minimum guaranteed service, as set out in the terms and conditions of their contract, they are entitled to service rebates. Should any NBS customer experience problems with the NBS service, they are advised to contact 3’s customer care centre, 24 hours a day 7 days a week, by phone at 1913 (free of charge), via email to [nbssupport@three.ie](mailto:nbssupport@three.ie) or by post to 3 Customer Services, Hutchison 3G Ireland Limited, PO Box 333, Dublin 2.

My Department has a role where customers have fully utilised the established complaints process and consider that their complaint has not been resolved. My officials operate a dedicated NBS mailbox, which NBS customers can contact by email at [nationalbroadbandscheme@dce.nr.gov.ie](mailto:nationalbroadbandscheme@dce.nr.gov.ie), with any comments or complaints they may have about their NBS service. My Department will then liaise with “3” personnel at its Head Office in Dublin to remedy any service performance issues.

## National Broadband Plan Implementation

154. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when it is intended to roll out a minimum service of 30 MB across the country; the reason for the delay in his roll-out, which is causing a severe digital divide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45407/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Government’s National Broadband Plan, which I published in August 2012, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed broadband is available to all citizens and businesses. This will be achieved by providing:

- a policy and regulatory framework that assists in accelerating and incentivising commercial investment; and

- 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 roll-out of services by service providers. ComReg's multiband spectrum auction, completed in 2012, is also enabling the roll-out of advanced mobile broadband services.

The State can only intervene to ensure access to broadband services in areas where the competitive market fails to deliver such services. In order to progress the State-led investment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest, a full procurement process must be designed and EU State Aids approval must be obtained. My Department is engaged in a comprehensive mapping exercise of the current and anticipated investment by the commercial sector to identify where the market is expected to deliver high speed broadband services over the coming years. The results of this mapping exercise will inform the precise 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, are ongoing. The procurement process for the approved intervention will be carried out in accordance with EU and Irish procurement rules and it is expected that it will be launched in 2014. Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, I am committed to ensuring that all parts of Ireland have access to high speed broadband, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in, and maximise the benefits of, a digitally enabled economy and society.

### **Energy Schemes Issues**

155. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will request EirGrid to grant an extension on the current deadline for submissions for the Grid Link project for the south east to allow members of the public ample time in which to make their submissions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45443/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** This is a matter for EirGrid and one in which I, as Minister, have no function.

### **Electricity Transmission Network**

156. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the input his Department has had in the choosing of the areas where EirGrid are currently proposing to erect pylons within Ireland; if other options were considered, that is underground lines or lines at sea; the agreements that have been made between his Department and EirGrid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45475/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** While several of the issues raised in the Question are matters for Eirgrid, and not ones in which I, as Minister, have any role or function, I will respond to the issues that fall within the ambit of my Department and Government policy in this area.

Neither the Government nor I seek to direct the energy infrastructure developers to particular sites or routes or technologies as was made clear in the July 2012 Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure. That statement emphasises that these are matters for the developers and for the forward planning process through regional and local development plans and at project level through the develop-

ment management process. In this context, energy infrastructure developers are encouraged to work with the forward planning processes at regional and local levels to set clear contexts for assessment of individual applications for planning consent and to facilitate as wide a degree of consensus as possible regarding how and where to meet grid development needs.

The Government, as detailed in the July 2012 Policy Statement, expects the companies in making their choices of project specific technologies and routing, as well as mitigation measures, to take account of all relevant national and international standards, to follow best practice and ensure value for money and be informed by detailed consultation at local level.

### **Electricity Transmission Network**

157. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on whether there may be a conflict of interest on the part of the consulting engineering company (details supplied) that EirGrid has employed to advise them on the selection of what they call the least constrained corridor in view of the fact that this company has also been employed by Tipperary County Council and a decision there could greatly impact on any decision made in County Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45476/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** This is a matter for EirGrid and one in which I, as Minister, have no function.

### **Alternative Energy Projects**

158. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his preferred options for the operation of wind generating turbine throughout the country with particular reference to the permitted height and proximity to dwellings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45542/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The development of wind farms to ensure that Ireland continues to meet its legally binding renewable energy targets and realise the export potential of trading energy with other Member States should also ensure 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 review of the Wind Energy Guidelines which will address the key issues of noise (including separation distance) and shadow flicker. Draft guidelines will be published for public consultation by end-November 2013 with a view to finalising guidelines by mid-2014. The revised guidelines will apply to all wind farm development in Ireland.

In terms of the potential export of renewable energy, one of the key requirements for proposals of a significant scale for wind energy export will be the achievement of the necessary planning consents in Ireland. Planning permission for such projects, which will be determined by An Bord Pleanála, must await the putting in place of a clear national planning policy framework and I have asked my Department to prepare such a framework. The policy framework will provide the opportunity to integrate relevant EU Directive requirements (including Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment), trans-boundary dimensions and stakeholder participation within the context of a national framework.

The outcome will be a high level development framework taking its lead from the Inter-

Governmental Agreement, EU Directive requirements and relevant national, regional and local planning policy considerations in conjunction with wider policies, objectives and requirements. It will incorporate a vision and strategy coupled with technical parameters and a spatial element.

The development of the framework will be progressed by my Department over the next year or so and will provide confidence and certainty for all stakeholders through an open, fair, balanced and consultative process. The initial phase of public consultation has now commenced and all interested parties and members of the public have been formally invited to make written submissions on the export project which will be taken into consideration in preparing the framework. Details can be found on a new dedicated section on my Department's website, exclusive to the project, and which will be updated as the project progresses.

### **Cyber Security Policy**

159. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which modern technological advances can be utilised to prevent or track Internet bullying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45543/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** Online media are not 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 are a range of reasons for this, not least the rapidly evolving nature of the technologies involved, the sensitivities around 'regulating' online media and the multi-jurisdictional nature of the Internet.

Ireland is committed through the Internet Governance Principles contained in the Declaration of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to the principle of "Multi-stakeholder governance". In this regard, the development of international Internet related public policies and Internet governance arrangements must allow for full and equal participation of all stakeholders from all countries. My officials have been and will continue to be engaged in the discussions on these issues. 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.

The protection of children online is of paramount importance and there are a number of initiatives already in place in this respect, notably through the Department of Education's resources and support for parents and children as well as the various initiatives carried out by the Office for Internet Safety, established by Government to take lead responsibility for Internet safety in Ireland, particularly as it relates to children. This Office operates under the aegis of the Minister for Justice and Equality. The Office also aims at building linkages and cohesion between all Departments and Agencies to ensure that the State provides the best possible protection for the community and promotes Internet safety.

The importance of education in this context cannot be overemphasised. It is essential that children, young people and parents are educated as to the risks that can be found online and that parents and teachers are supported in explaining these issues to children. In this regard, there are a range of tools available online to assist parents in managing internet access.

One important initiative in this regard brought forward by my Department is the development of the website called [www.makeITsecure.ie](http://www.makeITsecure.ie) which seeks to promote best practice in relation to many issues arising from the use of the Internet. This campaign, which was developed with industry, provides information in relation to the 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 have the lead role in relation to the specific issue of cyber-bullying, it works closely with other relevant Government Departments on this issue and the use of the Internet and ICT generally. Earlier this year, the Department of Education and Skills published an action plan on addressing certain cyber issues, including specific measures on cyber-bullying and in September published 'Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools'. I welcome these initiatives and hope that they will assist in addressing the challenges associated with cyber bullying.

### **Broadband Services Provision**

160. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which broadband, state-of-the-art technology is available in all areas throughout the country; the way this compares with other EU or non-EU competing states; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45544/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** Regulation of the electronic communications market, including the gathering of market data and publication of national statistical reports, is the responsibility of the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg). ComReg, has established a callcosts website [www.callcosts.ie](http://www.callcosts.ie) 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 collect or publish data on available broadband speeds on a regional or county-by-county basis.

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, among other things, that there were variations in broadband speeds within counties, especially in more rural areas of the country. It concludes that variations in access to higher broadband speeds is more likely to be a consequence of residing in an urban, suburban or rural area.

Therefore, when making comparisons with other countries, care needs to be taken to compare like with like. The OECD, for example, publishes rankings of states by reference to the highest marketed speed and averages of marketed speeds. The recent launch of a broadband speed of 200 Mbps in Ireland by a cable operator will improve Ireland's standing in terms of both highest and average broadband speeds offered in the market in such international comparisons. These comparisons do not however compare the penetration levels at those speeds within any state.

The Government's National Broadband Plan, which I published in August 2012, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed broadband is available to all citizens and businesses. This will be achieved by providing:

- a policy and regulatory framework that assists in accelerating and incentivising commercial investment; and
- 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. The State can only intervene to ensure access to broadband services in areas where the competitive market fails to deliver such services. In order to progress the State-led invest-

ment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest, a full procurement process must be designed and EU State Aids approval must be obtained.

My Department is engaged in a comprehensive mapping exercise of the current and anticipated investment by the commercial sector to identify where the market is expected to deliver high speed broadband services over the coming years. The results of this mapping exercise will inform the precise 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, are ongoing. The procurement process for the approved intervention will be carried out in accordance with EU and Irish procurement rules and it is expected that it will be launched in 2014.

Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan and the National Digital Strategy, I am committed to ensuring that all parts of Ireland have access to high speed broadband with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in, and maximise the benefits of, a digitally enabled economy and society.

### **Postal Services**

161. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which new and or compatible services and facilities will be supplied by An Post thereby enhancing its future and extending the quality of its services to the community throughout the country by maintaining its next-day delivery objectives and counter services daily; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45545/13]

**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. The opportunity to pay the local property tax via An Post outlets was also secured. An Post was 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.

While I have overall responsibility for the postal sector, the Communications Regulation (Postal Services) Act 2011 charges the Commission for Communications Regulation (Com-Reg), as the postal regulator, with the promotion of the development of the postal sector and particularly the availability of the universal postal service, the promotion of the interests of users and the facilitation of the development of competition in the sector. Under this Act, An Post is statutorily required, as the designated universal service provider, to provide a universal postal service. The essential element of this obligation is the collection and delivery of mail to every address in the State on every working day. The universal service obligation ensures by way of regulatory obligations that a minimum set of services is provided at an affordable price for the benefit of all users, irrespective of their geographical location.

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.

### Petroleum and Gas Exploration

162. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which exploration licenses granted, on and off-shore, in each of the past ten years to date have been activated; the number of viable discoveries; the number of explorations currently under way; the extent to which commercial viability is anticipated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45546/13]

164. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources arising from the number of exploration licenses granted in each of the past ten years, the extent to which discovery of oil, gas and other mineral deposits have been identified on and off-shore; the degree to which their commercial viability has been assessed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45548/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 162 and 164 together.

The number of Mineral Prospecting Licences and Petroleum Exploration Licences granted in each of the past ten years is set out in the following table:

Licences Granted during period 2003 – 2013

Year	Prospecting Licences (Minerals)	Petroleum Exploration Licences
2003	22	0
2004	26	3
2005	51	7
2006	84	4
2007	143	5
2008	91	5
2009	66	1
2010	93	0
2011	98	2
2012	102	0

Year	Prospecting Licences (Minerals)	Petroleum Exploration Licences
2013 (to date)	128	3
Total	904	30

While there have been no new commercial discoveries of oil and gas in the Irish onshore and offshore in the past ten years the drilling of an appraisal well in the Barryroe prospect in the Celtic sea has shown encouraging results. More work will be required to determine if the discovery is actually commercial and it is not clear at this stage how long this process will take.

The only petroleum discovery in recent years that has been declared commercial but has yet to be developed is the Corrib Gas Field. Twenty of the petroleum exploration licences granted during the period are still active.

While no new commercially viable deposits of minerals have been discovered in the past ten 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. Six hundred and forty seven of the mineral prospecting licences granted during the period are still active.

### Natural Gas Grid

163. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when it is expected that products from the Corrib gas field will become available to the national grid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45547/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** Completion of the Corrib gas field development works, by the developer, is the principal factor that will determine the date for first gas. Pending such completion, it is not possible to state a date for when gas from the Corrib gas field will become available.

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

*Question No. 164 answered with Question No. 162.*

### Mobile Telephony Services Provision

165. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which comparisons have been made with the quality of mobile telephone services here and those available in other European jurisdictions; if it is true that the service in terms of signal has been reduced and the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45549/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** An EU Commission comparison of “3G” mobile telephony coverage across the EU member states for 2010, the most recent such study available, ranks Ireland 6th highest for coverage at 99.5% compared to an EU average of 89.9%.

The provision of mobile telephony services is subject to the award of spectrum licences by the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg). In late 2012 ComReg concluded a process to allocate access to radio spectrum for use in the provision of the next generation “4G” mobile telephone services, which are the most modern such services currently available. The award of these licences involves payments in excess of €850 million by the successful applicants and significant additional networks investments to roll out 4G services. Two successful applicants have already announced the launch of 4G services and it is expected that others will roll out similar 4G services shortly.

I am advised that temporary outages or reductions in services may occur in particular areas as 3G networks are maintained or upgraded or as 4G networks are installed or due to temporary faults which can occur from time to time for a variety of reasons. I expect that with the continued significant capital investments being made by mobile operators, the quality of mobile services overall will continue to improve across the country. However monitoring such progress and detailed enforcement of the conditions imposed by the Regulator on service providers are matters for ComReg, which is statutorily independent in the exercise of its functions.

### **Broadband Services Provision**

166. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when he expects the availability of high-speed broadband to extend to all areas throughout the country; the steps necessary to bring about same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45550/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Government’s National Broadband Plan, which I published in August 2012, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed broadband is available to all citizens and businesses. This will be achieved by providing: a policy and regulatory framework that assists in accelerating and incentivising commercial investment, and 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. 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.

The State can only intervene to ensure access to broadband services in areas where the competitive market fails to deliver such services. In order to progress the State-led investment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest, a full procurement process must be designed and EU State Aids approval must be obtained. My Department is engaged in a comprehensive mapping exercise of the current and anticipated investment by the commercial sector to identify where the market is expected to deliver high speed broadband services over the coming years. The results of this mapping exercise will inform the precise 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, are ongoing. The procurement process for the approved intervention will be carried out in accordance with EU and Irish procurement rules and it is expected that it will be launched in 2014. Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, I am committed to ensuring that all parts of Ireland have access to high speed broadband, with a view to ensuring that all citi-

zens and businesses can participate fully in, and maximise the benefits of, a digitally enabled economy and society.

### **Renewable Energy Generation Issues**

167. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which fossil fuels continue to be replaced by alternative energy in the area of electricity generation, motor fuel and domestic heating fuels; the extent to which the alternative energy remains competitive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45551/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The overarching objective of the Government's energy policy is to ensure secure and sustainable supplies of competitively priced energy to all consumers. Ireland is currently heavily reliant on imported fossil fuels to meet our energy needs. While it is acknowledged that fossil fuels will remain part of the energy mix for some time to come, progress is being made towards increasing the share of renewable energy in our energy requirements. The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive set Ireland a legally binding target of meeting 16% of our energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020. In order to meet this target, Ireland is committed to meeting 40% of electricity demand, 12% of heating and 10% of transport power from renewable sources, with the transport target also being legally binding.

There are already a number of policies in place to support the cost effective increase in renewable energy across the three sectors and this increase in renewable energy will continue to play a direct role in reducing our reliance on expensive fossil fuel imports. Provisional figures for 2012 indicate that 6.9% of our overall energy requirements were met from renewable sources, made up of 19.5% in electricity, 5.1% in heat and 2.3% in transport. My Department is also currently finalising a bioenergy strategy following cross-Departmental and stakeholder engagement. The strategy will set out the actions, including any additional policies, required to optimise the cost effective contribution that energy from biomass can make to the 2020 renewable energy targets and thus further reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

### **Biofuel Obligation Scheme Implementation**

168. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which incentives remain available to encourage the use of biodiesel and bioethanol; the way this compares with other jurisdictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45552/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Renewable Energy Directive requires that all Member States must ensure that, by 2020, 10% of energy in transport comes from renewable sources. Ireland plans to meet the transport target primarily by mandating the use of biofuels through the Biofuel Obligation Scheme. The scheme works by obligating road transport fuel suppliers to bring a certain amount of sustainable biofuel to the market and in 2012 over 128 million litres were placed on the Irish market when the obligation rate was 4%. Since 1 January 2013, the obligation rate was increased to 6% by volume.

All but a few Member States operate a quota or obligation system with the mandates ranging from 1.83% to 7% by volume. A number of Member States have defined the obligation in energy terms with the resultant volume of biofuels required to meet the mandate depending on

the fuel mix of their respective transport fleets. Biofuels are also supported through the use of the tax systems and grant aid in a number of Member States.

### **Fuel Prices**

169. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the extent to which he directly or through the aegis of the regulator continues to monitor the prices of diesel and petrol at filling stations; if current prices reflect the reduction of prices of oil on the international markets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45553/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Irish oil industry is fully privatised, liberalised and deregulated and there is free entry to the market. There is no price control and it is Government policy to encourage price competition and consumer choice. Neither I nor the Commission for Energy Regulation has a statutory function in the regulation of petrol and diesel prices.

The upward trend in petrol and diesel prices arises primarily from increases in international commodity prices over which Ireland has no control. For example, the benchmark spot price of a barrel of Brent Crude Oil has risen from an average of US\$58 in February 2007 to an average of US\$110 in October 2013. This has inevitably resulted in an increase in retail petrol and diesel prices. Previous surveys have shown that prices charged by Irish retailers for oil products relate to the refinery price rather than to the price of crude oil. Prices at the pump reflect volatile market prices, transportation costs, trends in euro/dollar exchange rates and other operating costs, together with the impact of taxation on oil products.

My focus is on measures that will increase penetration of renewable energy resources in the area of transport. The Biofuel Obligation Scheme incentivises and enables the sustainable growth of an Irish biofuels market. The Scheme currently requires that the amount of biofuel brought to the market is not less than 6.38% of petroleum road transport fuels. In 2012 some 128 million litres of biofuel were brought to the Irish market. Additionally, the development of electric vehicles offers potential for Ireland to use cheaper grid sourced electricity. These opportunities will progressively reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels for transport, while supporting energy competitiveness and security.

### **Research and Development Funding**

170. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on the multiple independent procurements of research grant management software by agencies under the control of his Department and the total cost to the taxpayer of these systems; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the same supplier has supplied all but one of these systems and that all are compliant with EU Commission standards on the exchange of research information and are all capable of being integrated into one grant management system as has been done in the US and the UK with the consequent savings that produces; the reason despite the existence of a National Research Platform Report, no progress has been made on the implementation of an integrated national research platform; if his attention has been drawn to the consequent diversion of resources in research bodies HEs and others to the management of these multiple systems and away from the proper good governance of public resources spent on research. [45569/13]

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

The procurement of software by agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each agency. All of these agencies are aware of the necessity to comply with national and EU legislation and procurement rules to achieve efficiency and value for money in the procurement of goods and services. Issues in relation to research policy are a matter for the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

171. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the expenditure adjustment that will be made within his Department in 2014; the full-year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45582/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The 2014 Expenditure Report estimate for voted expenditure for my Department is €401 million, consisting of €321 million in current and €80 million in capital expenditure. The full year reduction over the 2013 estimate amounts to €14.5 million with €9.5 million current savings and €5 million capital savings identified. Current expenditure sees a reduction in the following areas: Payroll savings, Grant in Aid to RTE, The Broadcasting Fund and Communications, Energy and Inland Fisheries programme areas.

In relation to capital, there are reductions in Energy and Natural Resources allocations along with an increase of €12.5 million in the allocation for Communications programmes. In addition to the amounts shown in the estimates for my Department, under the Government's Stimulus Package, I secured an additional €30m in funding to increase investment in the Better Energy and Warmer Home energy efficiency schemes to a total of €57 million in 2014. These schemes fund energy efficiency improvements by householders as well as energy efficiency measures free of charge to low-income households. In 2014, over 30,000 homes are expected to benefit from energy efficiency upgrades under these schemes, bringing the total number of homes supported to more than 290,000. This detail will be shown in full in the Revised Estimates which will be published in the coming weeks.

### **Water Meters Issues**

172. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is confident that persons who will be paying for water will have full access to be able to either directly, or through independent verification, access the readings on their new water meters to ascertain their usage and to be able to verify faults; if no such access exists, if he will confirm that only Irish Water and their agents will have sole access to this information; if this represents a potential problem for dispute resolution in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45426/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The Water Services Act 2013 provides for the establishment of Irish Water as an independent subsidiary within the Bord Gáis Éireann Group and assigns the necessary powers to allow Irish Water to undertake the water metering programme. Water meters used for domestic billing must comply with the EU Measuring Instrument Directive which sets standards of accuracy. This Directive is implemented in Ireland by the Legal Metrology (European Conformity Assessment of Measuring Instruments) Regulations 2007. The Legal Metrology Service of the National Standards Authority of Ireland is the statutory body responsible for regulating and supervising weights and measures, including meters, in Ireland. Customers will be able to access to their water meters.

The Government has decided to assign responsibility for the economic regulation of the



water sector, including the setting of charges, to the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER). The primary role of CER will be to protect the interests of customers and to ensure a consistent and appropriate level of service is provided to them. It is envisaged that, as part of its customer protection role, the CER will establish a dispute resolution service for customers of Irish Water. This approach is in line with the services CER already provide for customers in the energy sector.

### **Electromagnetic Fields Studies**

173. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to any research having been carried out in Ireland or the EU in relation to the impact pylons have on a person's health; his views on whether these pylons may trigger cancer cells to develop; if the World Health Organisation have made any assessment on the health effects of pylons to persons living within close proximity to these pylons; his views on whether the erection of pylons will have a detrimental effect on those living in the surrounding areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45477/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The issue of the potential health effects of electromagnetic fields was the subject of an Expert Group Report commissioned by the Government and published in March 2007. This Report, entitled Health Effects of Electromagnetic Fields, is available for download on my Department's website ([www.envron.ie](http://www.envron.ie)). The Expert Group reported that the majority scientific opinion was that no adverse short or long-term effects have been demonstrated from exposure to electromagnetic fields at levels below the limits recommended by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP).

A substantial volume of research on this issue is being carried out internationally by regulatory bodies with responsibilities for monitoring the health effects of electromagnetic fields. The findings of this research are being monitored by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) EMF Project; it is expected that a report will issue in 2014. My Department will continue to monitor this and other scientific evidence as it is made available, and will consider any policy implications in this context.

### **Tax Yield**

174. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total anticipated value in 2013 of the local government fund and of the motor tax fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45512/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The estimated income to the Local Government Fund in 2013, as set out in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2013 published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, is €1.12 billion, of which €1.11 billion relates to Motor Tax receipts.

### **Property Taxation Yield**

175. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the 80% of the property tax take ring-fenced for local authorities refers to each local authority where tax was collected, or if the total collected will be ring-fenced for all local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45515/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The local government funding model will change considerably in 2014. Under the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, commencing in 2014 the Minister for Finance will pay into the Local Government Fund an amount equivalent to the Local Property Tax paid into the

Central Fund during that year; this revenue will be allocated to local authorities from the Fund. In addition, the establishment of Irish Water and its financial relationship with the local government sector will have a considerable impact on local authority financing.

The Government has indicated an intention to move to 80% retention of all Local Property Tax receipts within the local authority area where the Tax is raised. The establishment of Irish Water presents local government with significant organisational and financial challenges in 2014 and, in this context, it has been necessary to defer defining a certain proportion of the proceeds of the Local Property Tax to be retained in each local authority until 2015. This approach allows maximum flexibility in allocating Local Property Tax in 2014 with the priority to support those local authorities with weaker funding bases. The 2014 Local Government Fund General Purpose Grants will be announced in due course.

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

### **Wind Energy Guidelines**

176. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of approvals including planning permission granted or pending in respect of wind farms in County Kildare to date; the legislative basis including guidelines, regulations or statutory instruments applicable in such cases or in the event of such cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45541/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** My Department does not collate the specific statistical data requested. The Wind Energy Guidelines 2006, issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, are in place to ensure that all proposed wind energy developments are subjected to careful scrutiny by the relevant planning authority. They provide advice to planning authorities on catering for wind energy through the development plan and development management processes. The guidelines are also intended to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development and the treatment of planning applications for such developments. They require both planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála to have regard to them in the performance of their functions.

My Department is currently undertaking a targeted review of these guidelines focusing on noise, proximity and shadow flicker. The indicative timetable for the publication of the draft revised guidelines is Quarter 4 2013. The draft guidelines will – like all other new or revised guidelines – go out for extensive public consultation for a period of 6 weeks to 2 months, to allow for publication of the final guidelines in 2014.

### **Local Authority Housing Waiting Lists**

177. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of families on the housing list in each of the local authorities (details supplied). [45364/13]

178. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of private rented accommodation units that are available in each of the local authorities (details supplied). [45365/13]

179. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which private landlords are excluding families on local authority housing lists from consideration for housing in each of the local authorities (details supplied). [45366/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 177 to 179, inclusive, together.

My Department does not hold information on the number of households on local authority waiting lists as this figure fluctuates continuously as households on the list are allocated housing and new households apply for housing support.

In May 2013 under Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, all housing authorities were directed to provide a summary report of social housing assessments carried out in their areas and the data submitted by housing authorities are currently being analysed. A report on the assessment findings will be published by the Housing Agency in the near future. The report will provide an important insight into the level of need for social housing support across the country. As this is the first summary of housing assessments to be carried out under the 2009 Act, the results will not be directly comparable with previous statutory needs assessments.

Although my Department publishes a wide range of housing related statistics, it does not hold information on the number of private rented dwellings that are available to let. Information on registered tenancies by county and by Dublin postcode district is available from the Private Residential Tenancies Board at [www.prtb.ie](http://www.prtb.ie) but again this does not address availability.

As regards the extent to which private landlords are excluding families on local authority housing lists from consideration for housing, my Department is not aware of any research or studies that have been conducted in this area.

#### Local Authority Housing Provision

180. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on whether there is a growing housing crisis in the greater Dublin area especially for those on council housing lists; the extent of the problem and the way he will emerge from this problem. [45367/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** I directed all housing authorities to prepare a summary of social housing assessments carried out in their areas as at 7 May 2013. The data submitted by housing authorities are currently being analysed and once verified will be collated and a report published by the Housing Agency. This information will provide an important insight into the level and type of need for social housing support across the country.

The current assessment is the first to be carried out since the commencement of the Social Housing Assessment Regulations on 1 April 2011, which introduced a standardised system for assessing applicants for social housing support, including revised basis of need criteria. The results will not therefore be directly comparable to the results of the last assessment carried out, as at 31 March 2011, which found that there were 98,318 households on local authority wait-

ing lists. The full results of this assessment are available on my Department's website [www.viron.ie](http://www.environ.ie) and the Housing Agency's website [www.housing.ie](http://www.housing.ie).

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

Delivery of social housing continues to be significantly facilitated through more flexible funding models such as the Rental Accommodation Scheme and leasing, and the Government is also committed to developing other funding mechanisms to increase the supply of permanent new social housing. Such mechanisms include options to purchase, build to lease and the sourcing of loan finance by approved housing bodies for construction and acquisition. In addition, my Department and the Housing Agency are engaged with NAMA to ensure continued delivery of housing units for social purposes.

In spite of the current challenging circumstances, almost 70% of the budget for the Department will go directly to support housing in 2014 with an investment of over half a billion on a range of programmes. Meeting social housing need within the available resources will necessitate smarter and more innovative approaches in order to maximise output. In 2014, I will continue to focus the available resources towards the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors of the community.

### **Motor Tax Collection**

181. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to review legislation regarding commercial vehicle tax (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45374/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The operation of the motor tax system is kept under regular review. The position for many years has been that in order to be taxed as a goods vehicle, a vehicle must be constructed or adapted for that purpose and must be used solely in the course of trade or business. Under section 2 of the Finance (Excise Duties) Vehicles Act 1952, if a vehicle is used in a manner that would attract motor tax at a higher rate, tax becomes payable at that rate. Accordingly, if a goods vehicle is used in a private capacity it must, like all other private vehicles, be taxed at the appropriate private rate of motor tax.

### **Seniors Alert Scheme Issues**

182. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of persons with landlines connected to personal panic alarms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45378/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** My Department manages the Seniors Alert Scheme which encourages and assists the community's support for older people by means of a community-based grant scheme to improve the security of people over 65 years of age. The Scheme is administered by local community and voluntary groups with the support of my Department.

The aim of the Seniors Alert Scheme is to support independent living for those over 65 who live alone or who live with a person who is also over 65 years of age and of limited means. A key element of the Scheme is the provision of funding for a socially monitored alarm which

supports this independence. My Department has only approved applications for personal monitored alarms connected to a landline. From 2003 to date, in excess of 80,000 beneficiaries have received grants under the scheme.

### Local Authority Funding

183. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a breakdown by county of the local government fund general purpose grant allocations and final draw-downs in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. [45400/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** General purpose grants are my Department's contribution towards meeting the cost to local authorities of providing a reasonable level of services to their customers.

The information requested is set out in the tables below which detail the total general purpose grant allocations and final general purpose grant payments from the Local Government Fund for all local authorities in each county. The allocations for 2010 and 2011 reflect income from pension related deductions which was collected and retained by local authorities.

**Table 1 - General purpose grant allocations by County from the Local Government Fund 2010 to 2013**

County	2010	2011	2012	2013
-	€	€	€	€
Carlow	13,052,513	11,659,271	9,865,448	9,826,750
Cavan	19,057,097	17,268,005	14,854,931	14,745,113
Clare	16,913,007	15,338,891	12,372,506	12,159,289
Cork	80,062,339	71,568,486	56,166,379	53,795,875
Donegal	41,482,713	38,610,158	32,869,501	32,667,843
Dublin	177,483,982	158,221,861	118,005,053	113,290,760
Galway	45,483,346	41,164,039	34,775,191	33,796,527
Kerry	31,155,831	28,201,886	23,073,286	22,238,923
Kildare	27,741,406	25,950,930	21,822,765	22,244,748
Kilkenny	21,101,616	19,087,909	16,379,600	16,309,147
Laois	16,823,589	15,143,352	13,189,788	13,070,064
Leitrim	14,489,435	13,479,217	11,809,261	11,952,743
Limerick	34,319,130	30,994,565	25,651,934	25,933,791
Longford	15,005,245	13,862,073	12,126,650	12,318,890
Louth	21,514,636	19,284,802	15,928,387	15,502,375
Mayo	38,527,684	35,138,739	30,415,727	30,134,270
Meath	28,946,385	26,950,195	22,864,713	22,472,343
Monaghan	17,469,505	16,104,582	14,022,824	13,983,408
Offaly	17,404,185	15,934,486	13,711,364	13,564,713
Roscommon	20,110,463	18,490,254	15,967,965	15,828,208
Sligo	19,283,451	17,894,726	15,659,616	15,584,848
Tipperary	48,545,024	44,157,076	38,229,570	37,971,172
Waterford	30,521,544	28,149,265	23,820,851	24,264,808
Westmeath	21,797,165	20,082,314	17,313,127	17,287,004
Wexford	25,060,333	23,081,588	19,708,352	19,217,103

County	2010	2011	2012	2013
Wicklow	26,648,377	24,181,327	20,395,212	19,839,289

**Table 2 - General purpose grant payments by County from the Local Government Fund 2010 to 2013**

County	2010	2011	2012	2013
-	€	€	€	€
Carlow	11,921,250	10,817,411	9,609,458	9,826,750
Cavan	17,655,857	15,988,124	14,450,581	14,745,113
Clare	14,473,283	12,902,124	12,336,865	12,159,289
Cork	66,552,694	61,095,683	54,956,413	53,963,353
Donegal	37,761,835	35,462,317	31,616,582	32,822,572
Dublin	140,534,617	128,137,487	116,233,737	113,375,580
Galway	41,023,771	37,242,344	34,026,884	33,796,527
Kerry	27,337,324	25,037,960	22,755,081	22,238,923
Kildare	24,628,985	23,372,951	21,328,091	22,244,748
Kilkenny	19,343,430	17,432,726	15,990,212	16,309,147
Laois	15,583,946	13,819,010	12,752,890	13,136,013
Leitrim	13,588,994	12,480,094	11,597,455	11,952,743
Limerick	30,352,884	27,240,686	25,098,628	25,933,791
Longford	13,852,495	12,993,934	11,808,277	12,318,890
Louth	19,243,211	17,284,945	15,616,952	15,548,027
Mayo	34,877,551	32,810,065	29,899,530	30,134,270
Meath	26,795,657	24,459,917	22,309,091	22,580,768
Monaghan	15,955,495	15,167,470	13,541,630	13,983,408
Offaly	16,119,274	14,497,447	13,345,006	13,686,361
Roscommon	18,508,006	17,051,277	15,521,073	15,828,208
Sligo	17,653,955	16,186,298	15,403,304	15,584,848
Tipperary	44,800,579	41,098,307	37,415,561	37,971,172
Waterford	27,321,845	25,615,689	23,264,415	24,264,808
Westmeath	20,206,571	18,717,046	16,936,827	17,287,004
Wexford	22,376,390	21,127,486	19,155,737	19,217,103
Wicklow	24,314,451	21,723,093	20,136,035	19,839,289

### Local Authority Funding

184. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a county breakdown of the local government fund general purpose grant allocations in 2014. [45401/13]

185. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the mechanism that will be used to equalise revenue across local authority areas in 2014 following the full introduction of the property tax. [45402/13]

186. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the time frame for the introduction of variable property tax rates in local authori-

ties; and when local authorities will retain 80% of revenue collected. [45403/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 184 to 186, inclusive, together.

The local government funding model will change considerably in 2014. Under the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, commencing in 2014 the Minister for Finance will pay into the Local Government Fund an amount equivalent to the Local Property Tax paid into the Central Fund during that year; this revenue will be allocated to local authorities from the Fund. In addition, the establishment of Irish Water and its financial relationship with the local government sector will have a considerable impact on local authority financing.

The Government has indicated an intention to move to 80% retention of all Local Property Tax receipts within the local authority area where the Tax is raised. The establishment of Irish Water presents local government with significant organisational and financial challenges in 2014 and, in this context, it has been necessary to defer defining a certain proportion of the proceeds of the Local Property Tax to be retained in each local authority until 2015. This approach allows maximum flexibility in allocating Local Property Tax in 2014 with the priority to support those local authorities with weaker funding bases. The 2014 Local Government Fund General Purpose Grants will be announced in due course.

Under section 20 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, a local authority may, as a reserved function, resolve to vary the rate of the Local Property Tax within its functional area by a maximum of +/-15%. This power will be available to local authorities effective from 2015, as the relevant sections of the Act will come into operation on 1 July 2014.

Section 20 of the Act requires that, in varying the rate, a local authority must take account of its financial position, its income and expenditure, and of the financial effect of the varied rate on the economy of its functional area, including on those persons who will be liable to pay the Local Property Tax. Section 20 also provides that the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government may make regulations, including in respect of public consultation requirements prior to the variation of the rate of the Tax. I will give consideration to the making of such regulations in advance of the coming into operation of section 20 of the 2012 Act.

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

### **Place Names Changes**

187. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the procedure laid down in law in relation to the changing of the name of a street; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45408/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The law currently in force in relation to the changing of placenames is set out in the Local Government Act 1946, as amended. Section 78 of the 1946 Act provides that a local authority may, with the consent of the majority of qualified electors, change the name of a street. The

procedures for holding a plebiscite of qualified electors on a proposal to change a street name are set out in the Local Government (Changing of Place Names) Regulations 1956.

### **Housing Adaptation Grants Funding**

188. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the grants and initiatives available to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 10 to carry out necessary repairs. [45428/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** Under the terms of the suite of Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability, grants are available to assist households to have necessary repairs or improvement works carried out in order to facilitate the continued independent occupancy of their homes. Three separate schemes are available; the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme and the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme.

The Housing Aid for Older People Scheme provides grants of up to €10,500 to assist older people living in poor housing conditions to have necessary repairs or improvements carried out. Grant-eligible works include structural repairs or improvements, re-wiring, repairs to or replacement of windows and doors, provision of water supply and sanitary facilities, provision of heating, cleaning, painting etc.

The detailed administration of these schemes, including the assessment, approval and payment of grants to applicants under the various grant measures, is the responsibility of the relevant local authority, in this case, Dublin City Council.

### **Pyrite Remediation Programme Implementation**

189. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the way funding will be allocated from the €10 million proposed to deal with pyrite; the number of houses this fund will repair; the way he plans to deal with repair works which will not be covered by this fund; and his views on whether the construction and quarry industry should pay something towards these works. [45441/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** Initially, €10 million is being made available to my Department. Additional funding will be provided over the next two years, in the context of the further capital stimulus programme to be announced in early 2014, to deal with all dwellings deemed by the Pyrite Resolution Board to be in need of remediation.

The Pyrite Resolution Board (PRB), which I established earlier this year on an administrative basis and which will be put on a statutory footing when the necessary legislation is enacted, will oversee the implementation of the pyrite remediation scheme. The Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency will provide support to the Board in the delivery of the scheme. In so far as it is possible the Board will attempt to group affected dwellings together for the purposes of remediation programmes in order to achieve cost efficiencies through economies of scale. The Board's website ([www.pyriteboard.ie](http://www.pyriteboard.ie)) provides details of the proposed scheme, including eligibility criteria.

The initial phase of the remediation programme will deal with approximately 1,000 dwellings which, it is estimated, are in need of repair over a two year period. The post-2015 funding position will be dealt with having regard to the position at that time. While it is not possible, at this time, to estimate the number of dwellings that may require remediation post-2015, the considered view is that the numbers will not be as large as previously thought. There are a



number of positive indicators that support this view including the number of persons who have registered an interest with the PRB to receive an application form for the proposed scheme which now stands at 700 approximately.

I have always made it clear that I believed that the parties identified in the pyrite report as having a responsibility to provide solutions for affected homeowners should contribute to the resolution of the pyrite problem. Over the past eighteen months or so, I have tried to bring about a resolution of the problem involving those parties; unfortunately, this did not prove possible. However, the PRB will continue to engage with those parties to see what positive contribution they can make to the implementation of the remediation process.

### **Local Authority Housing Standards**

190. **Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Leitrim County Council is failing in its duty of care towards a disabled person (details supplied) in County Leitrim by failing to provide adequate heating facilities which will heat this person’s county council house in a manner which all medical advice prescribes as vital for the person’s survival; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45445/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** Under my Department’s Social Housing Investment Programme, local authorities are allocated funding each year in respect of a range of measures to improve the standard and overall quality of their social housing stock, including the regeneration of large social housing estates and flat complexes, estate-wide remedial works schemes, and funding for extensions and adaptations to meet the needs of tenants with a disability. Funding is also provided by my Department for a programme of works aimed at improving the overall standard and energy efficiency of the housing stock. This year I allocated just over €1.024 million to Leitrim County Council for spending on remedial and retrofitting works to the housing stock.

It is a matter for Leitrim County Council to decide on the appropriate form of heating for the property in question, having regard to the particular needs of the household involved.

### **Unfinished Housing Developments**

191. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide details of the €10 million fund introduced in budget 2014 for the resolution of issues in unfinished estates where no development bond exists; when he expects it to be functional; the way estates will be chosen to be part of the fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45461/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** I intend to develop a fund for the resolution of certain unfinished housing developments that have not been possible to resolve up to this point. The precise criteria under which the fund will be disbursed are currently being developed and will be finalised shortly. However, I envisage that the fund will operate in a carefully targeted and evidence led fashion to aid the resolution of occupied developments and in a way that will stimulate more significant investment by the owners of these developments, including generating additional employment through the resolution works.

### **Local Authority Housing Waiting Lists**

192. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if persons who voluntarily give up their family home as a consequence of mort-

gage arrears will be allowed onto their local authority housing list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45462/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** For a household to qualify for social housing support, a housing authority must carry out an assessment to establish whether the household is in need of housing and meet certain eligibility criteria, including income limits. As part of a concerted effort to deal with the issue of mortgage arrears, the Social Housing Assessment Regulations were amended in 2011 to provide that a household may be determined to be in need of housing if it has a mortgage that is deemed to be unsustainable under the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process.

### **Research and Development Funding**

193. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on the multiple independent procurements of research grant management software by agencies under the control of his Department and the total cost to the taxpayer of these systems; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the same supplier has supplied all but one of these systems and that all are compliant with EU Commission standards on the exchange of research information and are all capable of being integrated into one grant management system as has been done in the United States and the United Kingdom with the consequent savings that produces; the reason despite the existence of a national research platform report, no progress has been made on the implementation of an integrated national research platform; and if his attention has been drawn to the consequent diversion of resources in research bodies HEs and others to the management of these multiple systems and away from the proper good governance of public resources spent on research. [45570/13]

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

### **Registration of Title**

194. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average waiting time in the Land Registry from when an application for long possession is received to it being examined and dealt with; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45340/13]

195. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of dealings pending in the Land Registry in the various sections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45341/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 194 and 195 together.

Applications under Section 49 of the Registration of Title Act 1964 for registration of title acquired by possession are governed by a detailed and complex area of land law. The title to be shown to allow the registration to proceed must be based on “adverse possession” under the Statute of Limitations Act 1957. The circumstances of each case dictate the nature and the processing time of each individual application. Such applications require careful examination and the exercise of judgement of a high level.

The process involves the issue of notices to any party who may have an interest in the property in respect of which a Section 49 application has been lodged. There will routinely be ongoing and detailed correspondence between the Property Registration Authority and other parties. I am advised by the Authority that by their nature such applications, of necessity, may

take a long time to process and it is not therefore possible to give an average turnaround time for these types of cases. However, every effort is made to ensure that unnecessary delay is avoided. I understand that there is currently an arrear of 2,278 of these cases pending. Of these, 1,256 cases have been queried and cannot be proceeded with until a satisfactory response has been received. This leaves a net arrear of 1,022 cases. Where requests are made to expedite cases for particularly urgent reasons, the Authority will always endeavour to deal with such cases promptly.

The Property Registration Authority has a total number of 52,310 dealings on hand on 30 September 2013. This represents a very significant reduction of 76% compared with the highest level of dealings on hand which was recorded at 220,192 in March 2008. The Authority has since this time been engaged in an active arrear clearance programme which, it is envisaged, will be substantially completed in 2014. It is worthy of note that this reduction over a five year period has been brought about whilst the Authority has reduced its cost base by in excess of 33% and its staff levels by 25%.

Of the 52,310 dealings on hand at end September 2013, 12,587 are the subject of queries and cannot be proceeded with until a satisfactory reply has been received. The net arrear at 30 September 2013 was therefore 39,723 cases. A large element of this arrear is comprised of recently received cases and therefore represents the normal expected level of cases pending. During 2012, 75% of all applications for registration lodged that did not involve a change to the map, and were in order for registration, were completed with 10 working days. I am pleased to be able to inform the Deputy that the overall level of cases pending, at 52,310 is the lowest level of arrear of cases in the Land Registry since 1997.

### **Legislative Process**

196. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality asked if the provisions of the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 require the making of a ministerial order in order to commence; and if such an order has commenced. [45349/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 was commenced on 1 August 2012 (S.I. 281 of 2012).

### **Human Trafficking**

197. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda investigations into alleged human trafficking in each year from 2008 and to date in 2013; the number of alleged victims and the number who are children; the number of these investigations that have been completed; the number of alleged victims that have been granted a recovery and reflection period; the number of persons who have been granted a recovery and reflection period since its introduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45467/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008 came into effect on 7 June 2008 and an Anti-Human Trafficking Unit was also established in my Department in that year. Between 7 June and 31 December 2008 36 alleged victims of human trafficking were encountered by An Garda Síochána. No further breakdown of the 2008 figures is available.

On 1 January 2009, the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of my Department initiated a data collection strategy for the purpose of gaining a more in-depth understanding of the nature and extent of human trafficking in Ireland. To date, annual reports for 2009, 2010 and 2011 have been

published and are available from Ireland's dedicated anti-human trafficking website, [www.blueblindfold.gov.ie](http://www.blueblindfold.gov.ie), in addition to my Department's website.

For the purposes of clarity the information sought, as outlined in these annual reports, is below. It should be noted that the status of investigations at the end of each year relates to investigations initiated in that year and not to previous years investigations.

Year	Number of Garda Investigations	Number of Alleged Victims	Number of Alleged Victims who are Children	Number of Investigations Completed
2009	68	66	17	13
2010	69	78	19	34
2011	53	57	19	21
2012*	37	48	23	20
2013**	31	31	4	4

\* The Annual Report for Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland for 2012 is currently being finalised and will be published shortly on [www.blueblindfold.gov.ie](http://www.blueblindfold.gov.ie) hence the figures for 2012 are preliminary.

\*\* The figures for 2013 relate to the period from 1 January to 30 September 2013 and are also preliminary.

With regard to the recovery and reflection period, this has been granted to a total of 16 persons.

In An Garda Síochána Policing Plan for 2013, one of the eight stated priorities is to prevent and detect Human Trafficking. The Anti-Human Trafficking Unit in my Department and An Garda Síochána are continually vigilant for any emerging trends relating to human trafficking and they maintain regular dialogue on this matter with the relevant State agencies and non-governmental organisations working in this area.

### Visa Applications

198. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if and when favourable consideration will be given in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45478/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of my Department that the Visa application referred to by the Deputy was lodged at the Irish Visa Office in Abuja on 10 October 2013 and is currently being assessed. The long term or permanent nature of the intended stay in Ireland in this case means that it will require more in-depth consideration than straightforward short-stay visa applications. If further documentation and/or clarification of any matter related to the application is required, we will be in touch with the applicant at that time. Otherwise, the applicant will receive a letter informing him of the decision on his application in due course.

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

## Residency Permits

199. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected status of residency and-or eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45479/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The person concerned has current permission to remain in the State up to 21st December, 2013. The person concerned has applied for the renewal of this permission to remain. This application will be considered in the near future. Once a decision has been made in this application, this decision will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned. I am advised by the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that no application for a Certificate of Naturalisation has been received from the person concerned.

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

## Naturalisation Applications

200. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare whose stamp 4 was recently updated is eligible to apply for naturalisation on the basis of their status to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45480/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Officials in the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) inform me that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's question.

Section 15 of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation provided certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must:

- be of full age;
- be of good character;
- have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a total residence in the State amounting to four years;
- intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation;
- have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows—
  - (i) made a declaration, in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and
  - (ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

A foreign national who is married to, or is the Civil Partner of, an Irish citizen for at least three years may apply for naturalisation under section 15A of the Irish Naturalisation and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, where they have been continuously resident in the island of Ireland for the year immediately prior to the date of their application and for two out of the four years prior to that year. The marriage or civil partnership must be subsisting and recognised under Irish law. Section 15A provides that the Minister may waive certain conditions for naturalisation if satisfied that the applicant would suffer serious consequences in respect of his or her bodily integrity or liberty if not granted Irish citizenship.

Section 16 of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, waive some or all of the statutory conditions in certain circumstances i.e. where an applicant is of Irish descent or of Irish associations; where an applicant is a person who is a refugee within the meaning of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; or where an applicant is a Stateless person within the meaning of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Stateless persons. It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended.

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

### **Visa Applications**

201. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare qualifies for the necessary visa to enter this country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45481/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The visa application referred to by the Deputy has been created online but the supporting documents have not, to date, been lodged with the Embassy, which is necessary in order to have it processed. Once lodged, a Visa Officer will assess the application and supporting documents and make a determination about this case. Each visa application is considered on its individual merits, the onus resting with the applicant to satisfy the Visa Officer as to why the visa should be granted.

Comprehensive information on the visa application process is available on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service ([www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie)). It should be borne in mind however that the information contained on the website is intended to act as a guideline only. It does not limit the discretion of the Visa Officer in dealing with individual applications.

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

### **Family Reunification Applications**

202. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 258 of 15 October, No. 437 of 25 June 2013 and No. 154 of

19 September 2013, in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15, if the entire case will be reviewed in view of the circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45482/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I refer the Deputy to my previous answers to PQs No. 437 of 25 June, 2013 and 154 of 19 September 2013 and 258 of 15 October 2013.

I can confirm that officials from the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of my Department have reviewed this matter and it appears there are a number of discrepancies between the information provided in the details supplied by the Deputy and the information on file. I will arrange for a detailed letter to issue shortly to the Deputy in relation to this matter.

### **Residency Permits**

203. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 539 of 19 February 2013, the extent to which it has been found possible to review the entire basis on which the original decision to refuse residency status on the basis of conclusions reached in the course of that determination in the context of a report pursuant to section 13(1) of the Refugee Act 1996, as amended, was reached, with particular reference to conclusions reached under paragraphs 3.3(II) and (III) in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45483/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The decision referred to by the Deputy was the subject of an appeal and subsequent recommendation by the appellate body which upheld the original decision. Therefore the question of a further review as suggested by the Deputy does not arise.

### **Legal Aid Eligibility**

204. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the criteria to qualify for free legal aid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45511/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I wish to inform the Deputy that the detailed information requested is available on my Department's website at [http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Courts\\_policy\\_and\\_Legal\\_services](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Courts_policy_and_Legal_services).

### **Departmental Expenditure**

205. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the expenditure adjustment that will be made within his Department in 2014; the full-year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45588/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The further expenditure adjustment for my Departments Vote - Vote 24 Justice and Equality - in 2014 will be almost €15.9 million. The full year impact of the expenditure measures will be in the region of €19.6 million with a proportion of the adjustment already reflected in the Revised Estimates for 2013. There are other smaller technical adjustments to reflect transfer of responsibility for certain services with other votes.

### **Defence Forces Medals**

206. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Defence following on from the plan in 2006 to issue replacement certificates to the families of the military veterans of 1916 and the War of Independence, his plans to issue replacement medals to the families of those service-

men prior to the celebration of the 100-year anniversary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45473/13]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The position is that my Department receives requests from time to time for the replacement of lost, stolen or destroyed medals awarded to veterans of the 1916 Rising and the War of Independence. In relation to such requests, it has been settled policy for many years that replacement medals were issued on a once-off only basis on receipt of a *bona-fide* request from the veteran to whom the original medals were awarded. This policy was adopted in the interest of preserving the intrinsic value of the medals and to strictly limit the number of medals issued in any particular case.

Although all of the veterans are now deceased, the rationale for restricting the issue of replacement medals is still valid. Apart from the intrinsic value of the medals, their monetary value on the open market is also a factor. Since 2006 the approach has been that where 1916 Rising/War of Independence medals had been lost, stolen or destroyed, official certificates (in both Irish and English) would be issued in such cases confirming that the relevant medal(s) was/were awarded to the named veteran. Where any such case arises, the relative of the veteran can complete an application form available from the Pensions Administration Section of the Department of Defence and, if in order, the relevant certificate/s will be issued.

I have no plans to change the current arrangements.

### Departmental Expenditure

207. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Defence the expenditure adjustment that will be made within his Department in 2014; the full-year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45583/13]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** As part of the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) process, my Department engaged in a systematic examination of all elements of Defence expenditure. Following engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the ceilings for expenditure within the Defence Sector were set out for the 2012-2014 period. These ceilings were based on a rigorous assessment of pay, non-pay and pension elements of the Defence Sector Votes (Defence and Army Pensions). The Current expenditure provision for the Defence Sector in 2014 is €890m.

This represents a reduction of €2m on the 2013 CRE ceiling, after adjustments, and follows on from significant reductions achieved over previous years. These reductions were achieved through a series of measures, which included a stabilisation of the strength of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) at 9,500, a re-organisation of the Defence Forces into a two Brigade structure and a rationalisation and consolidation of my Department's property portfolio. Achieving the required savings in 2014 will be a challenge; however, it is envisaged that cost containment and control measures across the Defence Vote, together with careful evaluation and management of Defence Forces procurement, will deliver current expenditure savings of €2m in 2014. As set out in the 2013 Expenditure Report the Capital Envelope for 2014 will be €8m. This is a reduction of €1m, which will be achieved through prioritisation of building works to improve accommodation and facilities for the Defence Forces.

I have been assured by the Chief of Staff that despite reductions in funding, the Defence Forces continue to have the capability to deliver on all roles assigned by Government.

### Horse Racing Industry Development

208. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the recent publication commissioned by the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders Association,



Analysis of the Economic Impact of the Irish Thoroughbred Industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45535/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I welcome the publication of an ‘Analysis of the Economic Impact of the Irish thoroughbred Industry, October 2013’. This detailed analysis of the thoroughbred industry, commissioned by the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders’ Association, is a very useful piece of research for anybody with an interest in the sector.

I am acutely aware of the importance of the thoroughbred sector to the Irish economy and its pre-eminent position on the world stage as a global leader in the bloodstock industry. Indeed next week, I will be travelling on a major trade mission to the Gulf States, and the promotion of the Irish thoroughbred sector will be a major feature of the visit. I note that the ITBA Report estimates the industry contributed €1.1bn in economic output and supported 14,000 jobs in 2012. The Report identifies challenges facing the industry and suggests a range of actions aimed at securing the future of the industry.

The ITBA Report raises the issue of the taxation of betting and possible changes to the rate of VAT to be charged on horses. Earlier this year, my colleague, the Minister for Finance, introduced the Betting (Amendment) Bill 2013 which is aimed at updating the system of taxation applying to the betting industry. The Minister for Finance will also address the issue of VAT on horses through the Finance Bill.

The ITBA Report also raises issues with regard to prize money and the importance of the establishment of overseas markets. Horse Racing Ireland (HRI), a commercial state body established under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act 2001 and representing key sectors of the thoroughbred industry, is responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the industry. Decisions regarding prize money fall within the remit of HRI. Irish Thoroughbred Marketing (ITM) is a subsidiary of HRI. It is funded by HRI and by the Irish bloodstock industry, including breeders, sales companies and stallion farms. ITM provides service and support to overseas visitors interested in the Irish thoroughbred racing and breeding industry. The principal focus of ITM is to generate inward investment and to increase export sales of Irish bloodstock.

Successive Governments have recognised the importance of the horse industry for our country, and have supported it through legislation and policy initiatives. Infrastructural supports are provided to the industry through various measures operated by my Department. This commitment to investment has enabled Ireland to develop into a world centre of excellence for horse racing and breeding. The Deputy is aware that of my personal commitment to this indigenous Irish industry. Since taking office I have taken an active interest in the industry and I commissioned an independent review of the industry in 2012. Officials in my Department are currently preparing legislative proposals aimed at giving effect to the recommendations contained in the Indecon report on the Irish Horse Racing Industry (2012) which I plan to bring before the Cabinet for approval as soon as possible.

### **Scéim Talmhaíochta**

209. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén uair a dhéanfar íocaíocht faoi Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste agus Scéim na hÍocaíochta Aonair do 2013 le feirmeoir i gContae na Gaillimhe (sonraí leis seo); cén fáth go bhfuil moill leis an íocaíocht seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [45337/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Rinneadh iarratas ar Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste/an Scéim Íocaíochta Aonair 2013 an 16

Bealtaine 2013 faoin uimhir thréada thuas. I ndiaidh don iarratas a bheith déanta, aistríodh an uimhir thréada sin chuig an duine ainmnithe ó ainm a mháthar.

Scríobh mo Roinn chuig an duine ainmnithe an 18 Meán Fómhair, ag cur comhairle air gur chóir dó féin agus dá mháthair foirm iarratais ar Aistriú Teidlíochta a chomhlánú chun socrú a dhéanamh teidlíochtaí na hÍocaíochta Aonair a bhí sealbhaithe in ainm a mháthar a aistriú chuig a ainm féin. Ina theannta sin, de réir mar a aistríodh an uimhir thréada chuig an duine ainmnithe tar éis dó iarratas ar an Scéim Íocaíochta Aonair a chur isteach, bhí gá le foirm bhreise trínar chomhaontaigh an duine ainmnithe leis na freagrachtaí uile a bhaineann leis an Scéim Íocaíochta Aonair. Tá na foirmeacha sin próiseáilte anois.

Déanfar an t-iarratas a phróiseáil tuilleadh d'fhonn an réamhíocaíocht faoin Scéim Íocaíochta Aonair 2013 a dhéanamh chomh luath agus is féidir. Rinneadh íocaíocht i ndáil le Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste 2013 an 21 Deireadh Fómhair 2013.

### **Forestry Grants**

210. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on an application for a forest road grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45383/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The application by the person named under the Forest Roads Scheme is with the Forestry Inspectorate for consideration and recommendation in relation to the project. This should be completed within the next few weeks and a decision on the application will be given as soon as possible thereafter.

### **Beef Genomics Scheme**

211. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine with regard to the new BGS scheme, in respect of which the cost of sampling is supposed to be set at €25, if this may be reduced to €15 in view of the fact that farm incomes have decreased so much in recent years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45415/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I announced the Beef Genomics Scheme (BGS) on 15 October in the context of Budget 2014. The operational details are currently being finalised.

Having regard to the overall level of benefit for farmers and the potential productivity gains accruing from participation in the scheme, I am confident that the cost of sampling for the BGS will be reasonable. As with all schemes, its operation will be kept under review once introduced.

### **Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals**

212. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made in respect of an appeal to the Ombudsman regarding a disadvantaged area scheme appeals committee decision on a stocking density derogation application by a person (details supplied) in County Cork for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45434/13]

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

chaired DAS Appeals Committee. However, the person named then submitted further information to my Department, following consideration of which allowed his derogation application to be accepted; he was notified accordingly by letter dated 16 July 2013. On foot of this decision, the application of the person named under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was immediately finalised with full payment issuing on 18 July 2013, directly to the nominated bank account.

The application of the person named under the 2013 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme has also been processed, with full payment having issued on 24 September 2013, again directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

### **Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments**

213. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in payment under the disadvantaged areas scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; when payment will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45438/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** With processing of the 2013 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application of the person named having recently been finalised, payment issued directly to the nominated bank account of the person named on 21 October 2013.

### **Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments**

214. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a REP scheme 4 payment will be made available to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45442/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The person named commenced REPS 4 in June 2008 and received payments for the first four years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. Arrangements are well advanced to issue payments in respect of 2013 and I expect that these payments will commence in November.

### **Forestry Premium Payments**

215. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which forestry premia are payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; the extent to which premium payments are now due or remain outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45493/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** While grant aid for establishment of plantations was available to landowners in 1989 when the person in question afforested his land under the Western Package Scheme, there was no scheme providing annual forestry premiums in place at that time. A scheme of compensatory allowances was available at the time as an adjunct to the Headage Payments scheme, i.e. it was payable as a top-up to farmers in receipt of headage payments. However, the person concerned was not a participant in the Headage scheme.

A scheme of forestry premiums for non-farmers only came into being for landowners who afforested their land after 1993. Therefore the person concerned does not qualify for any for-

estry premium payments on his land.

### **Horse Racing Industry Development**

216. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will give consideration to the points raised in correspondence (details supplied) from the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders Association; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45563/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I welcome the publication of an ‘Analysis of the Economic Impact of the Irish thoroughbred Industry, October 2013’. This detailed analysis of the thoroughbred industry, commissioned by the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders’ Association, is a very useful piece of research for anybody with an interest in the sector.

I am acutely aware of the importance of the thoroughbred sector to the Irish economy and its pre-eminent position on the world stage as a global leader in the bloodstock industry. Indeed next week, I will be travelling on a major trade mission to the Gulf States, and the promotion of the Irish thoroughbred sector will be a major feature of the visit. I note that the ITBA Report estimates the industry contributed €1.1bn in economic output and supported 14,000 jobs in 2012. The Report identifies challenges facing the industry and suggests a range of actions aimed at securing the future of the industry.

The ITBA Report raises the issue of the taxation of betting and possible changes to the rate of VAT to be charged on horses. Earlier this year, my colleague, the Minister for Finance, introduced the Betting (Amendment) Bill 2013 which is aimed at updating the system of taxation applying to the betting industry. The Minister for Finance will also address the issue of VAT on horses through the Finance Bill.

The ITBA Report also raises issues with regard to prize money and the importance of the establishment of overseas markets. Horse Racing Ireland (HRI), a commercial state body established under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act 2001 and representing key sectors of the thoroughbred industry, is responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the industry. Decisions regarding prize money fall within the remit of HRI. Irish Thoroughbred Marketing (ITM) is a subsidiary of HRI. It is funded by HRI and by the Irish bloodstock industry, including breeders, sales companies and stallion farms. ITM provides service and support to overseas visitors interested in the Irish thoroughbred racing and breeding industry. The principal focus of ITM is to generate inward investment and to increase export sales of Irish bloodstock.

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Officials in my Department are currently preparing legislative proposals aimed at giving effect to the recommendations contained in the Indecon report on the Irish Horse Racing Industry (2012) which I plan to bring before the Cabinet for approval as soon as possible.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

217. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the

expenditure adjustment that will be made within his Department in 2014; the full-year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45580/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Exchequer contribution to the Vote for the Department will amount to some €1,203 million in 2014, which is comprised of some €1,019.2 million in current expenditure and €183.7 million capital expenditure. While this represents a fall of €29.5m.in overall terms on the current budget in 2014 compared to 2013, it nevertheless reflects the reality of macro level budgetary constraints. It is also worth noting that some agriculture schemes are coming to the end of their natural life and separately, the Department continues to reduce the administrative cost of delivering its programmes for farmers and the agri-food sector as part of its reform programme.

Details of adjustments to the Department's current budget (excluding central pay policy developments) to comply with the 2014 expenditure ceiling are as follows:

Current budget 2014	€ m.
Current Budget 2013	1,048.7
- Savings from scheme closures (REPs, Early retirement, Suckler Cow)	37.6
- Reduction in animal health and market support areas	12.4
- Additional pay savings to be achieved over and above pay savings achieved through the Haddington Road Agreement	2.9
Subtotal	52.9
Increased funding for new measures (Beef Genomics Scheme)	(23.4)
Total saving	29.5
Current budget 2014	1,019.2

Capital Budget 2014	€ m.
Capital budget as set out in the 2013 Expenditure Report	168
Adjustments: forestry and Haulbowline remediation	15.7
Capital budget 2014	183.7

### Mental Health Services Provision

218. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Riordáin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if public health nursing and the child and adolescent mental health services will be included in the functions of the Child and Family Agency Bill 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45440/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Following a Government decision on the Heads of Bill in November last, work on the drafting of the legislation – the Child and Family Agency Bill – was advanced in conjunction with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. The Child and Family Agency Bill was published on Friday 12 July, 2013 and progressed to Committee Stage on 22nd October, 2013.

The establishment of the Child and Family Agency is central to the Government's reform programme in respect of child and family services. From its establishment the Agency will have service responsibility for:

- Child welfare and protection services currently operated by the HSE including family support and alternative care services;

- Child and family-related services for which the HSE currently has responsibility including pre-school inspections and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services;
- The Family Support Agency which currently operates as a separate body under the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and will be merged into the new Agency;
- The National Educational Welfare Board which also currently operates as a separate body under the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and will be merged into the new Agency;
- Community-based psychology services (this does not encompass psychologists operating within acute, disability, mental health or other specialist settings).

The Bill largely focuses on the technical task of bringing together the functions of the three “source” agencies (the HSE, the Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board).

The Task Force on the Child and Family Support Agency made recommendations on a range of other services relevant to children and families, including:

- public health nursing;
- speech and language therapy;
- child and adolescent mental health; and
- children’s detention.

The practical implications of the scale of organisational change already outlined in the Bill are such as to require that consideration of these wider recommendations and, should it be considered appropriate, their implementation take place according to a less immediate timescale. This will allow for more careful review and consideration in conjunction with relevant Departments, principally the Department of Health.

A joint protocol for inter-agency working between the HSE and the Child and Family Agency, when established, has been prepared following extensive dialogue between Children and Family Services, Primary Care, Disability Services and Mental Health Services. The protocol aims to ensure a consistent national approach to service delivery where two or more services are involved in the same case. The protocol provides for local collaboration across care groups at local practitioner level with a mechanism for escalation to Area level and beyond if required. The Department and the Child and Family Agency will continue to advance such a collaborative approach in conjunction with the Department of Health and the HSE.

### **Child Care Qualifications**

219. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will examine opening up internships in the quality control area for childcare especially for those with a level 8 BA early childhood care and education degree or similar; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45457/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** In responding to the Deputy I am taking quality control areas to mean both the HSE Early Years Inspectorate and the new quality support service to support childcare providers in improving the quality of their services which I announced in Budget 2014.

The purpose of an internship is to give graduates an opportunity to gain work experience in their chosen field. It is important to ensure that interns get quality placements in order for

them to benefit from the experience. While in principle, subject to budgetary limitations, there would be no difficulty in encouraging interns within both of the areas mentioned, this will have to wait in the case of the Inspectorate until the very radical reforms that are ongoing are completed, and in the case of the mentoring service, until it has been developed, established and bedded down. It is unlikely that either service will be in a position to take on interns during 2014, but the matter can be kept under review.

### **Child Abuse Issues**

220. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of reports to social work departments of which sexual abuse was a component in 2010, 2011, and 2012; the number that received therapeutic care from the Health Service Executive; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45520/13]

221. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason that while the Health Service Executive records 600 different metrics of childcare it does not record the number of children who disclose sexual abuse each year that receive therapeutic care from the HSE; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45521/13]

222. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason the Health Service Executive does not separately record the numbers of children making disclosures of sexual abuse; her plans to rectify same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45522/13]

223. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in the number of cases dealt with by social work departments where sexual abuse was a component, if those cases were assessed by a multi-disciplinary team; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45523/13]

224. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in the number of cases dealt with by social work departments where sexual abuse was a component was it recommended that a parent not be allowed to make any further disclosures of abuse to the Health Service Executive; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45524/13]

225. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide in tabular form the number of cases dealt with by social work departments in 2010, 2011 and 2012 where sexual abuse was a component, if it was alleged that the child was being abused by a parent, by a relative, by a neighbour, by a teacher, or by any category of persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45525/13]

226. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide in tabular form the number of cases dealt with by social work departments between 2005 and 2012 where sexual abuse was a component and a parent was the alleged abuser; if the Health Service Executive recommended that the parent be denied access to the child, be allowed supervised access or be allowed unsupervised access; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45526/13]

227. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in the number of cases dealt with by social work departments where sexual abuse was a component, if the Health Service Executive relied on the reports of psychologists not in the direct employment of the Health Service Executive when assessing those cases; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45527/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 220 to 227, inclusive, together.

The available information on reports of sexual abuse to social work departments was provided in my reply to the Deputy dated 16 October last. The number of reports in each of the years requested by the Deputy is set out below in Table 1.

*Table 1. No. of sexual abuse reports.*

Category	2010	2011	2012
Reported	2,692	3,326	Data not yet available

The compilation of significantly more detailed breakdowns of referral data, such as that requested by the Deputy, while desirable, must be considered in the context of the significant resources which would be required to be diverted from front line service to compile such data and the inherent complexity of child welfare and protection cases. In relation to resources, the focus of the HSE is necessarily on working directly with children and families and compiling such key national information as is required to monitor service delivery and inform policy at the highest level. The issue of complexity in child protection cases is an important consideration as referral statistics are compiled on basis of primary type of abuse at point of referral. It is common in confirmed cases of abuse for multiple types of abuse to emerge. Referral statistics only capture the primary cause for referrals. I would stress that the focus of Child Protection Services in all cases is risk assessment and service provision, including therapy, to individual children. In this regard, all of the information highlighted by the Deputy would be captured at individual child level on individual case files to inform the handling of the case.

The purpose of management information for Children and Family Services is to know how well it is performing against its aims and objectives. This is essential in developing strategies and policies to meet the Agency's aims; to identify what policies and processes work and why they work; to assist tactical and operational managers in comparing their performance against targets, other Areas and over time; to provide accountability externally to service users, the public, the Government and other external stakeholders.

Data collected by Children and Family Services is either in the form of Performance Measures which are items that are relatively unambiguously counted (e.g. number of children, their age, number of child protection plans), or Performance Indicators which are configurations of performance measures which demonstrate the direction of travel in relation to a desired objective (e.g. percentage of children in care with a written care plan, percentage of children in care who have had three or more placement moves in the last 12 months, percentage of initial assessments which took place within 21 days of a referral). Performance measures and Performance Indicators inform the measurement of progress against targets set in annual Service Plans.

The total set of Children and Family Services data metrics is regularly reviewed to ensure that total information needs are being met. Decisions in regard to the addition of new metrics are considered in the context of the purposes set out above. A review of the Performance Indicators and metrics is currently underway in HSE Children and Family Services with a view to focusing on outcomes rather than solely on activity. It is acknowledged that there is scope to improve the range of data currently collected. My Department is engaged with Children and Family services in relation to improving the range of data available at the policy level in the context of the establishment of the new Children and Family Agency and the implementation of the new National Child Care Information System. These discussions will have regard to the balance required to be struck between directly working with child and family, and the need to focus on key data that will support the management of services at all levels and inform policy development. The availability and use of meaningful and accurate management data informing



policy and legislative development will, in turn, drive the accuracy and timeliness of the data gathered. Further, the Children and Family Agency Bill sets out a framework for performance management which is designed to provide a context for the next evolution of performance monitoring in children and family services.

In regard to the Deputy's query relating to cases dealt with by social work departments where sexual abuse was a component the HSE has informed me that it would be an extremely unusual circumstance in which it would be recommended that a parent would not be allowed to make any further disclosures of abuse. In relation to cases dealt with by social work departments where sexual abuse was a component the reports of psychologists not in the direct employment of the Health Service Executive may be accessed in some circumstances in assessing those cases as follows:

In cases where a criminal investigation is being pursued and the credibility of the allegation was not established through the joint specialist interview with an Garda Síochána, a further assessment may be required to determine credibility and therapeutic needs following the joint interview. These assessments are provided by specialist Centres at St Louise's, St Claire's, the Waterford Community Child Centre at the Waterford Regional Hospital and the Family Centre at St Finbarr's Hospital Cork and by community based Children and Family Services staff.

In cases where a criminal investigation is not being pursued an assessment may be required to determine credibility and therapeutic needs these assessments are normally provided by specialist Centre's and by community based Children and Family Services staff. Psychologists based at St Louise's and St Clare's Centres are not in the direct employment of the HSE. There may also be some limited circumstances where the needs of an individual child will best be met through the services of a private practitioner psychologist.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

228. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the expenditure adjustment that will be made within her Department in 2014; the full-year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45581/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Estimate provision for my Department in 2014 will amount to €449 million which consists of €414 million in current expenditure and €35 million in capital expenditure. The allocation represents an increase in net expenditure of almost €15 million or 3% over the 2013 resource provision. This level of funding is especially significant when account is taken of the €9 million in savings which are built-in as a result of commitments made in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure 2012 – 2014. These savings are being achieved, to the greatest extent possible, through increased operating efficiencies and value for money to protect front line services.

I consider that my Department's Budget allocation for 2014 will enable the delivery of a significant level of public services, as well a number of new policy measures which include additional funding to support the programme of reform for child welfare and protection services that will be implemented by the new Child and Family Agency which is due to be established in January 2014; delivery of a Preschool Quality Agenda which seeks to support high standards through supporting the efforts of providers and their staff in delivering improved and more reliable quality; and to respond to concerns raised by parents; additional investment to address child poverty through the Area Based Childhood (ABC) programme - a joint initiative between my Department and Atlantic Philanthropies to improve outcomes for children in disadvantaged communities.

### **Water Quality Issues**

229. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the reason unlicensed industrial grade products like H<sub>2</sub>SiF<sub>6</sub>, hydrofluorosilicic acid, which is extremely toxic, are allowed, when such a product would not be sanctioned in drug form on the Irish market, where only pharmaceutical grade and licensed medicines are permitted for sale here and their intake strictly monitored as well as the dosage, which is not the case with artificial water fluoridation where intake is unknown and the dose in water is only used as a marker for levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45464/13]

244. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health the reason unlicensed industrial grade products like (H<sub>2</sub>SiF<sub>6</sub>) hydrofluorosilicic acid is added to the public drinking water supply, when such a product would not be sanctioned in drug form on the Irish Market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45421/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 229 and 244 together.

Fluoride may be added to public water supplies either in the form of hydrofluosilicic acid complying with the specification for that substance in Schedule 1 to the Fluoridation of Water Supplies Regulations 2007 (S.I. 42 of 2007), or in such other form as may be approved by the Minister for Health. The fluoride used in Ireland is sourced as a primary product; it is mined directly from a raw material source, the mineral fluorospar as calcium fluoride (CaF<sub>2</sub>). It then goes through a purification process to conform to tightly controlled specifications under the requirements of CEN Standard I.S.EN 12175:2001 to produce Hydrofluosilicic Acid (HFSA), specifically used as the mineral additive, fluoride, to water.

The Irish Medicines Board (IMB) is the competent authority for the licensing of human and veterinary medicines and medical devices in Ireland. The IMB considers that neither drinking water itself nor the fluoride added to drinking water in the form of fluoride salts or silica fluoride, as defined in the Health (Fluoridation of Water Supplies) Act 1960, should be categorised as medicinal products requiring marketing authorisations. It considers that the fluoridation of drinking water should be seen as a measure consistent with general public health management. The principles for approval of use of HFSA in treatment of water intended for human consumption are no different to those relating to other chemicals used in drinking water treatment, such as disinfectants and coagulants. No water treatment chemical is intended for direct human consumption. The level of fluoride in drinking water in Ireland has been set at between 0.6-0.8 parts per million. This level of fluoride is deemed optimal for protecting the oral health of all age groups.

The Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health, established in 2004, continuously 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 protects the oral health of the population. These views are supported by reputable international agencies and valid scientific articles and reviews. The effects of fluoridation on health and related matters are kept under constant review.

### **Tobacco Control Measures**

230. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 104 of 15 October 2013, regarding his Department's participation in the high-level implementation group to oversee the project plan for the introduction of plain packaging of

tobacco products and where his Department outlined to the group from an intellectual property perspective the potential issues arising in relation to domestic and international law, the issues that he referred to in his response; if they are significant in terms of framing the proposed legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45559/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As the Deputy is aware, Government approval was received on 28th May 2013 to begin the process of introducing standardised packaging of tobacco products in Ireland. An interdepartmental Steering Group on Standardised Packaging has been established to oversee the implementation of a project plan in the area. The work of the Steering Group is part of the deliberative process informing the drafting of heads of a Bill to regulate the retail packaging of tobacco products in Ireland. As such, it would not be appropriate for me to give details of any discussions held by the Group at this time.

### **Medical Card Applications**

231. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45336/13]

**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.

### **Home Help Service Provision**

232. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in Dublin 12 will be awarded home help. [45345/13]

**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.

### **Drugs Payment Scheme Coverage**

233. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason there was an issue in the payment to pharmacies by the drugs payment scheme for Nadolol for a number of months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45346/13]

234. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if there is a problem with the supply of the drug Nadolol here; and, if so, the measures the Health Service Executive is taking to prevent a future supply problem; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45347/13]

235. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a guarantee to the sufferers of Long QT syndrome who depend on Nadolol that no further issues will arise for them in securing the drug under the drugs payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45348/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 233 to 235, inclusive, together.

Nadolol was being reimbursed by the HSE at a price of €79.45. The supplier informed the HSE some months ago that it could not continue to supply at that price. The HSE is aware that

the price currently offered to community pharmacies is in the region of €259. Where there is a sudden increase in price sought under the Drug Payment Scheme, there is an onus on the HSE to establish the reasonableness and accuracy of the claim. While this may result in a delay, the HSE makes every effort to expedite the process.

It is not possible to guarantee that there will be no supply issues in relation to any individual drug; however the HSE strives to ensure continuity of supply.

### **Medical Card Eligibility**

236. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the reason married couples are being discriminated against with the new ceiling for medical cards for the over 70s (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45359/13]

248. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the medical card income limit for the over 70s in budget 2014; the reason the income limit is not €1,000 for a couple; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45436/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 236 and 248 together.

The Government recognises that the living costs of an individual living alone are more than half the living costs of a couple living together. This is acknowledged through the provision of the Living Alone Allowance and differential income limits for medical cards for persons aged under 70 years between individuals and couples.

In that context, the over-70s income limit for a single person has been reduced proportionately less than the income limit for a couple.

### **Dental Services Provision**

237. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when orthodontic treatment will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45362/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The HSE provides orthodontic treatment to patients based on their level of clinical need. An individual's access to orthodontic treatment is determined against a set of clinical guidelines and priority is given to patients with greatest needs. The HSE has been asked to examine the specific query raised by the Deputy and to reply to him as soon as possible.

### **Health Services Issues**

238. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding residential care in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15. [45369/13]

**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.

### **Universal Health Insurance Provision**

239. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if the prospect of universal health insurance is no longer feasible in view of the fact that the population with health insurance fell from 52% to 45% in recent years, with the real expectation that it will fall to 40%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45371/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I do not believe that the relatively modest declines in private health insurance coverage in recent years will make universal health insurance (UHI) unfeasible. UHI will cover the total population, not just those who can afford to pay. Under UHI, everyone will be insured and will have equal access to a standard package of primary and acute hospital services, including acute mental health services. An Insurance Fund will subsidise or pay insurance premiums for those who qualify for a subsidy. The Programme for Government commits that everybody will have a choice of insurer. The Department is currently preparing a *White Paper on Universal Health Insurance* which will provide more detail on the model of UHI for Ireland. Intensive work is proceeding with a view to publishing the White Paper by the end of the year.

Intensive work is also underway in relation to the key building blocks that will bring benefits and drive efficiencies in advance of and pave the way for the introduction of Universal Health Insurance. These include:

- the strengthening of primary care services to deliver universal GP care without fees for the entire population. The Government has announced, as part of Budget 2014, that it will commence the roll-out of a universal GP service by providing all children aged 5 and under with access to a GP service without fees;
- the work of the Special Delivery Unit in tackling waiting times;
- the reorganisation of public hospitals into more efficient and accountable hospital groups that will deliver improved outcomes for patients. That reorganisation was informed by two expert reports, namely, *The Establishment of Hospital Groups as a Transition to Independent Hospital Trusts* and *The Framework for Development—Securing the Future of Smaller Hospitals*, which were published on 14th May 2013;
- the introduction earlier this year of a new scheme of risk equalisation for the private health insurance market;
- the delivery of a ‘Money Follows the Patient’ policy which will commence in shadow form shortly and will be phased in to adjust hospital budgets from January 2014;
- the approval of national healthcare standards and ongoing work in relation to supporting licensing legislation.

The reform programme is a major undertaking that requires careful planning and sequencing over a number of years. The Government will consult widely, as part of the reform implementation process.

### **Health Insurance Cover**

240. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he has increased the public health budget to allow for the 75,000 persons that will move across to the public system as they cancel their health insurance policies this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45372/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The number of people insured continues to decline since its peak at almost 2.3 million at the end of 2008. At the end of June 2013, 2.06 million people held private health insurance, which represents a reduction of 64,000 from end June 2012. The reduction in numbers has occurred in all age groups, but particularly in the 18 to 29 age group and it is unlikely that people in this age category will have a severe impact on public health services. Conversely, the loss of younger insured adults from the private health insurance market has a strong impact on inter-generational solidarity which underpins our com-

munity rated health insurance market.

The gross current budget for the Health Sector for 2014 is €13,263m, a reduction of €361m on the 2013 allocation of €13,624m. A total of €666m in health savings measures have been identified in the context of the Health Estimates to meet the overall health expenditure ceiling reduction of €361m, Programme for Government commitments of €57m, and health service pressures of €248m.

The level of health services to be delivered within the available funding will be set out in the Health Service Executive's 2014 National Service Plan. Given the demands on the health service, in particular from demographic and other service pressures, it is clear that the preparation of the 2014 Service Plan will be a challenging exercise. It remains a priority of my Department and the HSE to focus on improving the way services are organised and delivered, and to reduce costs so as to minimise any negative effect on service provision.

### **Medical Card Data**

241. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical cards and general practitioner visit cards that have issued to persons in County Cork each year from 1999 to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45384/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** The information sought by the Deputy is not readily available. However, I have asked the Health Service Executive to supply this information to me and I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Health Services Provision**

242. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to a parliamentary question tabled on 17 October 2013 the number of children and the number of visits children had to the urologist in St. George's per year over the past five years; if a lower starting salary and the fact that the position is split between Crumlin and Temple Street has acted as a barrier to persons applying for the urologist position. [45405/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Equipment**

243. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason a faulty fire alert system in St. Finan's Hospital in Killarney has resulted in 62 call-outs since the start of last year because the system is frequently tripping; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45409/13]

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

*Question No. 244 answered with Question No. 229.*

### **Cochlear Implants**

245. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that funding for bilateral cochlear implants is allocated in the 2014 Health Service Executive service plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45422/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Beaumont Hospital is the centre for delivering Ireland's national cochlear implant programme, with surgical provision for patients under six years being carried out in the Children's University Hospital Temple Street. Since the programme commenced in 1995, over 700 patients have received cochlear implants. Beaumont Hospital carried out ninety cochlear implants in 2012 (42 children and 48 adults). The routine practice in Ireland, so far, has been to implant one side only.

It is now considered best practice worldwide that children should have the option of bilateral implants, and this is reflected in the recommendation of the report of the National Review of Audiology Services which was carried out by the HSE in 2009. The aim of that Review was to examine the services provided to children and adults nationwide, and to formulate a national plan for the services. Its report was published by the HSE in 2011 and provides the blueprint for the planning, development and delivery of HSE audiology services. The Report recommended continued ring-fenced support for the cochlear implant programme but at levels which allow for simultaneous bilateral implantation for children.

The HSE has developed a proposal, in liaison with Beaumont Hospital, to introduce a bilateral cochlear implant programme in Ireland. In doing so, the HSE has engaged with many stakeholders. Introduction of bilateral cochlear implantation is expected to involve additional staff, equipment and capital works. The resources required will be considered in the context of the Health Estimate for 2014, announced on 15 October last, and the development of the HSE's National Service Plan 2014.

### **Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage**

246. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a drug (details provided) will be made available under the long-term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45429/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** Enbrel is licensed for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. However, rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis are not conditions covered by the Long Term Illness Scheme.

### **Prescription Charges**

247. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health if, in view of the hardship and distress that the announced increase in prescription charges for medical card holders is causing, if the monthly charge will be capped at €10; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45433/13]

265. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the revenue raised from the prescription charge for each of the years since its introduction [45506/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 247 and 265 together.

As announced in Budget 2014, it has become necessary to increase the prescription charge due to the very difficult and challenging economic environment which requires the Government to achieve additional savings in health expenditure with €666 million of savings targeted in 2014. The increase in prescription charges will account for €43 million of this target. The Government is committed to achieving these savings while protecting front line services to the most vulnerable to the greatest extent possible.

Medical card holders will be required to pay a €2.50 charge per item for medicines and other prescription items supplied to them by community pharmacists, subject to a cap of €25 per

month for each person or family. Prescription charges do not apply to children in the care of the HSE or to methadone supplied to patients participating in the Methadone Treatment Scheme. These new rates will be effective from 1 December 2013.

The revenue raised from the prescription charge for each of the years since its introduction is as follows:

2010 - €4.167 million

2011 - €27.604 million

2012 - €29.70 million

*Question No. 248 answered with Question No. 236.*

### **Health Services Provision**

249. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Health his plans to administer warfarin from local health clinics in view of the cost and inconvenience to persons having to travel to and from hospitals. [45439/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Warfarin is a medication to prevent at risk patients developing cardiovascular events due to blood clotting. In most cases, warfarin is prescribed to patients in the first instance in a hospital setting. Thereafter, the international normalized ratio (INR), i.e. taking of blood samples in order to titrate patients' warfarin dosages, is monitored on an ongoing basis in either a hospital setting or in general practice.

The HSE is currently considering plans to move much of the INR activity from hospitals to primary care settings, where appropriate and subject to appropriate clinical governance arrangements being in place.

### **Suicide Prevention**

250. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health when the new suicide awareness officer will be appointed for County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45446/13]

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

### **Health Services Provision**

251. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a CPAP machine will be provided under the long-term illness scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if they are entitled to a medical card. [45447/13]

**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.

### **Health Services Issues**

252. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Health if funding to the national



service users executive, under the auspices of the national advocacy unit, has ceased and, if so, the reason for same; when the Health Service Executive review of the NSUE will be published; and, in relation to the development of consumer panels, the role of the HSE to support such panels associated with the NSUE, and if HSE staff have been advised not to attend such panels to the detriment of their work. [45449/13]

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

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

253. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Health if he or his Department have had any discussions with the Health Service Executive regarding the waiting times for children who need orthodontic treatment in Navan hospital, County Meath; if they have discussed any possible solutions to this problem; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45454/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** The Department of Health and the HSE are currently involved in discussions about this issue. A number of options are being considered. The HSE has also commissioned an independent review of orthodontic services. The outcome of this review, which is near completion, will give guidance as to what changes will be desirable to provide the best possible model of care delivery, given the current resources available and future demand for services.

### **Medical Card Drugs**

254. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide the list of items for which persons with medical cards will no longer be reimbursed as a result of budget 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45458/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** Provision is made for €10 million savings arising from the removal of products from the Reimbursement List. The HSE will now consider products for review in compliance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

### **Medical Card Eligibility**

255. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 280 of 26 September 2013, wherein it was indicated that a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare was withdrawn on the basis of excessive income and where the spouse's income was recorded at €456 per week instead of the actual figure of €258 per week, if the refusal in this case will be reviewed as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45490/13]

**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 Eligibility**

256. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card or long-term illness card will be awarded in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45491/13]

**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.

## **Disability Services Programme Review**

257. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the procedures to be followed to facilitate access to funding for persons with special needs under the proposed individualisation process; if structures have been put in place in accordance with policy; if the concept of individualisation is applicable or likely to so become in the short and medium term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45492/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** The move towards a model of funding which is linked to individual need is encompassed by the recommendations in the Value for Money (VFM) and Policy Review of Disability Services which I published last year. The Department of Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE) will pursue the issue of individualised budgeting in the context of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the VFM Review. A Steering Group which is representative of the major stakeholders has been set up to oversee the VFM implementation process and the first meeting of this Group was held in September.

Individualised budgeting is an umbrella term that may take many forms, ranging from a method of determining resource allocation to agencies based on assessed client need and actual costs, to a 'money follows the client' model, a brokerage system or a personal budget model administered by the individual service user. The essence of individualised budgeting is that the individual is given more choice and control over how the money allocated to meet their needs is utilised. This might or might not involve the transfer of actual funds to the individual. This approach must be underpinned by a standardised needs assessment to ensure fairness and transparency in the way in which funding is allocated. The move towards an individualised budgeting framework raises legal and practical issues, and will require careful consideration and possibly legislation.

The priority is to further improve current services, while expediting the analysis of the benefits to be gained from newer models of individualised supports through demonstration projects which will be evaluated for wider applicability. The balance and emphasis will shift firmly and comprehensively towards these new models of individualised supports once sufficient analysis of the benefits is carried out in the Irish context and adequate financial management, resource allocation and governance structures are in place to ensure their long-term viability.

Demonstration projects are already underway to examine the practical aspects of introducing this major change and to establish the costs and benefits. The projects will be analysed in

2014 to determine their wider applicability, clarify the issues which must be resolved before the projects can be scaled up, and identify the best way forward. Work is also underway to identify a standardised national assessment tool and resource allocation model which will form the basis of the individualised budgeting framework. Other essential elements of the new model of service delivery and funding, such as a commissioning strategy and an outcome measurement framework, are also in development.

### **Health Services Staff Data**

258. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number of doctors currently registered here; if any studies or assessments have been carried out to ascertain the number of doctors required in the State to deal with any capacity constraints that may arise. [45495/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As of 23rd October 2013, 18,448 doctors retained registration with the Medical Council. Under the provisions of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 it is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive (HSE), in co-operation with the medical training bodies and after consultation with the Higher Education Authority, to undertake appropriate medical workforce planning for the purpose of meeting specialist medical staffing and training needs of the health service on an ongoing basis, and to assess on an annual basis the number of intern training posts and the number and type of specialist medical training posts required by the health service. In this context, the Deputy's question has been referred to the Executive for direct reply.

### **Health Services Expenditure**

259. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health in view of recent statistics from the OECD which indicate that only 67% of health spending in the State is funded by Government revenues, if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the proportion of the remaining 33% that is provided by out-of-pocket payments by persons and the proportion by private health insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45499/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** For the most recent year available, 2011, OECD data on total health expenditure showed that 33% of expenditure was funded by private sources. Private insurance expenditure accounted for 11.9% of total health expenditure while out-of-pocket payments accounted for 18.1%. Corporations, other than health insurance, made up the remaining 3%.

### **Health Services Reform**

260. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost to the State of the introduction of free general practitioner care for all citizens. [45501/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** The Government is committed to introducing, on a phased basis, a universal GP service within its term of office, as set out in the Programme for Government and the Future Health strategy framework. As announced in the Budget, it has been decided to commence the roll-out of a universal GP service by providing all children aged 5 and under with access to a GP service without fees. This will mean that almost half of the population will have access to GP services without fees. The Government is providing new, additional funding of €37 million to meet the cost of this measure.

The introduction of a universal GP service constitutes a fundamental element in the Government's health reform programme. The current Government is the first in the history of the State to have committed itself to implementing a universal GP service for the entire population. A well functioning health system should provide equal access to healthcare for its patients on

the basis of health needs, rather than ability to pay. The principles of universality and equity of access mean that all residents in Ireland should be entitled to access a GP services that is free at the point of use. The additional cost of providing access to GP services without fees for the entire population, based on current rates of payments to GPs, is estimated to be between €330 million and €365 million.

### **Health Services Expenditure**

261. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost to the State of providing free prescriptions for all citizens. [45502/13]

263. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the current cost to the State of providing free general practitioner care for those with medical cards. [45504/13]

264. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the current cost to the State of providing prescriptions for those with medical cards. [45505/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 261, 263 and 264 together.

In 2012 payments to GPs for services provided to medical card and GP visit cardholders was approximately €440 million. The cost of drugs and medicines is estimated at just over €1.3 billion. It is not possible to estimate the cost of providing free drugs and medicines to all citizens.

### **Health Services Expenditure**

262. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost to the State of providing free acute hospital care for all citizens. [45503/13]

266. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the current spending on acute hospital services. [45507/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 262 and 266 together.

Under the Health Acts all persons (not just citizens) ordinarily resident in the State are entitled to avail of acute hospital services subject to limited charges e.g. €75 per night in a public hospital bed subject to a maximum payment of €750 in any 12 month period. The HSE acute hospital allocation for 2013, as set out in the recently published HSE monthly performance report, is €3.704bn.

*Questions Nos. 263 and 264 answered with Question No. 261.*

*Question No. 265 answered with Question No. 247.*

*Question No. 266 answered with Question No. 262.*

### **Medical Card Eligibility**

267. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider basing the income threshold for the over 70s medical card on net income as opposed to gross income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45518/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** Under the arrangements effected by the Health Act 2008, a much simplified system of assessment for eligibility was introduced in respect of persons aged 70 or over, based on the significantly higher gross income thresholds rather than the standard net income limits. Under the net income assessment system, allowance may be made for rent/mortgage, travel to work and child care costs. However, these would not be a factor for the vast majority of older people.

### **Alcohol Sales Legislation**

268. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health the present position regarding legislation to tackle the below-cost selling of alcohol; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45531/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The Government has approved an extensive package of measures to deal with alcohol misuse, on foot of the recommendations in the National Substance Misuse Strategy Steering Group Report. Legislation is being developed to provide for, inter alia, a minimum unit price for alcohol. This is a mechanism of imposing a statutory floor in price levels per gram of alcohol that must be legally observed by retailers in both the on and off trade sector. As part of our work, a health impact assessment, in conjunction with Northern Ireland, has been commissioned as part of the process of developing a legislative basis for minimum unit pricing. The assessment will study the impact of different minimum prices on a range of areas such as health, crime and likely economic impact.

The provision of such a price measure for alcohol - as opposed to fiscal measures - is aimed chiefly at preventing the sale of alcohol at very cheap prices. A minimum pricing regime is a proportional policy exigency that allows the State to engage another parameter to deal with managing the supply of alcohol for the purpose of preventing its misuse. It is a policy aimed at those who drink in a harmful and hazardous manner.

### **Research and Development Funding**

269. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Health his views on the multiple independent procurements of research grant management software by agencies under the control of his Department and the total cost to the taxpayer of these systems; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the same supplier has supplied all but one of these systems and that all are compliant with EU Commission standards on the exchange of research information and are all capable of being integrated into one grant management system, as has been done in the US and the UK, with the consequent savings that produces; the reason despite the existence of a national research platform report, no progress has been made on the implementation of an integrated national research platform; and if his attention has been drawn to the consequent diversion of resources in research bodies HEs and others to the management of these multiple systems and away from the proper good governance of public resources spent on research. [45568/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The Report on a National Research Platform to which the Deputy refers was published in 2008. This report was aimed at generating a platform to house and view/search details of those researchers and projects funded by the various State agencies (to avoid having to search in each website). The only agency under the aegis of my Department to which the Deputy's question refers is the Health Research Board (HRB).

The HRB manages a portfolio of health research awards with a value exceeding €150 million. The HRB submitted a business case to my Department seeking approval to proceed with

the procurement of a new grant management solution to replace two legacy systems which were not fit for purpose (issues pertaining to stability, high cost of maintenance and poor usability). The HRB received final approval of €100,000 for this system in November 2011. To date €45,000 has been spent on the project with a further €55,000 to be spent over the next three to four years.

As part of the process of seeking approval for a new Grant Management system, the HRB engaged extensively with other agencies and public bodies to explore collaboration options. This included a series of meetings with Science Foundation Ireland and Enterprise Ireland. In each of these cases it did not prove possible to align the individual business requirements with the procurement cycle in such a way as to allow the HRB to proceed within the time frame it needed to migrate from its legacy platform.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

270. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the expenditure adjustment that will be made within his Department in 2014; the full-year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45586/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The gross current budget for the Health Sector for 2014 is €13,263m, a reduction of €361m on the 2013 allocation of €13,624m. This comprises a reduction of €20m for the Department of Health (Vote 38) and a reduction of €341m for the HSE (Vote 39).

A total of €666m in health savings measures have been identified in the context of the Health Estimates to meet the overall health expenditure ceiling reduction of €361m, Programme for Government commitments of €57m, and health service pressures of €248m. Some of the savings measures represent the full year effect of initiatives taken in 2013, while others are new savings targets for 2014. The level of health services to be delivered within the available funding will be set out in the Health Service Executive's 2014 National Service Plan.

Challenging savings targets have been set in relation to medical card probity and pay savings to be achieved under the Haddington Road Agreement. Full-year savings for some of the measures outlined in the Expenditure Report 2014, such as Generic Substitution and Reference Pricing; GP Visit Card instead of retention of full medical card on return to work; and the Nurse Bank, are more difficult to quantify at this stage for reasons of timing and the nature of the savings involved. It should be noted that a number of the measures I have taken here are new initiatives, and for this reason I believe that we should take account of the learning from them as we implement change and reform our health system.

At my request, the Government has decided that the Secretaries General of the Departments of Health, Public Expenditure and Reform and the Taoiseach will engage in an intensive exercise to ensure verification and implementation of the proposed savings in the Health Vote.

### **Rail Services**

271. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has held any discussions with Iarnród Éireann regarding the substantial problems that commuters have been experiencing with reduced carriage services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45373/13]

272. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether it would be justified for Iarnród Éireann to increase its fares by up to 10.3%, as has been apparently approved by the National Transport Authority, in view of the poor service that commuters have been subjected to as a result of fewer carriages being made available at peak times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45376/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 271 and 272 together.

I refer the Deputy to my reply to the Topical Issue on this matter on Tuesday 22nd October. I also met with the Chief Executive of Irish Rail yesterday and raised the concern of Deputies with regard to the issue of reduction of the number of Dart carriages at certain times. In some cases, Irish Rail have already responded and re-introduced larger carriages to accommodate passengers. He agreed to continual monitoring of carriage levels to ensure they match passenger demand.

Public transport fares are a matter for the various operating companies in conjunction with the National Transport Authority, which has responsibility for regulating the maximum fare on public service routes. I have forwarded the Deputy's questions to both the NTA and Irish Rail for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Road Improvement Schemes**

273. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when funding will be provided by the National Transport Authority for improvement works at a roundabout (details supplied) in Dublin 13. [45417/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Sustainable Transport Measures Grants Programme in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), which includes the project in question, comes under the remit of the National Transport Authority (NTA). This Programme facilitates investment in the various Quality Bus Corridor, cycling/walking, safety and traffic management projects throughout the seven local authorities in the GDA region.

Noting this 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 10 working days.

### **Taxi Regulations**

274. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the total sum that has been spent since 2008, by the former Commission for Taxi Regulation and now the National Transport Authority, to support the development and provision of infrastructure to facilitate and support the operation of small public service vehicles in all local authority areas; if he will provide a breakdown of the total amount spent on all or any projects; and the number of local authorities that applied for financial assistance, and the number that were refused. [45444/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** I gave an answer to the Deputy's question on 26th of September. Under Sections 11 and 50 of the Taxi Regulation Act, 2003, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has powers to give financial assistance to Local Authorities for the development of infrastructure for the small

public service vehicles services. I indicated that the question would be referred to the NTA for a more detailed reply.

I regret that on this occasion the NTA did not receive the information request from my Office. However, this has now been rectified and the NTA has confirmed that it will expedite the matter and forward the relevant information to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Aviation Industry Regulations**

275. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the Irish Aviation Authority has noted that an advisory panel to the United States Federal Aviation Administration has recommended allowing personal electronics to be used throughout flights, including during take-off and landing; if such discussions have been held regarding a similar arrangement within the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45456/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The subject matter of this question, i.e. the possible use of personal electronics during flights within the European Union, is an operational aviation safety issue and, as such, is a matter for the Irish Aviation Authority. I have referred the question to them for direct reply and I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a reply has not been received within 10 working days.

### **Road Signage**

276. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request Kerry County Council to re-erect a directional sign at Kilcummin Cross indicating the scenic route to Cloghane and Brandon as tourists and passers-by are currently bypassing this area; if he will take into consideration that this is a huge loss to the local community, businesses, taxpayers and rate payers in these difficult economic times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45465/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads, including bridges, in its area, is a statutory function of each road authority in accordance with the provisions of section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on such roads or bridges are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the Council.

Under the Traffic Acts the Council is the authority responsible for the provision of all traffic signs within its functional area. The Traffic Signs Manual provides details of the traffic signs which may be used on roads in Ireland, including their layout and symbols, the circumstances in which each sign may be used and rules for positioning them. This Manual was updated in November 2010 replacing the 1996 edition.

Within the framework of the Traffic Signs Manual it is a matter for the Road Authority to determine the extent of signage on its local and regional roads. When undertaking this function it is important for the Road Authority to have regard to road safety and to provide clear and consistent signage. This will assist in avoiding roadside 'clutter' and reduces the potential for distracting drivers by providing too much or inconsistent information.



## Driving Licence Issues

277. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that persons who were born in the North of Ireland are now on driving licences being designated as Northern Irish; if he will explain this practice; if he will work to ensure the licensing process respects the divergence of opinion among Irish persons on nationality North and South (details supplied). [45466/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** EU Directive 126/2006 requires Member States to introduce a Plastic Card Licence with effect from January 2013. Under the provisions of the Directive, the information to be contained on the face of the new form of licence is uniform across Member States. The new licence contains a field that provides 'Date and Place of Birth' of the licence holder. There is no requirement on the licence for an entry describing a driver's nationality.

## Cycling Facilities

278. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he intends to provide money to CIÉ to secure the disused railway line from Tralee, County Kerry, to the Kerry border for use as a greenway in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45468/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I refer the Deputy to my reply to his Parliamentary Question No. 278 of 4th July 2013 and the subsequent letter to him from the CIÉ Group Secretary of 19th July 2013. The position regarding ownership of the line remains unchanged.

Both my Department and CIÉ are fully supportive of the development of greenways along disused rail lines and recognise the benefits of these initiatives to the local economy through tourism related opportunities as well as the benefits to the community from a transport and recreational perspective. My Department recently announced the provision of €6.5 million to the Local Authority National Cycle Network (NCN) Funding Programme to fund the development of such infrastructure. As part of the competitive process for the funding, priority will be given to cycleway projects that are off road and have the potential to be world class trip attractors in their own right.

It will be a matter for local authorities to identify those projects that are most closely aligned with the criteria set out in the funding call and to work with interested parties and key stakeholders such as CIÉ to secure any necessary lands or infrastructure along the proposed routes.

## Vehicle Registration Issues

279. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the average turnaround time for the re-registration of vehicles with the vehicle registration unit in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45509/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Notifications relating to the re-registration of vehicles with new owner names are received in the offices of my Department in Shannon in two forms. Paper based notices, principally through completion of the relevant portion of the Vehicle Registration Certificates (VRC), account for 60% of overall transactions while online notifications by motor dealers through [www.motortrans.ie](http://www.motortrans.ie) account

for 40%. Returns in respect of 2013 to date indicate that the VRC based notifications are processed within 3 working days of being received in the office while online notices are processed within 1 day.

The law requires that the seller must notify the change of ownership. It is expected that some 850,000 ownership changes will be processed in my Department in 2013.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

280. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the expenditure adjustment that will be made within his Department in 2014; the full-year impact of expenditure measures that will be taken in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45591/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** My Department's gross allocation for 2014 will be €1.58 billion. This represents a 5% reduction on the 2013 allocation. While my capital funding remains similar to 2013 levels, this adjustment includes a €75m reduction on the current expenditure side of my Department's Vote, in line with commitments made under the Comprehensive Expenditure Review. The precise distribution and implications of these cuts will be confirmed in Revised Estimates later in the year.

With the budget available to me, the key objectives in the transport sector next year are:

- to continue development of the LUAS Cross-City project;
- to sustain investment in heavy rail to maintain safety levels across the network;
- to invest further in enhancing the quality of public transport through, for example, the renewal of bus fleet for Bus Eireann and Dublin Bus PSO routes;
- to build on our investment in public transport, cycling and walking facilities in key population centres;
- to invest further in our Smarter Travel programme, with a new round of Active Travel Towns; a second phase of the National Cycle Network (NCN); further rolling out of bike-sharing schemes; and the further development of Smarter Travel Workplaces and Campuses and Green School Travel programmes; and
- to implement the restructuring of the Rural Transport Programme.

Roads are also a key portion of the transport budget.

As regards major roads projects, the budget allocation for next year will see:

- the completion of Belturbet and Ballaghaderreen by-pass schemes;
- further progress on the N11 Arklow - Rathnew/ N7 Newlands Cross PPP scheme;
- further progress on N17/N18 Gort/Tuam, M11 Gorey/Enniscorthy & N25 New Ross Bypass;
- completion of the R402 Enfield Edenderry Strategic Scheme.

On the expenditure side for tourism, I am happy to report that the allocation of €123m to the tourism programme for next year will be increased through the Stimulus measures announced

by Minister Howlin in his budget speech. This funding will enable Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to deliver key initiatives which can build on the success of the Gathering and a very good performance of the sector in 2013.

At €69m, the overall sports allocation for 2014 is down €5m on 2013. However, I am happy to report that the additional funding from the Stimulus plan for 2014 announced by Minister Howlin will benefit the Sports sector and should ensure that the overall budget available in 2014 will exceed the monies available this year. This will enable us to launch another round of the Sports Capital Programme and commence work on the long outstanding Indoor Arena at the National Sports Campus. This is welcome news for community sports clubs across the country and will increase participation in sports. Clubs will be able to apply for essential works like new changing rooms, pitches, lighting and other projects for the second time since this Government took office. It will also mean that we will be able to fund regional projects as happened with the last programme.

The precise breakdown of this funding will be determined as part of the Revised Estimates process once there is clarity on the overall amount of funding available from the proceeds of the sale of the Lottery Licence.